

Klick Health

Future-focused, “fiercely independent”
Toronto agency continues to surge



“We take a very deliberate and planned approach to how we grow our team”

—Leerom Segal

Klick Health’s 2013 growth happened on several fronts: another full floor in the independent agency’s Toronto office, a new outpost in San Francisco, and a surge in growth that has pushed company revenues well into the \$100-million range.

For those who think this list feels truncated, here are a few more items: 11 new digital accounts, five new branded AOR accounts—full, not just digital—and what CEO and co-founder Leerom Segal calls three “new global relationships” as well as 100 new hires to help the company perform all that new work. Further, while 2013 showed the company growing 37% over 2012, Segal says 2014 will be even better, with growth potentially hitting 50% over last year.

Segal couldn’t talk specifics about the new west coast location, but said “it’s the beginning of our footprint out there.” Managing director Jay Goldman, who describes himself online as a “technologist, designer, speaker, author, generally swell guy” is in charge of the new official US outpost. Segal notes that although the San Francisco location is the first declared space,

Klick has been in the US for a while, with about 30 people scattered across metro areas including New York, Philadelphia and Chicago.

The Toronto office has not been neglected during this growth spurt, and the company notes that it has carved out a bigger space for its innovative Klick Labs which is equipped with rapid software prototyping tools, fabrication technologies and a 3-D printer. Segal says the new space and tools mean employees can “really experiment more rapidly with everything in-house now,” and apply this knowledge to projects which include wearables and virtual-reality interfaces.

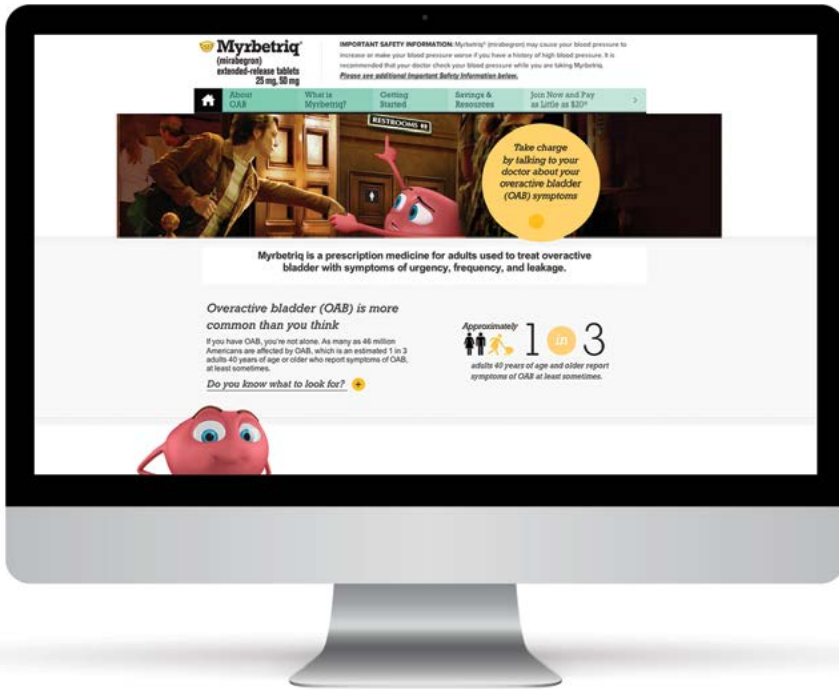
What he can say about new business in general is that it has been pouring into the agency at a pace the organization of around 350 employees has never seen. “For probably the first time in our company history we have more opportunity than we can respond to,” Segal says. The CEO notes that pitches flow both ways and that his company has had to turn business down—something he says is not an easy decision, but a critical one “when your team is extremely busy.”

Hiring a lot more people quickly would appear to be an easy solution for a bustling agency, but Segal said the company won’t risk taking on more bodies to take on more work “because that would completely erode our culture. We take a very deliberate and planned approach to how we grow our team and we look for the right balance.” Segal says Lori Grant, senior vice president brand development and digital strategy, is a key asset when it comes to keeping the agency on this path and “making sure we right-size the team and respond to the right opportunities.”

Clients are not the only ones who have to pass muster. Getting onto the Klick payroll requires an interview and probationary period executives consider a rite of passage that is very much sink or swim. Once in, the pressure does not let up. The CEO says that Klick team members are encouraged to pursue challenges and that if they manage to really hit their marks, can expect to be promoted within their first year and that they will continue to be promoted as they prove their mettle.

A commitment to growth does not mean acquisitions or mergers. Segal says his agency is “fiercely independent” and says one reason, aside from having the freedom to do what’s right for the client, is that mergers provide growth but not value for employees or clients. This careful approach to how Klick intends to expand is also seen in its decisions to cut loose operations that don’t meet its needs, such as the August 2013 decision to eliminate a dedicated sales staff in North America. It “was an experiment that brought no expertise or value to the customer other than managing the sales process,” he told *MM&M* at the time.

The firm fosters a sense of continuity and camaraderie through monthly department “Mojo meetings” where teams celebrate successes, talk about what departments can do to improve workflow, and/or listen to speakers. They also take this department mindset companywide in a monthly Show and Tell at which the company celebrates the best work done during that four-week period. Outliers, such as the US work-



Klick Health's digital work includes pieces for Amitiza (facing page) and Myrbetriq (at left). Below, *The Decoded Company*, a guidebook for helping companies use technology to bring out the best in people



AT THE HELM

Leerom Segal, CEO and co-founder

PERFORMANCE

In 2013, revenue growth of 37% over 2012, into the \$100-million range, with growth of 50% predicted for this year

Headcount reached 350 employees

HIGHLIGHTS

Acquired five new branded AOR accounts and 11 new digital accounts

Developed Sensei Labs, which leverages Klick's strategic knowledge to help companies make the launch process smoother and smarter

Expanded Klick Labs, which allows employees to "experiment more rapidly" with a wide range of technical capabilities

Opened an office in San Francisco and added a floor of space to its Toronto offices

CHALLENGES

Communicating all of the firm's capabilities to potential clients

Managing growth by "making sure we right-size the team and respond to the right opportunities"

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

force, are part of this process and the team, flying up to Toronto every two weeks or so to keep everyone engaged and interacting. "We do spend a lot of energy and thinking about our Mojo," Segal says because this is what makes the best ideas come to the surface.

These ideas go beyond strategy and positioning and flow into projects such as Sensei Labs which is expected to have launched by press time.

The goal of Sensei Labs it to export some of that knowledge and apply it to making product launches smarter and smoother. Segal says the concepts are scalable, and will be able to guide emerging firms to move from being a small R&D company to a larger one, while at the same time showing established companies how to move more swiftly.

The scope of talents that this encompasses is in flux, and a look at the firm's offerings can make it hard for a visitor to suss out just what Klick is — agency? Advisor? The answer has evolved to include a top-to-bottom conversion agency which can establish third-party workflows and corporate cultures in addition to creating tools that help with everything from clinical trial recruitment,

creating communications tools to court managed markets and training sales representatives and creating the visual aids they now rely on more than the traditional detail. "We're actually orchestrating a lot of people in the commercialization process and what that allows us to do is really connect the dots," Segal says.

Segal says that while this has been something Klick has been working towards for a while, it is only recently that clients have started approaching the agency and

asking "can you do it all? Can you be the turnkey provider" who can be the point of contact for campaigns spread across multiple agencies or pretty much anything else the client may need?

"We wanted that strategic role of helping our customers," he says and attributes the latest influx of comprehensive requests to the reputation his firm has cultivated, as well as the ping-pong employment nature of clients. "We work in an industry where people move around a lot and when they've had success with an agency and partner that they feel was really instrumental and a key part of them achieving their desired outcome, they go back to you."

—Deborah Weinstein

