



AT THE HELM

Larry Star, chairman and CEO

PERFORMANCE

Topped the \$50 million mark in revenue

HIGHLIGHTS

Headcount jumped 20% from mid-2006 to 250+

Existing business grew, with new assignments coming in from Abbott Labs and Roche

Interest in digital prompted resources to be pushed toward 22 Clicks interactive division

CHALLENGES

Addressing “reputation erosion” in the industry

Lost Genentech’s Lucentis only months after launch

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

Harrison & Star Business Group

Employee initiative readies ranks for global, interactive business push



Much of the healthcare agency world spent 2006 attempting to answer the question of where they would find the staffers to fuel continued growth. Harrison and Star, on the other hand, spent it trying to answer the question “Why should people come work for us?”

To hear chairman and CEO Larry Star tell it, only through a little soul-searching can an agency distinguish itself from its peers. As a member of the Omnicom network, H&S is required to conduct a culture survey once every two years; believing that its results are telling, the agency decided instead to conduct it on an annual basis.

When the 2006 survey revealed some employee grumbling about the training and learning opportunities, the company created an initiative that has since been dubbed Harrison and Star University. “I think the surveys make everybody here feel that they’re empowered and appreciated,” Star says, adding that he removes himself from the process. “I only get aggregate results, so people feel free to speak their minds.”

While the firm didn’t fill every vacancy, H&S upped its headcount to slightly above 250, a 20% jump over mid-2006. Additionally, the firm cracked the \$50 million mark in revenue. New business successes came primarily from existing clients. Abbott Labs, for which H&S already handled Humira and Kaletra, tapped the firm

for the US and global Zemplar assignment and HIV therapy Aluvia. Roche, which had primarily used the agency for overseas work, handed it the hepatitis treatment Pegasys. Star describes the organic growth as “votes of confidence in the work we’ve been doing.”

H&S’s relationship with Genentech hit a speed bump or two. While the firm coordinated the global launch of cancer therapy Avastin with aplomb, it lost Lucentis only months after its launch. “To be perfectly honest, it’s hard to say what happened,” Star admits. “I think the brand has some challenges and [Genentech] was looking for a different approach. That’s all.”

Like many other firms, H&S saw intensified interest in digital from clients. This prompted the company to shift resources toward its 22 Clicks interactive division. “Paper and print aren’t going to go away, but clients are seeing the value in investing in digital technologies for their field forces,” Star says.

Along those lines, he adds that the whole everything-is-global revolution is finally in full swing. “A few years ago, clients were just paying lip service to it—they said ‘global,’ but they meant ‘North America and Europe.’ Now we’re really seeing it happen. It’s a tougher game to play.” Star points to India, China, Japan and Singapore, as markets that clients are keen to crack.

In the months ahead, look for H&S to pursue steady growth. “I’m not looking to open new offices,” Star says. “You can get more real estate, but can you duplicate the chemistry and culture? That’s not the best way for us to



**Above: Professional ad for Genentech’s Avastin
Top left: Visual aids for Roche Hep. C drug Pegasys**

get better at what we do.” Star hopes his firm will be among the ones that does something to address the “reputation erosion” faced by the industry.

“This industry used to have the highest regard within society. Now, it’s close to the bottom,” he notes. “I understand how physicians and the public at large may be frustrated. They perceive that decisions are being made based purely on financial reasoning, rather than what’s good for patients and society at large. It falls on people like us to address that at some point in the future.”—Larry Dobrow

“Paper and print aren’t going to go away, but clients are seeing the value in digital technologies”

—Larry Star