



AT THE HELM

Kathy Magnuson,
managing director

PERFORMANCE

Solid growth in response to rebranding from Nelson Communications

HIGHLIGHTS

Landed King's Altace, Glumetza and Thrombin-JMI; new work from top client Galderma, on the aesthetic/corrective franchise

CHALLENGES

Talent acquisition and retention; impact of genericization; looming uncertainty and political pressures in the run-up to the 2008 elections

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see *Agency A-to-Z*, beginning on page 143

"We're going to see pressure to use generics for cost-cutting and that's not necessarily in the public's best interest"

—Kathy Magnuson

Brand Pharm

Finding life after Nelson, and ready to ramp up its digital offerings



Eighteen months into a new brand identity, Brand Pharm—the agency formerly known as Nelson Communications—is humming along with a trio of assignments from King Pharmaceuticals, as well as new work from Galderma.

King awarded the company its Altace blood pressure drug, clogging agent Thrombin-JMI and Glumetza, the extended-release metformin hydrochloride King markets with Depomed. Galderma, a longtime Nelson client, awarded the firm its aesthetic and corrective franchise and a topical anesthetic. Nelson has handled MetroGel and Tri-Luma for a number of years.

The agency also continues to work on Remicade, which it launched in 1998, the Sanofi-Aventis allergy franchise (including the Allegra family and Nasocort) and work for Convotec.

Meanwhile, the new branding, backed by an ad campaign touting “an agency rooted in alternative thinking,” is taking root and attracting attention among pharmas, says managing director Kathy Magnuson. “We’ve had a good amount of growth and a great response to the new agency name and the campaign and how we’re positioning ourselves,” says Magnuson, who gained exclusive responsibility for the shop with Lorraine Pastore’s return to Lifebrands and now reports

directly to Publicis Healthcare North America advertising head Mike Trepicchio.

Nelson, which the Publicis pooh-bahs picked apart, spinning off the sales division (now Publicis Selling Solutions), was recognized for “knowing our clients’ marketplace as well as they do,” says Magnuson. But it was a somewhat dowdy old-line medical advertising shop, and its advertising and med ed businesses were languishing. Publicis elected to tear down the old façade and start afresh, and the all-elbows branding reflects that, though the agency strives to retain its old rep for market expertise while targeting challenged and challenger brands, says Magnuson.

“Our brand is ‘Stimulating alternative therapy,’” says Magnuson. “That can be looked at as either how we approach the business or the end product.” Target brands for Brand Pharm include those which need to be put on firmer positioning, mid-life cycle.

With a staff of 81, Magnuson expects to see “strategic” growth in the coming year. The shop is working on ramping up its digital capabilities, she says, while making use of network resources. “We need to execute in digital as well as we do our products in print,” she says.

Looking ahead, Magnuson sees the impact of continued genericization and the 2008 elections as two of the biggest challenges facing the industry. “We’re going to see ever-increasing pressures on the healthcare system to use generics for cost-cutting and that’s not necessarily in the public’s best interest,” she says. Like many of her colleagues in medical advertising, Magnuson also cited



Above: Professional ad for Sanofi-Aventis' Allegra
Top left: From a journal ad for King's Thrombin-JMI

talent acquisition and retention as a hurdle.

Brand Pharm is also instituting an internal campaign to make the shop more “green” through reductions in paper and other waste and efforts to cut electricity consumption. The agency has assigned a dedicated staffer to coordinate those efforts. “Wherever we can, we’re incorporating green processes as much as possible,” says Magnuson. “We think we should make a positive impact on our world on a daily basis, and we’re trying to live up to our corporate philosophy.”—*Matthew Arnold*