



AT THE HELM

Anders Ekman,
managing director

PERFORMANCE

Business was flat in
2011

HIGHLIGHTS

New business came to
the agency from Eisai and
Salix

Addition of Ekman in
executive suite brings
mainline digital agency
expertise

Analytics became a
growth area for the
firm's business

CHALLENGES

Lost work from Merck
and Sanofi due to 2011
network consolidations

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vice offerings and client
roster, see Agency A-to-Z,
beginning on page 181

**“We’ve kind
of shifted
from being
a brand
agency to
being a
business
partner”**

—Anders Ekman

Saatchi & Saatchi Health Communications New York

New leadership at the Publicis
network’s flagship professional shop

Saatchi & Saatchi Health Communications, the New York flagship of the Publicis medical agency network, got new leadership as Anders Ekman was named managing director.

A veteran of Digitas and McCann Worldgroup’s MRM digital network, Ekman brings his new agency considerable mainline digital agency expertise, having worked on such blue-chip megabrands as General Motors and Mastercard. Working on the healthcare professional side of the business, he says, is fun, even if it is a classic example of rebuilding the plane while flying it.

“There’s no road map,” says Ekman, “and so many people I meet say, ‘Oh, it’s just awful now and it’s so different.’ I don’t know the difference, but I see things like all of this channel efficiency that we have to plan into what we do or the innovation that’s going on in end-of-life brands, where you have no sales force support and you’ve got to be completely outsourced and automated in your marketing, and I say, ‘It sure ain’t the days of wine and roses, but there’s business to be done and there’s money to be made for us.’ Pharma is not going away.”

The shop’s headcount has come way down over the past two years, to around 130 now from 200 in 2010, as those big blockbuster brands have gone to the off-patent beyond.

“End-of-life” brands—those winding down as they approach loss of exclusivity—is one area the agency is looking to carve out a niche in, and the Saatchi shop has assembled a stable of 10 of them. It’s a far cry from the big prime-of-life blockbusters that have made up the shop’s bread and butter in the past, but in today’s environment, professional agencies need to be opportunistic.

“Our role as a service provider is to be a step ahead, to be seeing trends and things that our clients need help with,” says Ekman. “We’re seeing more innovation go on [around end-of-life brands] in terms of marketing and sales force integration than you sometimes get in big launch brands.”

Business was flat in 2011, says Ekman, who joined the shop in October. Of 2012, he’ll say only that “the picture is certainly not one of standing still. It’s a year for us to monetize the things that went on in 2010 and 2011 and to grow.”

Last year, the agency lost several accounts to network consolidations. Those losses included accounts from Sanofi (Aubagio, for MS) and Merck (ridaforolimus). A big US and global cardiology win—Ekman is not at liberty to say what brand or company it was from—more than made up for the losses. This year, the shop has won new business from Eisai, on a Phase III oncology compound, and an in-market product from Salix.

Analytics is a fast-growing part of the firm’s business. About a quarter of the revenues coming in to

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REGENERON SANOFI ONCOLOGY

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the shop are from digital work. “That is not where we would like it to be,” says Ekman. “We’re designing campaigns now not so much with the journal ad at the center but with the experience at the center. I think a more diverse revenue mix will follow as a result of that.”

“The company was built upon building great brands,” he adds, “and we still have to do that, but we’ve kind of shifted from being a brand agency to being a business partner. It’s no longer enough to simply do a great journal ad. You’ve got to be able to deliver there and do the brand architecture and all of the important communications work while having a seat at the table and being accountable for how the business performs. That’s a different set of skills, and those consultative skills will be most prized.”

—Matthew Arnold