



AT THE HELM

Adrian Sansone, EVP, managing director; Rich Norman, EVP, chief strategic officer; Ellen Gorczyca, EVP, exec. creative director; Nick Manganiello, EVP, chief creative officer

PERFORMANCE

Agency says it had a "very solid" year

HIGHLIGHTS

Executed launches for Pfizer, Sanofi, AbbVie, Boehringer Ingelheim and Daiichi Sankyo

Moved its NYC offices to One Penn Plaza

CHALLENGES

Learning how being "uncomfortable" can spur the agency to further growth

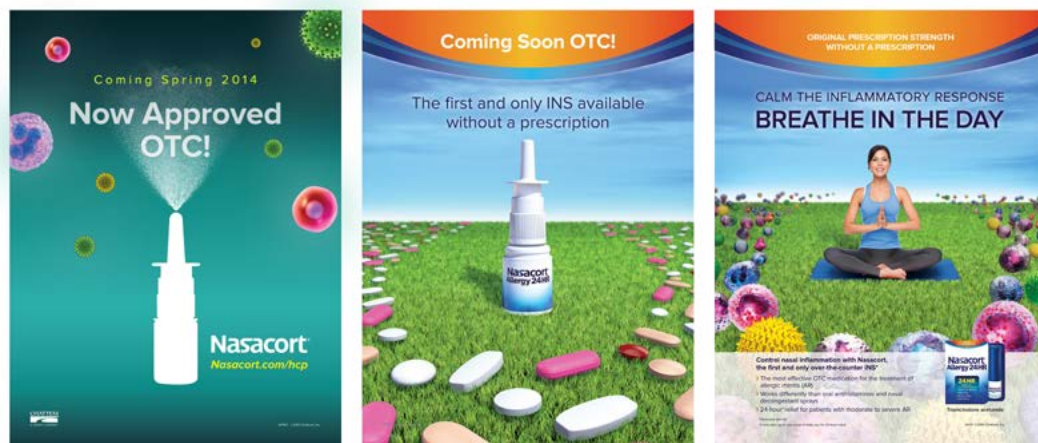
For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 183

Publicis Life Brands Medicus

Getting out of its comfort zone lets agency pursue new opportunities

Lest you think that the PLBM mission is yet another blast of ultimately meaningless agency-speak, Sansone notes that the company has put into place what he calls "a small incentive program around the behaviors of being uncomfortable." Translation: employees who live the mission will be compensated for doing so. Sansone declines to discuss specific awards, but he says that the approach has resonated with existing employees and potential hires alike.

If 2012 was the year in which PLBM shook itself up structurally—Sansone ascended to the top job in August and its business-team-based organizational scheme was put in place that December—then 2013 was the year that the company started seeing the fruits of its transformation. It expanded its relationships with existing clients Pfizer and Sanofi and toiled on launches for those two companies as well as for



One of the campaigns Publicis Life Brands Medicus executed was this one for the Spring 2014 release of the over-the-counter version of Nasacort, Chaffem's intranasal steroid

Publicis Life Brands Medicus (PLBM) executive vice president, managing director Adrian Sansone toes the cautious-agency-steward line. Having helmed the firm since August 2012, he describes 2013 as "an energizing year" and, as per tradition for the head of an entity with a publicly traded parent, declines to discuss headcount or revenue projections beyond "we're very solid."

But then he veers from the script, and starts to talk about failing—namely, his belief that failing is not necessarily a bad thing, despite a wellspring of popular opinion to the contrary.

Let him explain: "What we do is about learning and growing, right? It's about pushing ourselves. It's about pushing uncertainty aside and failing fearlessly. When you fail, that's an accelerant to growth. By doing that, we'll elevate the quality of service and solutions to our clients." This line of thinking, embraced wholeheartedly by the PLBM staff over the last year, informs the firm's new mission: to "be uncomfortable."

"Our industry is going through a significant amount of change," Sansone continues. "If you don't embrace it, you won't be successful. 'Be uncomfortable' is about owning that change and seeing the opportunities that can be derived from it."

AbbVie, Boehringer Ingelheim and Daiichi Sankyo.

Which isn't to say that PLBM was overly devoted to pursuing new clients. In fact, Sansone notes, the agency made a conscious decision to go after fewer opportunities. "With that kind of filtered, selective approach, we believed our chances of success were higher, and they were. Putting our current clients first paid off for us."

PLBM experienced one significant personnel defection—director of client services Linda Bennett left to take a similar post at Heartbeat Ideas—but was able to "elevate its thinking," in Sansone's words, with the hires of David Siflinger as finance director and Daniel Hackett as director of human resources.

With the agency comfortably installed in its new digs—it moved to One Penn Plaza, a prime midtown New York City location in May—PLBM will attempt to attract more unorthodox thinkers. "I'd like to bring in talent from different industries, maybe from the consultant world or high-end manufacturing companies," Sansone says. Look, too, for PLBM to push deeper into the world of analytics. "I don't think we're where we need to be, frankly, and it's not going to happen as quickly as we want it to happen," he continues. "Making all that data practical and telling stories from it—that's a huge opportunity for us." —Larry Dobrow

"Making all that data practical—that's a huge opportunity for us"

—Adrian Sansone