

# SUBSTANCE & STYLE

HC&B is following an ambition bigger than Texas, Carbon is winning bags of big-name business and The Navicor Group is collecting clients through its commitment to the cause. These three very different firms are *MM&M's* agencies to watch...

Several things can kickstart a successful agency. Sometimes it's about being in the right place. Sometimes it's about being young and vibrant. Sometimes it comes down to what you believe in. None of which means a thing if the talent's not there in the first place. Fortunately, these agencies have bags of it.

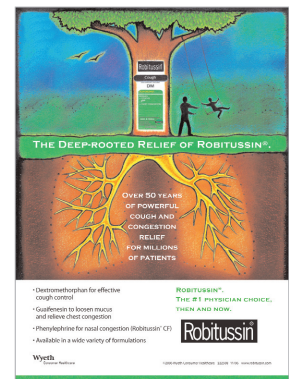
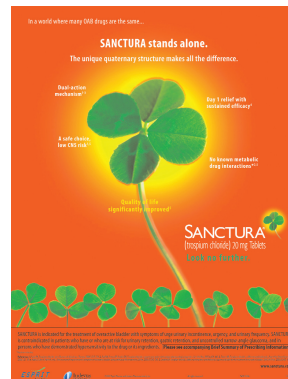
## HC&B Healthcare Communications

"Just a few days ago, I got a call from an oil and gas company out of Australia, who wanted us to do a branding campaign for them," says Kerry Hilton, president/CEO of HC&B Healthcare Communications. "I told them we don't do that anymore."

The oil connection is not as far-fetched as you might think: after all Hilton's agency is based in Texas (Austin, to be precise). But it's been a while since he has dabbled in other industries because, as the only shop of its kind in the underserved Lone Star state, HC&B has been cleaning up in healthcare with 20-25% growth every year. Revenue next year is projected to reach \$5 million.

"Texas is a huge state, obviously," says Hilton. "There's a lot of biotech going on, there's a lot of pharma going on. And the Austin connection is really big because it's a very tech town. [Plus] we're right in the middle of the US, so we have two clients in Chicago, we have clients on the West Coast, on the East Coast and in the Midwest."

Hilton and partners George Catlin, VP account planner, and Nancy Byrnes Beesley, VP of account service, opened the agency's doors (with



Two offerings from CommonHealth's agency Carbon: professional ads for Esprit/Indevus' Sanctura (left) and Robitussin (right)

somewhat unfortunate timing) on September 10, 2001, with a single client—San Antonio-based KCI, whose medical device, VAC, became a billion-dollar brand. "As they grew, we grew," says Hilton.

Since then, HC&B has combined its geographical advantage with some highly engaging creative to win a slew of clients, mainly devices and diagnostics companies (KCI, Exagen Diagnostics, The Scooter Store, DJ Ortho), healthcare networks (Texas Oncology, Tenet Health) and HMOs (Scott & White Health Plan). However, the agency just



Left: HC&B was responsible for this billboard ad for Cypress Fairbanks Medical Center Hospital in Houston, TX. Bottom: The Navicor Group created this professional ad for Pharmion's Vidaza (azacitidine for injection)

scored its first pharma client, Incisive Pharmaceuticals, based out of Houston, and followed it up with a neutraceutical account (Kemin Health in Des Moines, IA).

Next up, Hilton plans to add "some pretty robust interactive capabilities" and a PR group. And while he may own Texas when it comes to healthcare accounts, he plans to step up the national competition.

"You'll probably hear soon about some new hires that will help us manage some of the larger pieces of business that are coming off of the East Coast and the Midwest," he says. "We'll just continue to grow our brand as a national healthcare industry and not the regional player that we've been for a few years." —James Chase

## Carbon

Three-year-old CommonHealth agency Carbon enjoyed a year in which it won 10 new brand assignments, three new client companies and increased staff by one-third. "That's not bad for a so-called small and emerging company," says president Darlene Dobry.

Among the year's highlights Carbon partnered with Glaxo-SmithKline to assist in the launch of OTC weight-loss treatment Alli. "We have joined with GSK's multiple agency partners to work on the healthcare professional aspects of alli," Dobry said.

Other Carbon clients include Abbott's Advicor; Esprit Pharma, PharmaDerm and Wyeth Consumer Healthcare. "It's an eclectic mix of clients for us," says EVP, chief creative officer Scott Watson. "They give us quite a bit of flexibility and they trust us quite a bit to create campaigns that are not your typical pharma campaigns."

"It really is exciting because they treat us as very strong partners and they are the ones who want us to try and be innovative," Dobry adds. "They want to break the big pharma mold, stand out and really stretch their dollar. It's a great opportunity for us."

Carbon aims to keep up the momentum it has built up during the past year. "We want to continue to grow," Dobry says. "Scott and I have talked about focusing on getting some interesting new therapeutic areas that we are not

currently working in. I think that would be really stimulating to all of us." Doing so while maintaining growth will be Carbon's biggest challenge, Dobry says. "I do think it's attainable though, especially if we can put in some additional effort during the coming year. Let's face it, that's why we come to work every day. We want to help people and we want to make sure we are getting the word out about new therapies."

—Stephen McGuire

## The Navicor Group

A focus on cancer and autoimmune diseases lends employees at this 51-person boutique agency a strong sense of mission. President Garnett Dezember expresses it poignantly: "We ardently advocate better patient care, seeking to improve survival and enhance quality of life."

That's a shift from the "helping-our-clients-achieve-business-goals" speak one often hears among larger agencies. The commitment may explain why this Ohio firm is fast becoming known for its pursuit of higher expectations. "We had a very strong year," Dezember says in an e-mail to *MM&M*, "adding several significant new accounts and 20 new staff members."

The new business comes from key players in Navicor's main therapeutic categories. The roster includes Tarceva, the Genentech pill approved for advanced non-small-cell lung (second-line) and pancreatic cancer (first-line); Xeloda, the Roche oral chemotherapy for metastatic breast and colorectal cancer; and undisclosed pipeline products from Aspreva, Gilead and Protherics. Existing accounts also straddle both pre- and post-launch areas and include Pharmion (Vidaza, Innohep), MedImmune (Ethylol), Intarcia (pipeline products), Gilead (Hepsera) and Roche (pipeline product).

If Navicor's specialty product expertise has shined, Dezember has been among its brightest candles. He honed his oncology marketing skills during a 20-year stint with Bristol-Myers Squibb, for which he was involved in the US launch of Taxol.

—Marc Iskowitz

