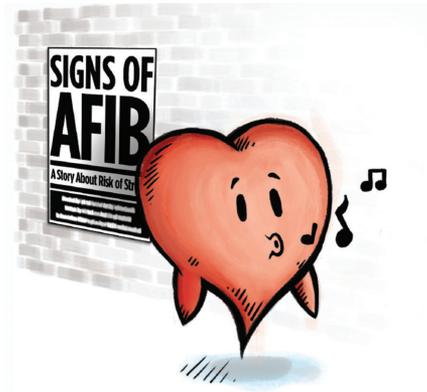


Digitas Health

Bringing multiple messages together into a single, successful strategy



“It’s a great position to be in if you enjoy pioneering”

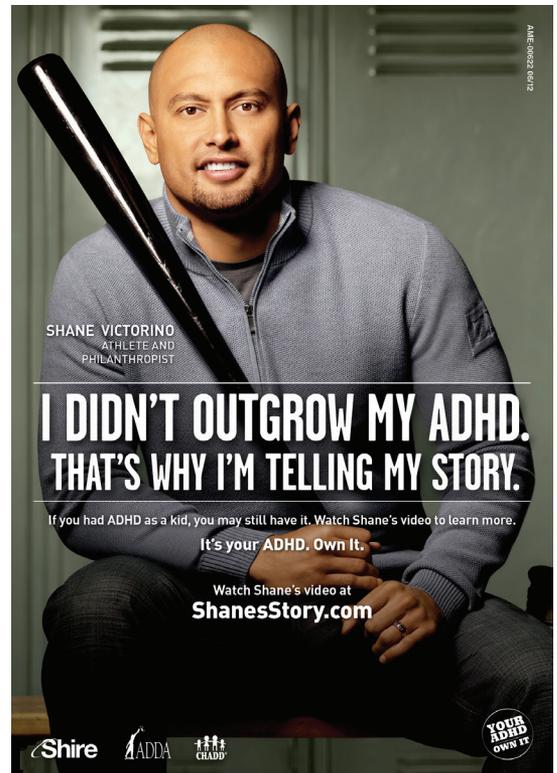
—Alexandra von Plato

Digitas Health tells its story and shows what it has to offer clients on its revamped website, which was created to provide an optimized multi-screen experience. That experience shows visitors to the site two things. One, that Digitas knows multiscreen is the way to go—and is aware that visitors know it as well. Two, it shows that Digitas takes the expectations of those visitors seriously. “We’re sort of walking the walk,” says Alexandra von Plato, president and global chief creative officer of Publicis Healthcare Communications Group.

It also provides insight about the flavor of the place—whose client roster includes Amgen, Athena Health, Genzyme, Gilead, Novartis, Pfizer, Sanofi, Shire and UCB—since it uses images submitted by Digitas employees at various offices. One such image was of the Philadelphia office’s popcorn popper. Von Plato and Publicis Healthcare Communications Group president Michael du Toit say the image of the popcorn burbling to the top and spilling over the edge captures the essence of the Digitas mission that guides work on

the 70 brands it represents: helping not selling. “I like it because its fresh and it’s something to share,” von Plato laughs. “We’re not selling, it’s free,” jokes du Toit.

Bringing together multiple messages into a single stream is what the company excels at, even more so now that the general consensus among clients is that—finally—digital is king, and digital is where you go to meet consumers. And their multi-channel expertise in digital and orchestration of customer-centric messaging is what has enabled head of business development Greg Lewis to woo between \$15 million and \$20 million in new business to the agency every year since he came on board three years ago. This is in addition



An AFib awareness piece (above left); part of the “Own It” ADHD-awareness campaign (above)

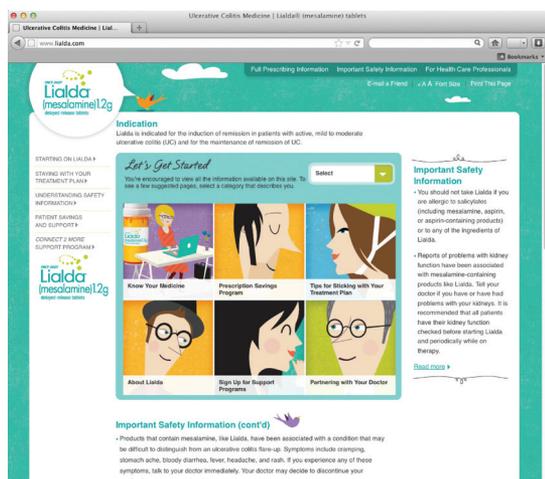
to the organic growth that continues to expand their client reach, and has contributed to the jump in business in the first quarter of this year, compared to the same period in 2012. The execs cannot share exact numbers, but say last year’s growth was in the double digits compared to 2011.

The movement isn’t strictly limited to growth that includes the recent launch of its office in India, or the plans to open doors in Japan and China by the end of the year, its goal to deepen its European presence or even the rollout of its second M-dot summit which brings together CEOs, venture capitalists, tech firms and Digitas to talk about the future.

The momentum also includes where clients are asking Digitas to assert its expertise and to leverage its global perspective. Creating M-dot also shows something unique about Digitas, which is that the company doesn’t restrict its investments to billable talent. In this

case, the non-billable talent includes Geoff McCleary, who came on as the agency's mobile specialist in 2012 and launched the now-annual meeting. "Geoff came in as the head of mobile with no hopes or dreams of being billable ... agencies don't like to do that," du Toit says proudly.

Another change is that Digitas no longer has to do client walk-throughs when talking strategy and purpose. "The multichannel discussion is over. They're asking for a plan vs. a digital plan, a complete plan vs. a physician plan," du Toit says, and notes that the agency is meeting these goals by drawing across skill sets within Digitas and its network. A typical client experience now means having reps from its financial, creative, strategic, media, science and tech groups attached to its assignments. Du Toit says that while Digitas has consistently had this on offer, clients now understand why all the skill sets are necessary and how it will help them achieve



The consumer brand website for Shire's ulcerative colitis medication Lialda

their goals. "Six, seven, eight years ago, it would have been tough to sell them on the need for a media or tech person when all they thought they needed was an art director, a writer and an account person."

It may sound like a lot of heads for an account, particularly when it starts to include expertise from employees around the globe, but von Plato and du Toit say breadth is actually all part of an efficient loop that helps clients and global brands make the most of their budgets in terms of results and knowledge. As an example, du Toit notes that a client in South Africa cannot even be bothered to talk about traditional approaches—it's all mobile or its nothing, since "in South Africa their lives are on their phones." Successful campaigns there will influence mobile campaigns and touchpoints here, once the US catches up. The international reach also lets clients create assets once, instead of treating each market as a standalone account that needs to be reconcepted and rebuilt.

Also fueling creative growth is client curiosity. Von Plato says that although pharma remains skittish about outreach such as social media, an increasing number "recognize they can't afford to wait," to embrace change.



AT THE HELM

Alexandra von Plato, president and global chief creative officer, Publicis Healthcare Communications Group; Michael du Toit, president, Publicis Healthcare Communications Group

PERFORMANCE

Double-digit growth from 2011 to 2012

HIGHLIGHTS

Client roster includes Amgen, Athena Health, Genzyme, Gilead, Novartis, Pfizer, Sanofi, Shire and UCB

Head of business development has brought in between \$15 million and \$20 million in new business every year since arriving at the agency

Recently launched offices in India and China

Increased international reach creates efficiencies in dealing with multiple markets for a client

CHALLENGES

Finding more ways to create multi-tiered conversations with clients

Working to reduce client skittishness about outreach such as social media

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

Another way to peer into the agency's outreach expertise is the agency's Group Hug project. This annual giving campaign lets employees tap into their networks to compete for votes: get enough people to support your organization of choice, and it wins. The response rate has been up to between 140,000 and 150,000 some years, from a base of 500 employees who "have lit up their entire social network," and know how to make messages move.

The movement clients want and Digitas is providing is a multi-tiered conversation that converges at the point of sale but is hinged on the customer, not the brand. As an example, the agency says it helped a client with a high-priced specialty drug in a tight category



The Facebook page for Vimpat, indicated to treat partial-onset seizures in people with epilepsy

show the drug's value, by expanding the conversation. Now, such features as how much patients and payers save on out-of-hospital care when they use the product compared to after-care costs on other therapies are foregrounded, rather than leading and ending with the drug's benefits. Although the presentation will vary slightly based on audience — doctor, patient, physician — du Toit says the key is that the communication arc created will be of a piece so everyone in the decision making process is "talking the same language" as it relates to the brand.

The company says it expects its early 2013 momentum to carry through the rest of the year. That momentum is expected to include an infusion of clients and talent as Digitas strives to be, as von Plato says, "at the forefront of change." She adds that "our clients expect that of us and it's a great position to be in if you enjoy pioneering." — Deborah Weinstein