



# Giant

Well-positioned firm parlays its digital skills into big business

## AT THE HELM

From left: Mike Sperling, Principal; Adam Gelling, Principal; Larry Wolheim, Principal; Stephen Mullens, Principal; Steven Gold, Principal; Alyse Sukalski, SVP Operations

## PERFORMANCE

Revenue grew 50% to \$25.9 million

## HIGHLIGHTS

Won AOR status on accounts for Xtandi and Alair system for Asthma; digital wins from Shire and Onyx Pharmaceuticals

## CHALLENGES

Recruiting staff, especially at the senior level

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 187



**G**iant is certainly living up to its name. Revenue grew more than 50% to \$25.9 million as the agency celebrated its 10th anniversary last year. Staff grew in tandem from less than 100 ending 2011 to 140 now, with more than 20 openings across all levels and departments.

“It was a landmark, banner year because we firmly positioned ourselves as the leading west coast independent agency,” says principal Steven Gold. “We’re here to stay.”

Growth was driven mainly by new business, including professional AOR status and disease education work on Astellas/Medivation’s prostate cancer treatment Xtandi. The agency also landed a professional and consumer AOR win on a new device procedure called the Alair System for Asthma from Boston Scientific, and Silvergate Pharmaceuticals awarded US professional AOR status on a new enalapril formulation for pediatric hypertension.

Pure digital wins included e-detailing platform work for Shire’s entire ADHD franchise and an interactive, multimedia social engagement program that’s primarily aimed at the professional oncology community for Onyx Pharmaceuticals.

There was also nice organic growth with Genentech and Actelion Pharmaceuticals—consumer AOR status on Genentech’s macular degeneration treatment Lucentis (Giant is already professional AOR

for the product), and professional US AOR status on Actelion’s Opsumit (for PAH).

Gold says clients are seeking more interactive work that’s highly integrated, and he also reports “major expansion” in iPad detailing, CRM programs and use analytics to prove ROI. “Last year we really started seeing larger portions of work delivered in digital channels,” he says. “It’s going sky-high—70% of work on Xtandi is being delivered digitally now.

“We’re positioning ourselves at the center of brands, so clients aren’t seeing us as just delivering one piece of work,” Gold continues. “They want to partner with us on brand strategy, concept, launch development and delivery across all channels.”

Gold attributes much of the agency’s success to its staff and to the fact that strong senior talent is on the front lines with clients. “We’ve resisted the temptation to staff verticals and build with lots of junior people,” he says. “We have 10 creative directors, and they’re with our clients every day. It really comes down to the people, and we have a killer team committed to innovating and delivering giant results for our clients.”

Though recruiting is challenging, particularly at the senior level, Gold says the agency is attracting great talent. Senior hires last year strengthened account services, digital and medical science groups. Among them were Eric Steckelman, SVP management supervisor; Adena Svingos, SVP medical director; and Kevin Stokes, SVP creative director, overseeing the creative group on the Xtandi account.



Giant’s web and mobile work for Xtandi (above left) and an advertisement for Lucentis (above)

“We’ve done a pretty good job of cornering the market in San Francisco,” Gold says. “People in town with strong agency experience pretty much all work here now. We’ve relocated quite a few people from the East Coast and the Midwest. A few have come from Southern California.”

Signaling a strong commitment to accelerating growth, Giant received a “sizable and significant” investment this May from Shamrock Capital Advisors.

“We’re going to continue to do what we’ve been doing, but we’re going to do it faster and more aggressively,” Gold says. “I wouldn’t expect another 50% increase in revenue this year—we didn’t forecast that last year. If it happens, great, but we’re planning for 20% to 25% growth.” —Tanya Lewis