



AT THE HELM
Al Topin, president

PERFORMANCE
Revenue increased between 5% and 10%, reaching the \$5-million to \$10-million range

HIGHLIGHTS
New business from Mission Pharmacal, Myriad Genetics, Terumo Cardiovascular and Foundation Medicine

Partnership with HCB Health led to AOR status on CareFusion's CloraPrep and the final round of another pitch

CHALLENGES
Lost two Mission Pharmacal brands

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

"It's exciting to get into broader and broader specialty marketing"

—Al Topin

Topin & Associates

At Chicago firm, new business and a new strategic partnership



Topin & Associates president Al Topin describes 2013 as a solid year, noting new business really picked up in the third and fourth quarters. Overall, revenue at the Chicago shop increased between 5% and 10% over 2012 and remained in the \$5 million to \$10 million range.

"The challenges, as always, are staying ready and flexible for upcoming business and keeping staff aligned correctly amid client-side budget hiccups and timing shifts," Topin says.

New business wins included an AOR assignment on ear-pain analgesic Otic Care from existing client Mission Pharmacal. The agency also expanded its relationship with Myriad Genetics to include new project work, and new corporate project work came in from Terumo Cardiovascular, which had been a past client.

Foundation Medicine, a new client that does genetic testing, awarded two project assignments.

The only losses were two Mission Pharmacal brands (Uribel, Urocit-K 15), which were moved to other agencies.

Topin and Kerry Hilton, partner and CEO of Austin-based HCB Health, joined forces to jointly pitch

several pieces of new business late last year. It proved fruitful, as they won AOR status on CareFusion's CloraPrep this year. Topin says they also made it to the final round on a pitch for an undisclosed antibacterial.

"Kerry and I have known and liked each other for years," Topin says. "HCB has in-depth device expertise and some very good talent. Combined, we have much broader and deeper resources. Pitching together allowed us to get in the door and win. When clients see how seamless it is, they don't have a concern that this is a different configuration."

Topin adds that both agencies are working with Austin-based healthcare analytics specialist Kelly Myers to provide clients with patient-centric data that can help them tremendously with targeting on the marketing side and on the sales side. "Working with Kelly allows us to present something both different and valuable to clients, and it gives us a more strategic base and focus," Topin says.

Given industry dynamics, including risk and claims issues and the ever-increasing use of digital channels, Topin has noticed medical regulation departments, IT, and legal are involved in marketing to a much greater degree than in years past. "It creates new challenges for both the client and the agency," he says. "We have to be prepared to support the marketing department in working with IT, medical regulation and legal."

Other trends include competition from agencies of all sizes, including some b-to-b agencies that aren't exclusively focused on healthcare, and an uptick in client companies looking to assign large project work.

"Some clients are using a broader mix of agencies at times and looking at projects separately," he says. "That's a generalization, but we're seeing it as an opportunity. If you pitch for these large projects and win, it's a several-year assignment."



A balloon dog promotes Otic Care (left); multi-media work for CitraNatal (above)

"We're also finding opportunities to pitch in varied marketplaces, such as oncology and antimicrobial," Topin continues. "It's exciting to get into broader and broader specialty marketing."

Business continues to be good this year.

"Budget and commitments look solid," Topin says. "Timing is always a question mark, but I think it will be another very solid year." —Tanya Lewis