



AT THE HELM

Managing partners (clockwise) Bruce Epstein, Brian Wheeler, Bruce Medd and George Courides

PERFORMANCE

2010 was a 'strong year,' revenue up 10%

HIGHLIGHTS

AOR awards for Bayer Schering Pharma and Bausch & Lomb

Launched an integrated campaign for Watson's Generess FE

Added three PharmDs

CHALLENGE

Account consolidation

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—Bruce Epstein

RevHealth

Breaking \$10 million mark, with 10% growth off new brand wins



Managing partner Bruce Epstein describes 2010 as a "strong year" for Morristown, NJ-based RevHealth. New brand wins, along with increased digital and peer-to-peer work, drove revenue up about 10% (net billings exceeded \$10 million).

"We never experienced a downturn, although our growth rate slowed," Epstein says. "We're not seeing client budget cuts like we did two years ago. Though, pricing, generics, payers will all keep putting pressure on pharma companies."

Epstein reports digital is probably the fastest growing part of the agency. Peer-to-peer communication is also increasing. Robert Citron joined in 2010 to lead RevHealth Digital. Eileen West was hired in 2010 to run First Amendment, the peer-to-peer group.

"It's a natural business extension from the advertising side to peer-to-peer and from peer-to-peer to advertising," Epstein adds. "It's very organic. If you do really good work on one you get opportunity for the other."

Wins last year included AOR awards for Bayer Schering Pharma's Avelox (infectious disease) and Bausch & Lomb's Zirgan. The agency also picked up a large assignment for Xolair, an allergic asthma medication co-marketed by Genentech and Novartis. Enzon's Oncaspar was lost after the company was sold.

Preparing for the integrated professional, consumer and digital launch of Watson's Generess FE (birth control) was one of last year's highlights. Epstein is very proud of the program, which has social networking aspects and ties purchase to charitable contributions (\$5 is donated to the patient's choice of a number of charities each time she fills her prescription).

"Upcoming generations are more socially conscious than in the past, and they do a lot more social networking," Epstein says. "If you can do a digital program that's tied to charity, it's of interest."

Epstein adds that companies that can leverage social networking effectively will be very successful. He spells out a guidance formula: "The value of social networking to the product divided by how risk adverse the company is."

"With Generess, we think it's a great opportunity," he notes. "The FDA hasn't had comments so far."

Though noting that pharma DTC is "decreasing pretty dramatically," Epstein says RevHealth hasn't suffered much because it isn't too invested there. He sees non-personal promotion continuing to increase and notes digital is the most cost-effective non-personal option.

Account consolidation is always a risk for independent agencies, but RevHealth's efficiency is advantageous. "Because we're independent and we don't have a lot of junior staff, we're more efficient," Epstein says. "The industry is trying to keep its margins, and it affects all suppliers around us. We've benefited from



Above: A professional campaign for Watson's Ella; Top: From a journal ad for Essilor's Airwear and Thin&Lite

that—we're medically focused and we're efficient."

A registered pharmacist and a teacher of pharmaceutical advertising, Epstein has recruited 10 PharmDs into account management and copywriting (three last year). "I really like hiring medical people who are motivated. I much prefer hiring someone from medicine and teaching them advertising."

Headcount was 45 ending 2010. It's up to 55 this year. Epstein is looking for a minimum of five (mostly senior) people, and he says there could be up to 20 openings (across all levels).

The agency is pitching a lot and has won more new business already. Revenue is expected to be up at least 20% ending 2011. —Tanya Lewis