



AT THE HELM

Lisa Bair, founder and CEO

PERFORMANCE

Revenue grew 91% in 2010

HIGHLIGHTS

Landed new work and expanded assignments from Pfizer, Eli Lilly, Sunovion and Bayer

Restructured and introduced Hobart Innovations; built a new building on the New Jersey campus

Added Dana Regan, Jorge Font and Larry Blandford to the team

CHALLENGES

Competing with big agencies in a crowded space

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 171

“To stay in front of the [big agencies], we’re going to have to innovate”

—Lisa Bair

Hobart Group

Restructured ‘payer expert’ firm boasts big revenue growth in 2010



In its attempts to distinguish its offerings from those of the competition, The Hobart Group has always had an ace up its proverbial sleeve: a huge amount of expertise in the payer space. For years, even as the rest of the medical marketing world was chasing the next blockbuster drug, the agency singularly dedicated its attention to that specialty. In doing so, it built a reputation as one of the go-to firms for companies hoping to crack the payer market.

Over the last year or three, however, Hobart found the space increasingly crowded. Whether due to desperation or a desire to expand their offerings (or both), other agencies started to elbow in on Hobart’s specialty. Hoping to stay ahead of the threat, Hobart acted aggressively to further differentiate itself. It restructured, creating a holding company umbrella, Hobart Group Holdings, to house three Hobart-branded entities: The Hobart Group (a full-service agency based in Gladstone, NJ), Hobart Forte (ditto, but in New York City) and Hobart Innovations (a just-debuted entity designed to create new products).

“There are a lot of people trying to compete in our space right now, lots of big agencies devoting resources to managed market expertise,” says Lisa Bair, founder and CEO of Hobart Group Holdings. “To stay in front of them, we’re going to have to innovate.”

Clearly, that last goal informed the introduction of Hobart Innovations. “In order to drive our positioning—being 100% dedicated to payer expertise—we needed to develop more products,” Bair continues. “The healthcare marketplace is changing so rapidly. [Hobart] Innovations will create the proprietary tools that companies are looking for.” As of early June, the unit counts five employees to its name, while The Hobart Group has 45 and Hobart Forte has 37.

While the restructuring and the adjustments/resource redeployments that accompanied it occupied much of Hobart’s energy, it continued to hum along business-wise. Fueled by new and expanded assignments from mainstay clients Pfizer, Eli Lilly, Sunovion and Bayer, Hobart saw an amazing 91% growth in revenue during 2010. Work for Pfizer included an AOR assignment for Chantix and projects designed to introduce the company’s oncology products to payer decision-makers. Hobart repositioned and rebranded Eli Lilly’s business-to-business division, served as managed markets AOR for Cialis and worked on the launch of Axiron, for men with a testosterone deficiency. As for Bayer, Hobart handled a wealth of work across the company’s women’s health, oncology and MS portfolios. “Keeping these brands at the forefront



Above: A journal ad for Lilly; left and top: an unbranded Pfizer ad for smoking cessation

in the eyes of payers and managed-care people has become very important,” Bair notes.

High-level personnel additions over the last year include Dana Regan (EVP, director of client services), Jorge Font (SVP, benefits industry innovation) and Larry Blandford (SVP, strategic services).

Don’t expect huge changes from Hobart in the second half of 2011 and beyond. The firm will continue to grow, but Bair is committed to doing so smartly. If there are surprises, they’ll come from the new Innovations arm. “We’re already starting to tease our clients a little bit with what we’re going to do. They seem really interested, so we’ll see what happens.”

—Larry Dobrow