



AT THE HELM

Lisa Ebert, managing director

PERFORMANCE

Headcount grew by 20%

HIGHLIGHTS

Opened new offices in Madrid and Shanghai

New business: Playtex Products, Schering-Plough's Claritin, CIBA Vision and Auxilium

Continued work on Procter & Gamble Professional Health organization

CHALLENGES

Lost Macugen because they decided not to put money into global

Competing for face time with a physician

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

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—Lisa Ebert

Medicus NY

Bolstered by new business, the firm continues to extend its global reach



When Medicus managing director Lisa Ebert gives a year-in-review assessment of the agency she helms, she sounds more like a fire-and-brimstone college football coach than the head of a healthcare marketing agency. “We never turn down a challenge, so we spend a lot of our time in the trenches with our clients,” she says, her voice rising. “We deliver beyond our own expectations. We make stuff happen.”

Ebert has reason to crow. Medicus grew its headcount by 20% over the last year, to 135 or so professionals. With the addition of offices in Madrid and Shanghai, the firm now boasts 12 locations around the globe.

Medicus further solidified its status as one of the pre-eminent marketers of OTC brands to healthcare pros. In early 2006, the company snared both the US and global professional business for Procter & Gamble Professional Oral Health organization. Medicus continued its hot streak later in the year and in the first half of 2007 by adding Playtex Products (for work on its infant-care brands) and Schering-Plough's Claritin.

Other key wins included CIBA Vision (for an assignment involving the company's contact lens brands) and

Auxilium (for what Ebert describes as “pre-market initiatives”). The only client loss of note was Macugen, about which Ebert shrugs, “The client decided not to put any dollars behind global, which is what we were doing.”

Ebert attributes the new-business surge in part to Medicus' existing clients. “They're the ones who get the word-of-mouth going. You can advertise in the journals and say whatever you want about yourself, but what they think about your work is what really matters,” she says. This may be why, despite Ebert's caveat that “there's always the possibility of another office or two,” Medicus has no plans for aggressive growth ahead.

“I only want to grow at a pace that allows us to manage what we've already earned,” she stresses. “You see so many agencies grow so fast, and then they face challenges to support the business they already have.”

Medicus is also one of the few agencies not attempting to hire every digitally oriented art director, producer or designer out there. Owing to a close working relationship with Publicis Group sibling iMed Studios, Medicus has access to the expertise on a near in-house basis. “They have people here on-site all the time,” Ebert says. “I'm not sure how I see the benefit of starting a division of our own that has only three or four people. The way our relationship with iMed works, we can be doing multiple [digital] projects at once.”

Rather than bemoaning the difficulty of finding the best talent, Ebert seems most fazed by the challenge of securing face time with physicians. “There's more and more competition for that physician's time, and more challenges to come up with new approaches,” she says.

In the months ahead, look for the agency to continue to devise novel solutions for that problem, as well as



Above: Professional ad for OTC Claritin-D
Top left: Part of journal ad for P&G's Asacol

expansion of its efforts to communicate with physicians about OTC brands. Ebert also hopes to be involved in marketing efforts even earlier in the process; 30% of the firm's business over the last year stemmed from the pre-market development stage.

“We love to build brands from the ground up. It gives you a perspective and kind of a sense of ownership,” she says. “If you asked around, I don't think you'd find that anybody feels any differently.”

—Larry Dobrow