



AT THE HELM
Reid Connolly, CEO

PERFORMANCE
Revenues were up nearly 25% to \$36 million

HIGHLIGHTS
Picked up 17 new brands last year, with about half of them from new clients and about 75% for DTC or consumer-facing work

Full-time employees went up from 102 to 125, and the agency's office space doubled

Opened a new office in Chicago to capitalize on the big pharma, biotech, life science and consumer wellness companies and brands in the Midwest

Attracted a strong slate of new execs, including Jonathan Isaacs (from Ogilvy & Mather) and Richard Marshall (from H4B)

Named to *Crain's* Best Places to Work list in both New York and Philadelphia

CHALLENGES
Finding the right talent to move the agency forward

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

Evoke Health

Turning top talent and strong vision into increasing growth

Evoke Health snagged AOR wins on 17 new brands in 2013, a tally that helped drive revenue up nearly 25%, to \$36 million, at the Huntsworth Health agency.

CEO Reid Connolly says about half of those wins were from new clients and about 75% are for DTC or consumer-facing work. The rest are digital AOR assignments.

"It was our seventh year—lucky number seven," says Connolly. "Each year has been better than the last, and I feel lucky to be able to say that. Our vision really paid off in 2013. We had big DTC wins, which is where we've been focusing a lot of our effort and investments, and we brought in some great DTC talent."

Full-time employees were up to 125 from 102 in 2012, and office space was doubled. There are currently 135 total in New York and Philadelphia.

A new office opened in Chicago this spring, with David Levin, formerly of AbelsonTaylor, leading it.

"Historically, we haven't done a lot of business in the Midwest, but it's a hotbed of big pharma, biotech, life science and consumer wellness companies and brands," Connolly says. "We wanted to get great talent on the ground and win some of those clients."

The agency also signed up some great talent on the east coast, including Jonathan Isaacs, formerly of Ogilvy & Mather, who joined the executive team as CCO for the entire agency. Richard Marshall, formally

of H4B, was named MD of the New York office.

Another Ogilvy & Mather alum, JC Parker, was hired as executive creative director. Deb Silverman, formally of Digitas Health, joined as VP, strategic planning.

Connolly also invested in five VP client partners to support new business—Desmond Yuen, Elissa Sherman, Katherine Menges, Sandra Walczak and Laura Brill.

"Strategic planning and creative make the difference between a mediocre consumer agency and a stellar consumer agency, and we've brought in some of the best strategic-planning and creative talent in the industry," he says.

Senior level promotions included Mike Dennelly, who was named EVP of strategy and Tom Donnelly, who is now group managing director overseeing the Philadelphia and Chicago offices.

Among the biggest highlights of 2013 for Connolly was making *Crain's* Best Places to Work list in both New York and Philadelphia. "It was great to get that validation from employees," he says.

About half of Connolly's time is spent finding the right talent.

"We want the strongest consumer people we can find," he says. "There are many talented people who don't like being treated like cattle at holding companies, and they love coming to work for an agency like Evoke."

While the holding company model still draws its fair share of big pharma companies, Connolly says that the more innovative ones with strong pipelines are retaining agencies based foremost on their superior quality work and talent—not on whether or not they have big-holding-company affiliation.

"We've brought in some of the best strategic-planning and creative talent"

— Reid Connolly

He also sees fewer clients these days with an appetite to work with separate digital and consumer agencies, noting many were burned by general agencies that didn't really have the strong digital capabilities they claimed to have.

Connolly is focused on ramping things up in Chicago this year, and he expects continued growth across all offices.

"We've always been a high-growth agency, and there's no plan of changing that," he says. "We're doubling down on consumer health and wellness and growing that body of work." — *Tanya Lewis*



For contact details, rosters, wins, losses, billings and creative samples from over 150 firms see our Agency A-to-Z, pages 183 to 225