

Medicus Life Brands

Combined powerhouse emerges with new account wins and organic growth

*September Is
Prostate Health
Awareness Month*



“The growing popularity of social networking is a testament to the need to connect with others”

—Lisa Ebert

Medicus joined forces with LifeBrands about a year ago. The expectations were that the combined powerhouse would provide clients with some very significant benefits. Well, a year later business is looking pretty good. The resulting entity—Medicus Life Brands has emerged with strength across the full spectrum of expertise from OTC brands to Rx for primary care, to high-science specialty markets. According to managing director Lisa Ebert, Medicus Life Brands is doing very well and expecting significant growth due to new account wins and organic growth with existing clients. A significant source of that growth, says Ebert, will come from digital/interactive.

Ebert noted that the company finished 2008 and started 2009 on a high note in new business with 4 out of five wins, including two new brands among existing clients (Schering-Plough) as well as wins that represent significant new client relationships for the agency, including Gilead and Novartis.

Medicus Life Brands—part of a global network of agencies within the Publicis Healthcare Communications Group—specializes in building healthcare

brands through multi-channel, insight-driven communication targeted to healthcare professionals, their patients and caregivers. The agency delivers expertise throughout the lifecycle of a brand—from prelaunch market development (one-third of its business) through mature brand planning. Seventy percent of its business is professional Rx. The remaining 30% is promoting OTC brands to healthcare professionals.

On one end of the spectrum, Medicus Life Brands manages major OTC brands such as Prilosec OTC, Claritin, Enfamil, Crest and Oral B. On the other end, they manage specialty brands in a broad range of therapeutic categories including oncology, cardiology, respiratory, CNS and gastrointestinal.

According to Ebert, the agency is currently working on several key launches for companies such as Sanofi-Aventis, Procter & Gamble, GTx, LungRx and Auxilium. Their client base ranges from biotech, small specialty firms, to Big Pharma.

Ebert says that new business wins continue to be strong. Among new clients/products: Viread from Gilead, for the treatment of hepatitis B; Novartis for corporate branding; Schering-Plough, an existing client, for several products in prelaunch phase in the cardiovascular category; and UCB in the CNS category. These new accounts include strategic and creative responsibility for several product launches as well as corporate branding.

In addition, the company is seeing significant organic growth within brands that they currently manage, much of it due to new digital initiatives.

According to Ebert, among the challenges facing the firm are meeting the increasing client need for cost containment without compromising its deliverables or ability to help clients meet business goals.

Ebert says that there are several trends in medical advertising that the industry is tracking including brand loyalty through online community-building. “The popularity of social networking is a testament to the human need to connect with others with shared interests,” says Ebert. While activity in online communities has surged in recent years, Ebert asserts that this area represents a relatively untapped opportunity for healthcare brands to build a loyal customer base not only with patients, but healthcare professionals as well. “While the pharmaceutical industry is already helping to build communities among patients suffering from a common condition, we will see an increased focus on building communities where professionals will engage with peers in the online setting to enhance patient care,” says Ebert.

More OTC choices will elevate the need for professional influencer strategies, according to Ebert. “As patients continue to have more and more choices in the OTC healthcare category, trusted intermediaries will play a greater role in the decision-making process than ever before.” Ebert adds that the OTC brands that successfully differentiate themselves among healthcare professionals will have the competitive advantage.

Medicus Life Brands executives contend that there is an intensified need for cohesive dialogue across



AT THE HELM

Lisa Ebert, managing director

PERFORMANCE

Expecting significant growth in 2009

HIGHLIGHTS

Experienced a high note in new business with 45 wins including two new brand accounts among existing clients such as Schering-Plough

Formed new client relationships with Gilead and Novartis

Grew organically with existing brands, most of it in digital initiatives

Building a loyal customer base with patients and healthcare professionals through social networking

Consolidated all multimedia programming, production and support services into one creative services department

CHALLENGE

Meeting the continually increasing client need for cost containment without compromising its deliverables

Anticipating patent expirations on the horizon

For contact details, service offerings and client roster, see Agency A-to-Z, beginning on page 175

channels and customers. They assert that advances in technology will continue to bring us more options related to where, when, how and to whom we can communicate. “We are no longer limited by one-way communication channels where we could only ‘push’ information,” says Rich Norman, EVP, chief strategic officer. “We now have huge opportunity to build relationships over time with our customers as we ‘listen’ to their preferences and build in opportunity for two-way ‘dialogue’ through multi-channel communication strategies.”

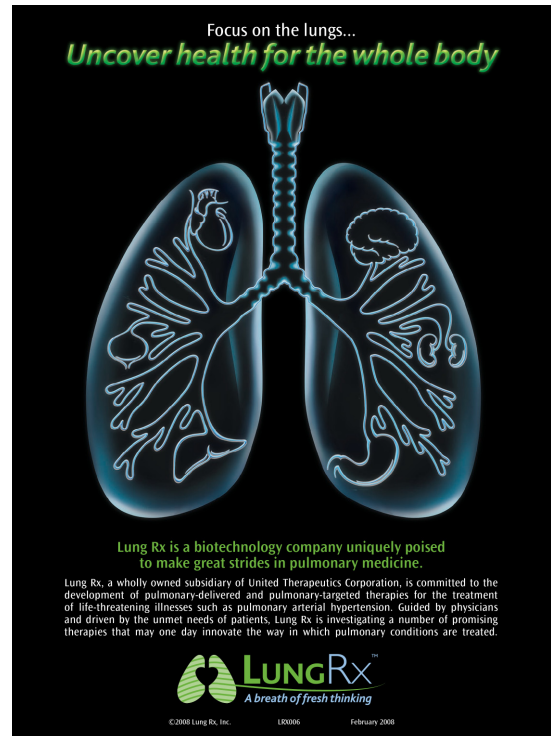
Norman adds that while vast options bring significant advantages in tailoring our message strategy, they also bring a risk of message fragmentation. “Therefore we will see a greater demand for seamless integration across all agency disciplines with a focus on achieving brand synergy and efficiency. We are seeing a significant shift in media spend from print to interactive—and ultimately, significant growth in our digital business.”

In the area of personnel changes and restructuring, with the union of Medicus and LifeBrands in 2008 all multimedia programming, production and support services were consolidated into one creative services department. Best practices from both agencies were integrated to enhance process and workflow.

Medicus Life Brands has been able to tap the wealth of talent that is currently available in the marketplace. According to EVP and chief creative officer, Nick Manganiello, the company has been able to successfully build its business with distinguished talent. “A key characteristic is someone who is not only distinguished in their role but is driven to learn more and to share knowledge,” he says.



Above: A journal ad for Oral-B Pulsonic brush; Left: Part of a disease awareness ad for prostate health



Above: A corporate ad for Lung Rx, a subsidiary of United Therapeutics, for pulmonary-targeted therapies

Norman says that the company’s philosophy of client/partnerships attracts proactive thinkers and people who are driven to make a difference.

Among the biggest challenges ahead for Medicus Life Brands, as well as the industry as a whole, are a significant level of patent expirations on the horizon, continued price pressure/cuts in promo spending, meager pipelines, more stringent regulations around promotion and the evolving balance among channels, voices and influencers of healthcare marketing.

Looking forward, Ebert says that the company “is laser-focused” on staying on top of the continuous advances in media technology. “We have been very successful distinguishing ourselves by knowing when and how to apply new media in a relevant way based on our in-depth knowledge of our brands, content expertise and intimacy with our audience. We expect to see continued significant growth in the agency’s digital and interactive business.”

Ebert notes that the company remains focused on its goals. “The essence of the commitment is to maximize brand potential while never losing sight of the fact we are in the customer service business. The ‘enviable agency experience’ starts with bringing together the right team to provide the right expertise to deliver strategic and creative excellence for each brand’s unique needs,” say Ebert. Medicus Life Brands defines service by embodying a collaborative spirit, a “get it done” attitude and an untiring attention to detail. “This commitment makes a difference to our clients, and will continue to be the cornerstone of our impressive record of enduring partnerships and continued growth.” —Anthony Vecchione