



AT THE HELM

Lynn O'Connor Vos, CEO

PERFORMANCE

Double-digit growth

HIGHLIGHTS

Acquired Geoff Howe Marketing Communications

New work came in from AstraZeneca (global branding AOR), Transitions Optical (health engagement work) and Bayer (oncology brands)

Awarded management of blogger community for pharma company

Launched ghgFWD to drive innovation

CHALLENGE

Driving creative ambition

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 169

“Even the most conservative clients want high-impact ideas that can be syndicated”

—Lynn O'Connor Vos

Grey Healthcare Group

New relationships, consolidated wins and acquisition set up ‘productive year’

Lynn O'Connor Vos, CEO of WPP agency Grey Healthcare Group (ghg), is pleased that the agency has successfully diversified its roster, held onto a significant amount of its pharma base, and expanded consumer and digital business. She reports double-digit growth for 2010.

“It was a year of very strong performance—profit performance, revenue performance, as well as innovation,” she adds. “We feel very strong. Confident. We’re not dependant a lot on the approval process.”

Acquisition last summer of the animal health division of Geoff Howe Marketing Communications (GHMC) further strengthened ghg’s expertise and global footprint in animal health. Partnering in a joint venture with WPP sibling VML to launch a new agency, Healix Digital Health, expanded digital capability.

A team of four managing partners was established last year. The team includes veterans John Dietz, MP, director of brand strategy, and Cindy Machles, MP account services (domestic). Art Chavez rejoined ghg from the CementBloc as MP account services (global). Erin Byrne, MP, chief engagement officer, joined from Burson-Marsteller.

Patrick Norrie now oversees creative leadership

worldwide. Andy Hastie was hired to lead digital in London; Michel Dubery joined as MP, Europe; and Matt Hunt joined to lead strategy in Europe.

The GHMC acquisition delivered a hub in Prague, a base in Kansas City, MO, and additional talent in London. Executives joining after the acquisition included Bryan Archambault, SVP, director of client services; Fraser Monk, SVP, creative director; Stephen Connors, SVP, global animal health; and Jasvir Gill, COO in London.

New wins included a global branding AOR assignment from AstraZeneca; health engagement work with Transitions Optical; and global assignments for two Bayer Healthcare oncology brands. Novartis awarded work on a global vaccine and expanded med ed work. Client Novo Nordisk AS assigned the full DTC insulin portfolio (AOR for all insulin brands in the US). Work with Strativa Pharmaceuticals expanded to include its full portfolio of brands.

Byrne stresses the importance of multichannel engagement, of integrating content across channels and of helping clients focus on share of engagement.

“Developing outstanding breakthrough content is our niche,” Vos adds. “It’s never going away, but you need to bring content to people where they are.”

Dietz notes a global counsel of strategy and creative leaders drive ghg’s insight-based philosophy.

Vos says ghg’s entrepreneurial spirit attracts talent, and she’s not had trouble recruiting. An initiative called ghgFWD launched last year to drive innovation

Above: A consumer ad for Novo Nordisk's Victoza, an injectable to improve blood sugar for type 2 diabetes

throughout the agency. It includes weekly meetings, contests and exposure to WPP siblings. Dietz describes it as “a health engagement incubator.”

Vos has an excellent outlook for the rest of 2011. The agency has won several new pieces of business, including management of a blogger community for a pharma company.

“Our biggest mission is driving creative ambition in the company,” she says. “Big ideas, strong ideas, great digital expertise and the best creative in the industry is what we’d like to achieve. Clients are looking for big ideas that play out on multiple channels. Even the most conservative clients want high-impact ideas that can be syndicated. The bar has been raised, and we’re excited.” —Tanya Lewis