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ALL STARS'09

Digital revolution



Digitas Health has grown by more than 40% in each of the last two years since being acquired by Publicis-owned Digitas, but the former Medical Broadcast Company doesn't view digital as merely an appendage to medical marketing. Instead, its growth has been built on helping clients place digital at the heart of their overall communications efforts.

"Digital has gone from being a channel to being an engine to provide and broaden clients' marketing capabilities," says Digitas Health CEO David Kramer. "The industry is in the midst of a revolution. The sales model is being revised radically because pharma companies have to talk to healthcare professionals in new and different ways. Consumers are no longer just responsive to general ad messages. They need companies participating with them as opposed to just selling them stuff."

"Healthcare professionals and consumers need to be brought together in new ways," he says. "That spells a need for cross-channel capability, and that's empowered by digital services."

In 2008, Digitas Health landed nine new clients and won 13 new brands from existing clients. Kramer explains that as the agency has "become a more potent purveyor of search and online services," it has also broadened and diversified services. Agency of record assignments increased from 7% of the shop's business in 2007 to 22% this year, with AOR status awarded on

PHOTO: SABINA LOUISE PIERCE

(Left to right): Michael du Toit, EVP/marketing; David Kramer, CEO; Larry Mickelberg, EVP/strategy and new business; and Alexandra von Plato, EVP, chief creative officer

AstraZeneca's Pulmicort Respules, Crestor consumer and all AstraZeneca media business, and Shire's Lialda consumer business.

The AstraZeneca media win was particularly sweet. "Our work with AstraZeneca is changing the digital media landscape, enabling us to develop first-mover programs," says SVP media Matt McNally. "For example, for the first time, WebMD changed the look of its homepage on behalf of AstraZeneca—that's a true partnership."

Tracy Wise, brand director for Pulmicort Respules, says that while Digitas started working only on interactive, it became evident the agency's strategic thinking could be capitalized on in a "channel-agnostic way."

"The leadership of Digitas Health has a good understanding of the landscape—not only where it is currently, but the vision of what it can become for good marketers," Wise adds.

"We've gone from an audience of



millions to millions of audiences," Kramer says. "It demands a change in the way you market."

Kramer gives employees a lot of credit for the agency's success. Headcount increased over 55% to about

465 total, with offices in Philadelphia, New York, Boston and London.

EVP strategy and new business Larry Mickelberg says Digitas Health is positioning itself as "the new lead agency," focused on helping brands "go from pushing out messages to providing informational tools" to professionals and consumers.

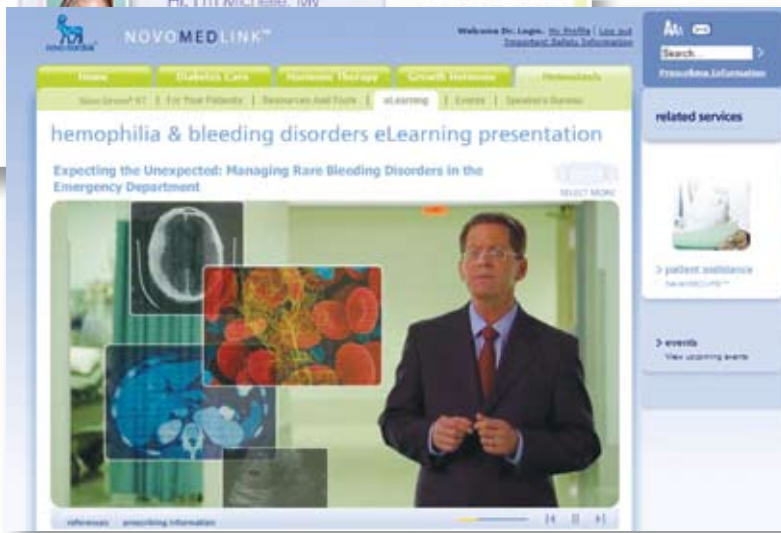
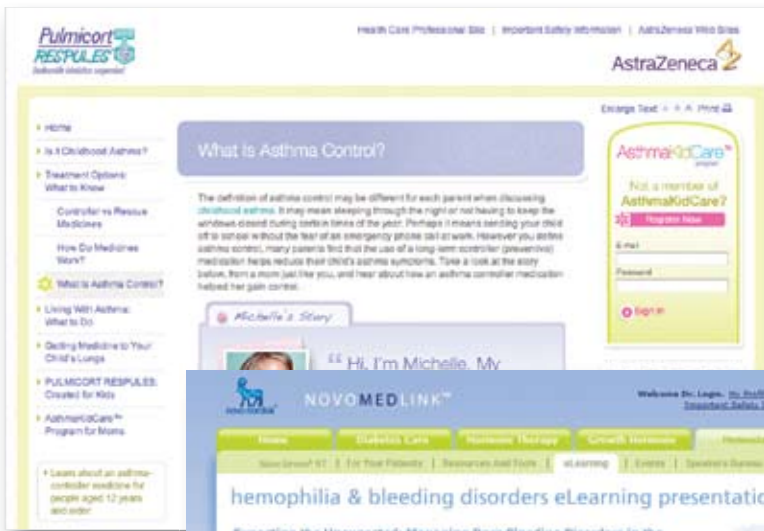
"The agency's role going forward is to create and distribute health information and tools that are easy to find, use, organize and share," Mickelberg explains. "It's a new paradigm."

And Alexandra von Plato, chief creative officer, notes that the goal is to help clients add value to their customers beyond just the benefit of their products. Increased collaboration between media and creative—both online and off—are key. "We're trying to understand customer needs," she says. "We work with media to find where they're going to get information and how they're searching so we can create content and distribute it in ways where it will be consumed. The work is more tailored to the context."

"We think about how to provide the most helpful information through whatever channel makes sense—largely from our digital core," Mickelberg explains. "Other agencies can act digital because it's easy to bolt on. We are digital. We think digitally. We're challenging clients to think differently and to collaborate with us."

—Tanya Lewis

Digitas Health was awarded AOR status for AstraZeneca's Pulmicort Respules (left), and did work for Novo Nordisk's NovoMedLink (below) and Novo Nordisk's Diabetes in America (above)





DIGITAS HEALTH

www.digitashealth.com