



AT THE HELM

Co-presidents Bob Vogel and Jeff Farina

PERFORMANCE

Sales growth of 60% compared to 2012 levels

HIGHLIGHTS

Landed work from clients including Dendreon and Celgene

Business grew to include 12 brand products

Helped develop the Novartis Oncology My NET Manager app to help patients manage their disease

CHALLENGES

Communicating the importance of looking ahead to clients

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

“We provide smart, practical advice. And that’s sort of been our mantra”

—Jeff Farina

Vogel Farina

Specialty, long VF’s sweet spot, has them on a major growth spurt



Vogel Farina. No Nonsense.” This, the greeting on the Grey Healthcare Group/WPP subsidiary’s website, is followed by “Senior Momentum, not Senior Moments” on the contact page, referring to the agency’s policy of having senior executives stay engaged with clients beyond the pitch.

Simple. Straightforward. And, were it not for the 60% sales growth in 2013 compared to 2012, a first glimpse at the homepage could be construed as a little... vanilla. But to dismiss what appears to be a visual undersell would be to miss a mindset that has helped the agency of around 50 full-time employees accrue a client list that includes Celgene, Dendreon, Greer, Novartis and Pfizer. “We provide smart, practical advice. And that’s sort of been our mantra,” Co-President Jeff Farina tells *MM&M*.

The other co-president, Bob Vogel, notes that in 2013 VF “saw our largest growth in terms of income, in terms of growing the client base.” He says he expects 2014 to be more about stabilizing.

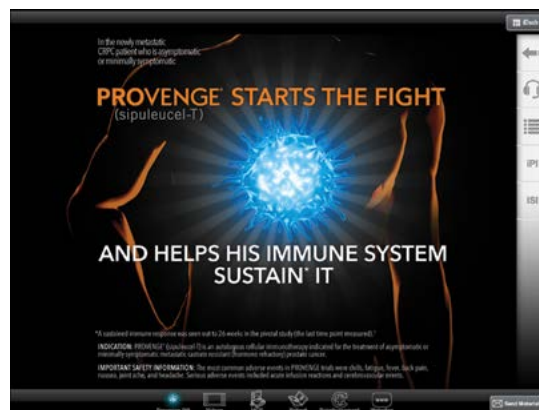
The foundation for 2013’s growth came not just from having the talent, but also the foresight to be in what is now a critical part of the pharmaceutical mar-

ketplace: specialty and immuno-oncology drugs. Both are sweet spots for corporate pipelines and both are also a major focus of payers and cost-bearing patients, both of which are becoming increasingly aware of this growing industry subset. “Specialty is becoming more mainstream, but it doesn’t mean everybody can do it. It requires a lot of strategic heavy lifting,” says Vogel.

The duo has been focused on the specialty division since the agency’s start in 2002, and has grown the business along with its footprint to include 12 brand products and a portfolio of in-house talent that provides output which is 50% interactive, 25% digital and 25% disease education.

Vogel Farina’s talent pool is not only well-versed in digital, but the agency also requires it to go beyond their core skill sets and learn the science behind their clients’ products and where those products fit in the pharmaceutical space. To further this fluency, the agency onboarded its first-ever director of scientific strategy, Colleen Admirand, a former VP, group creative director at Ogilvy CommonHealth Worldwide. The co-presidents haven’t hammered out exactly what this new role entails (“We’ll let you know when we find out,” Vogel jokes), but it is part of the agency’s process which is that everybody is all-in on all fronts.

This mindset has been one that has enabled the agency to see a client’s needs—and potential solutions—from beyond the client’s own perspective, a capability that has helped VF creatives to develop tools like the Novartis Oncology My NET Manager app which helps patients manage their disease and better communicate with their medical teams.



Vogel Farina’s projects included work for Greer’s Orlair (left) and Dendreon’s Provenge (above)

The importance of looking ahead is also rubbing off on clients. Vogel and Farina note that clients are now having conversations about how to connect with payers earlier in their conversations with the agency. As in before approval—so the idea of value is baked into the strategy, as opposed to being tacked on at the end.

Landing work has been a mix of straight-out pitching—such as with the Dendreon account for the prostate cancer drug Provenge—and others, such as Celgene, that have grown out of a client’s previous experience with VF. —Deborah Weinstein