



AT THE HELM

Andrew Schirmer, managing director

PERFORMANCE

Healthy growth with “aggressive” rise in staffing levels

HIGHLIGHTS

US consumer for Pfizer’s Chantix and global consumer for GSK’s Cervarix; offices opening in Shanghai, London, Madrid and Frankfurt

CHALLENGES

Continued regulatory uncertainty and political pressures on DTC; Navigating the risk/benefit tightrope walk; recruiting in competition with tech, financial industries for young talent

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

“Every marketer is asking what they’re getting [for their money] but they don’t want 10 different answers”

—Andrew Schirmer

McCann HumanCare

Added Chantix and Cervarix to a long list of big-name consumer accounts



From a DTC spot promoting GlaxoSmithKline’s restless leg syndrome treatment Requip

McCann’s consumer healthcare shop rounded out 2006 with two big wins, landing the US consumer business for Pfizer’s smoking cessation drug Chantix and the global consumer assignments for GlaxoSmithKline’s HPV vaccine Cervarix.

The agency bested Saatchi & Saatchi and McGarry Bowen in a competitive pitch for the Pfizer drug, which was approved in May 2006. Consumer ads are in development, and McCann HumanCare managing director Andrew Schirmer promises that “it will be one of the most exciting DTC approaches in memory.” The Cervarix business came through a consolidation, with McCann companies picking up consumer, professional, CRM, young adult and multicultural assignments. Though denied fast-track approval status at FDA, the product seems poised to prompt a blow-out consumer campaign as it goes head-to-head with Merck’s Gardasil, should it make it to market. McCann HumanCare continues to handle consumer duties on Pfizer’s Viagra

and Aricept (a co-promote with Eisai) and GSK’s Avodart, Coreg and Requip, as well as Sepracor’s Lunesta, which remains anything but sleepy several years into the insomnia drug wars.

The awards, says Schirmer, necessitated “aggressive uptake in staffing.” HumanCare’s dedicated staff now numbers 35 account managers, 20 creatives and six to eight strategic planners, though the shop runs most essential functions, from finance to production, through the McCann Worldwide mothership and borrows from sibling groups as it needs to.

“At this point, we’re probably over six times as large as when we started four years ago,” says Schirmer, who boasts of the stability of his senior staff. HumanCare recently promoted Doug Welch and BJ Kaplan to group creative directors and tasked SVP/group account director Richard Donohue with heading the agency’s Novartis business.

The agency’s multicultural business, McCann HumanCare/Salud, launched a year ago, is growing nicely as medical clients add on mostly Hispanic-focused components to their business with the firm.

So, too, are McCann’s CRM business, MRM, which is currently engaged on half of the HumanCare accounts, and the network’s measurement and analytics group, which offers cross-discipline analytics.

“It’s very valuable, because every marketer is asking what they’re getting for what they’re spending, but they don’t want 10 different answers,” says Schirmer. The firm also engages clients through Interpublic Group’s emerging media lab, an experimental unit based in LA which seeks to keep IPG companies out in front of new technologies.

McCann HumanCare is also branching out globally. The agency opened its Tokyo office last year and is about to hang its shingle in Shanghai, London, Madrid and Frankfurt. By the end of the year, Schirmer expects to have outposts in France and Italy as well, and then HumanCare will turn its sites to the big Latin American markets.

Looking ahead, Schirmer sees no end to the regulatory uncertainty and high publicity environment surrounding DTC—at least until the end of the current presidential cycle in two years.

“Healthcare will continue to become a bigger public debate, and attention will be on the entire industry,” says Schirmer.

“The other macro trend is that it’s a kind of wrestling match between what’s appropriate and safe and without risk in DTC communications within a media environment in which we struggle to keep the attention of the American consumer,” he says.

And with the resurgence of the tech industry, hiring young talent will only get tougher. “Think 1999,” says Schirmer. “Our industry has to work hard to get the talent.” —*Matthew Arnold*