

# Abelson Taylor

Chicago shop keeps building on a legacy of success and stellar work



**“Nobody talks about web sites, but that’s where the revenue is. People use them”**

—Dale Taylor

**A**belsonTaylor’s 2011 and 2012 are looking a lot like 2010, and this is a very, very good thing. The independent company, with 484 employees as of May 31, has continued on its path of explosive growth, seeing its headcount rise by 4.8% this year and by 14.6% in 2011. All that expansion needs someplace to go, and that means outwards. Last year, the agency took on 7,200 square feet of space, but even tacking on an amount of square footage that is equal to about 21 New York studio apartments has not been enough.

“One of our biggest issues right now is space in our building. We have over three floors in this building and we’re going to need to take on more,” President and CEO Dale Taylor said.

The growth is a combination of increasing its IT and adding creative muscle, with a greater emphasis on backend hires this year than last year, due to increasing digital business. Powering the rising headcount is a workload that had the health business clocking in at 10% more than the year before. Last year’s total: 12

new accounts, seven without a pitch. This year’s pace is equally brisk—AT has chalked up seven wins this year. Six of these recent wins also rolled in without a pitch.

SVP Jay Carter said although it may be an industry trend to get business based on past work, for AT it’s pretty much become the norm. His explanation was a riff on the oft-quoted “you never get fired for hiring IBM.” The IBM-like halo has also expanded the type of work the agency does, and AT has taken on more broadcast work, in addition to expanding its digital reach.

But AT has been determined since the beginning that growth has to be measured. “Dale told me in complete seriousness right around 1997, ‘I’d be perfectly happy if we stop at 100 [employees],’” Carter said.

This means the agency has not been shy about turning away business. Taylor said simply scooping up work because it’s there for the taking would violate two company goals: First, Carter and Taylor said it would tip the employee work-life balance in an unfavorable direction. Second, Taylor said that keeping up with a breakneck pace would dilute the quality of the agency’s work, because it would mean “hiring every warm body you could find.” This, Taylor said, would not fly.

Refusing business could be considered risky, but Taylor said the agency turns down work without fear. “I think when we say no to more business, we sort of put our money where our mouth is in terms of telling our staff and our clients that we want to do the best work.

“The reason that we always give is that we just don’t have the capacity to take on a pitch right now and still serve the needs of our clients,” he explained.


As for fallout: Taylor said spurned clients have been known to come back to see if AT had any free bandwidth. One even told Taylor, “I don’t think I’ve ever called an agency and had them say no because they’re too busy before... I like the fact that you said you were too busy to pitch.”

In fact, Taylor and Carter said they continue to grow because they want to give their employees the chance to really explore their careers. Although the agency’s career track is not quite the mailroom-to-boardroom scenario, it comes close: Copywriters start as fact checkers/clinical researchers, designers begin in art production, and account managers usually get their start in traffic. And employees tend to stick around. Carter said grad school is usually the main reason employees leave. It doesn’t mean promotions don’t happen—123 AT-ers were promoted last year—but it does mean dramatic leadership changes don’t happen very often. The agency made a creative director a VP earlier this year, but the last major shift was in 2010 when Carter split his job into two and Nancy Drescher became VP, director of client services. “Nancy just flat out does a better job at it,” Carter said.

The ground-up training is part of an overall ethic that Carter said continues to attract clients. Carter said it’s also why clients have pulled some agency work and given it to AT, because AT knows how to navigate

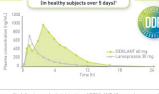
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**Mean plasma concentration in healthy subjects over 24 hours\***



**Key features following an administration of DEXILANT 40 mg as compared to 40 mg of dexlansoprazole (the active moiety of DEXILANT) in healthy subjects:**

- Achieves first peak plasma concentration 1–2 hours after dosing, followed by a second peak within 4–8 hours\*
- DEXILANT also provides an area under the concentration curve (AUC<sub>0-24</sub>) approximately 3 times greater than lansoprazole 30 mg on day 5\*

**Important safety information**

Do not co-administer atazanavir with DEXILANT because atazanavir systemic concentrations may be substantially decreased. DEXILANT may interfere with absorption of drugs for which gastric pH is important for bioavailability (e.g., ampicillin, cefaclor, digoxin, iron salts, ketoconazole). Patients taking warfarin with PPIs may require monitoring for increases in international normalized ratio (INR) and prothrombin time. Concurrent baclofen use may increase tacrolimus whole blood concentrations. DEXILANT is contraindicated in patients with known hypersensitivity to any component of the formulation. Significant response with DEXILANT does not preclude the presence of gastric malignancy. Commonly reported treatment-related adverse events: diarrhea (12.2%), abdominal pain (12.2%), nausea (12.2%), headache (12.2%), flatulence (11.8%), and constipation (11.1%).

**INDICATIONS**  
DEXILANT is indicated in adults 18 years of age and older for the treatment of all grades of erosive esophagitis (EE) for up to 6 weeks, maintenance healing of EE for up to 6 months, and the treatment of heartburn associated with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) for 6 weeks. No dosage adjustment is necessary for patients ≥65 years of age.

**HOW TO USE**  
Take one 40 mg tablet once daily, with or without food, at the same time each day. Do not crush, chew, or break the tablet. If you are taking atazanavir, do not take it at the same time as DEXILANT.

**CONTRAINDICATIONS**  
DEXILANT is contraindicated in patients with known hypersensitivity to any component of the formulation. Significant response with DEXILANT does not preclude the presence of gastric malignancy. Commonly reported treatment-related adverse events: diarrhea (12.2%), abdominal pain (12.2%), nausea (12.2%), headache (12.2%), flatulence (11.8%), and constipation (11.1%).

**WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS**  
See full prescribing information on page 1.

**ADVERSE REACTIONS**  
See full prescribing information on page 1.

**DRUG INTERACTIONS**  
See full prescribing information on page 1.

**USE IN SPECIFIC POPULATIONS**  
See full prescribing information on page 1.

**DESCRIPTION**  
DEXILANT (dexlansoprazole) is a proton pump inhibitor (PPI) that is a racemic mixture of the enantiomers dexlansoprazole and lansoprazole. DEXILANT is a prodrug that is converted to the active moiety, dexlansoprazole, in the stomach.

**CLINICAL STUDIES**  
See full prescribing information on page 1.

**REFERENCES**  
See full prescribing information on page 1.

**HOW TO OBTAIN**  
DEXILANT is available in 40 mg tablets.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
Visit us at [www.takeda-us.com](http://www.takeda-us.com) or call 1-800-455-6288.

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**Opposite page: An ad for Healthpoint's Santyl ointment. This page: AbelsonTaylor's 2011 MM&M Gold Award-winning ad for Takeda's Dexilant (top) and creative from a campaign for Vertex's Incivek**



**PERFORMANCE**  
Dale Taylor, president and CEO

**PERFORMANCE**  
Health business jumped 10% in 2011

Staff growth of 14.6% last year and 4.8% so far this year

**HIGHLIGHTS**  
Brought on 12 new accounts in 2011, seven of which did not require a pitch

Added 7,200 square feet of space to its Chicago offices

Saw digital become more important to its clients, rising to 20% of agency business

Launched Sunovion's schizophrenia drug Latuda

Saw sales for Vertex's hepatitis drug Incivek reach the \$1 billion mark

Instituted a digital boot camp to bring employees up to speed on current technology

**CHALLENGES**  
Figuring out innovative ways to navigate FDA regulations

Making sure that new tech development doesn't overshadow revenue producers

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 181

**THE #1 PRESCRIBED DIRECT-ACTING ANTIVIRAL**  
AS RATED BY DOCTORS | CLEARLY MEASURABLE IMPACT



**In adults with genotype 1 chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) and compensated liver disease**

**TARGET: HCV GOAL: SVR**

**Indication**  
INCIVEK combination with peginterferon alfa and ribavirin is indicated for the treatment of genotype 1 chronic hepatitis C in adult patients with compensated liver disease. Incivek combination, when co-treated with or without peginterferon alfa and ribavirin, is indicated for patients who are treatment-naïve or who have previously been treated with interferon-based treatment, including prior full responders, partial responders, and responders.

The following points should be considered when initiating treatment with INCIVEK:

- INCIVEK must not be administered as monotherapy and must only be prescribed with both peginterferon alfa and ribavirin.
- A high proportion of patients full responders particularly those with cirrhosis did not achieve a Sustained Virologic Response (SVR) and had significant treatment-associated adverse events on treatment with INCIVEK combination treatment.
- INCIVEK efficacy has not been established for patients who have previously failed therapy with a treatment regimen that includes INCIVEK or other HCV NS5A protease inhibitors.

**Important safety information**

**Contraindications**  
Contraindications to peginterferon alfa and ribavirin also apply to INCIVEK combination treatment.

INCIVEK combination treatment is contraindicated in women who are or may become pregnant. Incivex may cause fetal harm when administered to a pregnant woman. If Incivex is used during pregnancy or in the event of a pregnancy while on treatment, advise the patient of the potential hazard to a fetus. INCIVEK combination treatment is also contraindicated in men whose female partners are pregnant.

INCIVEK is contraindicated when combined with drugs that 1) are highly dependent on CYP3A for clearance and for which elevated plasma concentrations are associated with serious and/or life-threatening events and 2) strongly induce CYP3A and thus may lead to lower exposure and loss of efficacy of INCIVEK. Contraindications include: rifampin, rifabutin, rifapiprin, diltiazem, verapamil, ergonovine, ergometrine, methylergometrine, diethyl ether, St. John's wort, fenofibrate, gemfibrozil, gemfibrozil (Durselin®) or lisdexamfetamine (Adderall®) for pulmonary arterial hypertension, oral miconazole, and/or heparin.

**INCIVEK**  
(telaprevir) 375 mg Tablets

See full prescribing information on page 1.

the FDA regulations. Carter said the reason is simple: "We get content through medical and regulatory." He said anyone working for AT knows how to swing this, whereas "if you're a hot digital shop, the word content is a four-letter word."

The new normal has made this skill set even more important. "It's becoming harder to find things to say, and our clients are becoming more risk averse," Taylor said.

Knowing the acceptable messages is just one part of an effective campaign, and Taylor said clients are becoming more sensitive to a holistic view of the messaging conversation. He has seen clients handing them both DTC and DTP work. Taylor said the one-agency move is happening because clients are understanding that "messages need to be synchronized." Taylor said their approach is to "put a question in the minds of a

consumer or patient," and to complement that with professional outreach that means "the only answer a doctor can give is your brand name."

Despite digital hesitancy among its clients, the agency has seen the medium inch up in importance, accounting for as much as 20% of the agency business. Further, even though clients aren't necessarily ready to embrace digital, they want to know the skill set is present.

This means being prepared, not for the 70-year-olds who aren't looking up osteoporosis information on their smartphones, but the future 70-year-olds who can't remember life without the web.

To immerse employees in the space so they are as thoroughly schooled in digital outreach as they are in regulatory compliance, AT's strategy was simple: Set up a digital boot camp to bring everyone up to speed.

Carter noted that what's interesting about the digital space is how the focus on the new has overshadowed what's become standard, and why. "Web sites are old school now. Nobody talks about web sites, but that's where the revenue is. People use them" Carter said. Going along with established revenue creators, however, doesn't mean simply staying put.

Part of this includes developing platforms like its Electronic Visualization Engine, or eVE, which it rolled out last year. "We didn't really want to be in this business, but as we looked at the platforms that were available for doing electronic visual aids, none of them allowed us to be as engaging as we wanted to be," Taylor explained. The iPad tech helps sales reps not just with presentations, but also collects data on the back end to create a constant stream of feedback.

Taylor said the launch of Sunovion's schizophrenia drug Latuda and the \$1 billion sales mark for Vertex's hepatitis drug Incivek have been highlights for the past year. He also expects nothing less in the future. "This will be our 32nd year in business, and we've grown every year. We've never ended a year smaller than when we started it... We're going to have another great year, no doubt about that." — Deborah Weinstein