



AT THE HELM

Anne Stroupe, managing director; Anthony Rotolo, chief creative officer

PERFORMANCE

Agency has “won some good clients” and is growing

HIGHLIGHTS

Racked up two wins and has three more clients that are about to sign

Rebranding provides expertise in traditional branding/advertising and measurement/analytics

CHALLENGES

The frustration of educating outsiders about the agency’s new model

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

“We have a new way of thinking and a new way of looking at the market”

—Anne Stroupe

TRUE Health + Wellness

A “new breed of agency” seeks clients who welcome innovation



The challenges of balancing existing client work with the large-scale rebranding effort that resulted in the creation of TRUE Health + Wellness last fall were not lost on Anne Stroupe. “I read a book about an entrepreneur around that time,” she says. “One thing he wrote that stuck with me was, ‘If you’re going to start a new business, do it before you engage with a family or after your children have grown.’ Well, all I can say is that I’m very glad my son is grown up. It was 24/7 for a while there.”

She’s talking about the process that ended with the firm she previously led—The Agency Inside Harte-Hanks—spinning off some of its business into TRUE. Stroupe is at the helm of the new firm as its managing director; other Agency Inside execs, among them chief creative officer Anthony Rotolo, made the shift alongside her. Agency Inside has now turned its focus toward relationship marketing and works with TRUE (as do other Harte-Hanks brands) on a regular basis. TRUE counts around 15 full-time staffers under its roof.

“We’ll utilize that Harte-Hanks network and shared services in areas where you don’t necessarily need a pharma background. You don’t have to know pharma to do HTML coding,” Stroupe says.

The rebranding process, which occupied much of Stroupe’s attention during 2012, gave birth to what she believes is a new breed of agency, one that taps

traditional advertising/branding functions and Harte-Hanks’ longstanding measurement/analytics expertise in equal measure. While a get-to-know-us video on the agency’s website intercuts marketing-speak (“Brand is consistently focal”) with artful black-and-white images of children playing, the new agency’s value proposition appears to be something like this: circa-2013 pharma brand development is incomplete if there is not an early focus on analytics and relationship marketing. In the past, those pieces tended to be grafted on after the fact.

The model was the result of an exhaustive effort that included the expected research, which suggested that a new company/brand identity was the way to go. Nonetheless, Stroupe and her team consulted with senior leaders at a handful of pharma companies along the way. “We kind of test-drove it with them, which really helped,” Stroupe says. “You come up with something and you like it, then you give it to somebody who’s never seen it before and say, ‘Please shoot holes in it.’ Then you refine it from there.”

TRUE, like the other firms that are under the Harte-Hanks banner, declines to reveal its client roster. Still, Stroupe says that the company enjoyed a strong year on the new-business front, with “two new wins and three more that we’re just about to sign. The way I’d put it is that we’ve won some good clients and that we’re growing.” The frustrations have come in the



TRUE Health + Wellness has put a lot of work into communicating the new firm’s special focus

form of educating outsiders about the company’s new model. “It wasn’t just, ‘Oh, look, we’re a new agency,’” Stroupe continues. “We have a new way of thinking and a new way of looking at the market. That requires some conversations.”

In a similar vein, Stroupe expresses some frustration with the reluctance to take more chances that many clients have. TRUE is far from being the only firm that feels this way, of course, and Stroupe understands the myriad challenges, both regulatory and otherwise, that clients face. That said, she has prioritized “identifying the true brand innovators, the people who are willing to play outside the norm, to not just check off the boxes in how they should be doing their marketing. Those are the people who we really click with.” —Larry Dobrow