



AT THE HELM

From left: Jill Beene, Chuck Wagner, Ashley Schofield, Amy Hansen, Craig Romanok

PERFORMANCE

Headcount is up "about 10%," and relationships with several large clients have expanded

HIGHLIGHTS

Agency settled on the new company vision of "specialty care for specialty brands"

Created a digital-intensive program for MedImmune's RSV infection drug Synagis

CHALLENGES

Managing the process of change

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

CDM Princeton

With a new leadership and vision, CDM shop shows change is good



CDM Princeton managing partner, creative director Ashley Schofield is quick with a response when she's asked about fundamental changes at the agency during the last year or so. "Well, we painted our walls," she says. "There are some very vibrant colors."

Schofield punctuates her deadpan flourish with a laugh, one echoed by agency president Chuck Wagner. Wagner himself, in fact, headlined CDM Princeton's year of change: He arrived from CDM Group sister firm Entrée Health in April 2013 and immediately joined with Schofield and the rest of the executive team to help articulate a new company vision.

Much of 2013, then, was spent defining who—and what—the market is looking for in a healthcare agency. After research and any number of client sit-downs, CDM Princeton settled upon "specialty care for specialty brands."

"We're taking a very broad view of the ecosystem that surrounds brands and disease states," Wagner explains.

The new approach is still, well, new, but Wagner says that clients have responded enthusiastically so far. "We've had opportunities to introduce clients to

our view of things and we haven't found one yet that hasn't appreciated it," he reports. "I'm not sure we know exactly who is going to value this the most, but so far it's looking good."

Imposing both a new vision and new top leadership on an agency celebrating a milestone anniversary—its 15th—could be a recipe for disaster in the wrong hands. Schofield, however, says that the transition "wasn't as hard as you'd think it would be. We were building on a culture of collective intelligence. Everybody here is deeply ingrained to look beyond a single discipline. We're curious at heart."

None of this is to suggest that CDM Princeton didn't experience its share of headaches. Wagner acknowledges that "we have had some other changes here, but I don't want to go into them in any great detail"—which likely has something to do with the departure of managing partner, creative Gerry McLaughlin, a nearly 15-year veteran of CDM Princeton who now serves as chief creative officer at Havas-owned H4B Catapult. A great majority of the news, however, was bright.

While the agency toes the CDM Group line and declines to share a precise headcount figure, Wagner says that "as a percentage, we're up about 10%." Given what he reported in these pages last year—the firm was planning to fill 25 open positions, which represented around 20% of its total employee base—that means CDM Princeton is somewhere in the range of 140 staffers. Similarly, while Wagner says "we're still working with more or less the same list of clients" as it was a year ago, the firm deepened its relationship with Shire Pharmaceuticals, among others.

"There are relationships we've had for many years, and they've taken off as the companies [themselves] have taken off," he adds.



The Lipid Zone game (left) and Novo Nordisk's Beach to Boardwalk project (above)

And then there's the work itself, highlighted by a program for MedImmune's Synagis, a drug which treats RSV infection in premature babies. CDM Princeton created a digital-intensive program designed to help parents of afflicted newborns keep up with their dosing schedules.

"It's one of the first programs I've been involved with in this industry that has a component for every influencer: parents, payers, specialty pharmacies, physicians, you name it," Schofield enthuses. "If you're looking for something that exemplifies 'specialty care for specialty brands,' this is it." —Larry Dobrow

"Everybody here is deeply ingrained to look beyond a single discipline"

—Ashley Schofield