

Sudler & Hennessey

After a management restructure and a solid home performance, S&H takes on the world



“It’s like we’re designing the car and the machinery to build it—almost at the same time in some cases”

—Rob Rogers

Sudler & Hennessey did a major overhaul last year of its creative department. This year’s focus has been on more than just creative, though, as the agency is planning on taking over the world—one country at a time.

“Some of the most interesting things that have happened in the last 12 months have been outside of the US,” says chief creative officer Rob Rogers. “We like to think of ourselves as a well-run global business.”

That “well-run global business” recently opened up its first office in Mexico, the first step in expanding its foothold in Latin America.

“When we looked at our global presence, clearly we didn’t have the representation there that we thought we should,” says S&H president Louisa Holland. The agency continued to showcase its global presence by opening up more offices across Europe, including Geneva, Athens, Vienna, Istanbul, Prague, Bucharest and Budapest.

“Sudler has had the reputation for being a great creative shop for many years, but I think that a lot of the time we take it for granted,” says Rogers. To make sure

Sudler & Hennessey didn’t lose sight of its creative and global goals, the agency held Movida, their first global creative directors meeting in a while. “It was just very exciting to have 20-something creative guys from all around the world meet and really talk about the business of creativity, and what it meant for Sudler & Hennessey,” says Rogers.

It was during this meeting that the creative teams got a chance to see some of the major global differences in the work being produced.

“To see this amazingly diverse group put a personal perspective on the way they deliver creativity was just tremendous,” he says. “I think it added a great deal of vigor to our creative offering globally, and many, many people have gone on to create better work and reach out to each other; so that we’re thinking creatively as a network in a way that we perhaps haven’t done before.”

This new way of looking at creative is imperative since the pace of work at S&H has increased tremendously.

“In addition to the pace, add the fact that the nature of the work we’re doing is so much broader and deeper than it was two or three or four years ago,” says Holland. She says it isn’t just the pace of work that’s changing but the type of work S&H is doing as well.

“When you ask what sort of work are we doing? Well, the answer is just ‘enormous,’” she says. “We’ve been working with some clients to help them evolve the kind of research they do when their product is 17 years post-launch and they’re trying to figure out how to get the last few years of life out of it. We’ve developed new planning tools to help clients understand how to think beyond individual silos of communication channels.” Holland says some of the work the agency is doing is helping to change the tools S&H and their clients use.

“It’s like we’re designing the car and we’re designing the machinery to build the car—almost at the same time in some cases,” explains Rogers.

With all of the changes going on at the agency and in the industry, Sudler & Hennessey has learned to expect the unexpected.

“A few of the things that we thought were going to happen didn’t happen, for a whole number of reasons,” says Rogers. “And usually, it had nothing much to do with the agency and was very much out of our control. It’s a sense that the unexpected has become more commonplace as far as we have to learn to be better and expect that things aren’t necessarily going to happen the way you plan them to.”

One of the challenges anticipated for the coming year at the agency have to do with the trend of new medicines not making it to market because of safety concerns.

“We’ve probably had more than our fair share of products not making it past the FDA. That’s always difficult to deal with—when you’re winning a lot of those early assignments and several brands don’t make it,”



Above: Journal ad for Galderma's Clobex
Far left: Part of a corporate ad for Galderma

says Holland. "I think another challenge has been, as we grow, to ensure that our clients have a complete understanding of everything we do."

There have been some typically detrimental changes in the industry's landscape that have actually benefited the agency as a whole. "We've never done a lot of traditional DTC promotion," says Holland. "But we do quite a bit of direct-to-patient communication. So, the backlash against DTC actually has supported the direction we took which was supporting well-developed communications to patients and physicians, with the goal of improving the dialogue between the two. So while that's a big change in the landscape, it's actually been very supportive of us, and the work that we're doing."

There have been changes within the agency, both to reflect the challenges found within the industry and in anticipation of things to come. The biggest personnel change for the past year was the restructuring that resulted in the appointment of several managing partners in April—for a total of eight partners. The restructuring was in response to some of the challenges the agency has been facing Holland says.

"More business, bigger business, more clients, things moving more quickly and needing to keep a multi-disciplinary approach," she says. "We wanted to bring together these different disciplines and have a shared responsibility for clients."

The new managing partners are Ruben Gutierrez, managing director of IntraMed Educational Group; Donna Michalizysen, managing director of Precept

Medical Communications; Robert Rullo, managing director of IntraMed's West Coast office; Wayne Traub managing director of Sentrix Global Communications; Larry Lannino, formerly client service director; Daria Blackwell, director of multicultural communications; Anthony Manson, formerly managing director of interactive and patient marketing disciplines; and Paul Giroux, who heads up the agency's strategic planning department.

In addition, Bob Paglia joined the agency in the role of senior strategic planner, heading up the managed markets capability. There was a major change outside the US as well. Brian Kelly's role was changed to reflect the centralizing of the European Union strategically.

S&H was optimistic last year about a new position at the agency: brand catalyst. Kathy Jenkins, a 20-year veteran in the industry, stepped into the role in January 2006 (she recently left the agency). There were some challenges associated with the role. "I think it was a great idea although it did present a bit of a challenge to have someone who was not full-time on a team sometimes coming in and critiquing work," Holland admits. She says S&H will probably move someone else into that position but the function of the role will change.

A new person in that revised role would most likely benefit the agency as they have added brand assign-



"Welcome Back Tiger" campaign for Pfizer's Viagra in Australia

ments in the past year from Allergan, AstraZeneca, Baxter Cellular Therapies, Bayer, Cubist, Forest Laboratories, Galderma, Monogram, Ortho-McNeil, Pfizer, Procter & Gamble, Schering AG, Schwarz Pharma and TAP Pharmaceutical. "If you look at our global dance card, there are only a few companies we don't touch," says Rogers. "However not all S&H clients are the same in every country, and neither are the services."

"WPP Group head Sir Martin Sorrell said recently, 'Business is getting messier,' and if the last century was all about being neat and tidy and fitting in a box, then this century is all about being all messy and sort of chaotic," explains Rogers. —Tracy Peterson



AT THE HELM
 Louisa Holland,
 president

HIGHLIGHTS

Restructured agency to include eight managing partners

Bob Paglia joined as senior strategic planner

Opening up S&H's first shop in Mexico and 10 other office throughout Europe

Brand assignments added this year from Allergan, AstraZeneca, Baxter Cellular Therapies, Bayer, Cubist, Forest Labs, Galderma, Monogram, Ortho-McNeil, Pfizer, Procter & Gamble, Schering AG, Schwarz Pharma and TAP Pharmaceutical

Holding Movida, a global creative directors meeting

CHALLENGES

Keeping up with the intense pace of work and informing clients of the agency's capabilities

Finding someone to fill the revised brand catalyst role

Dealing with the loss of brands that don't get FDA approval

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