



AT THE HELM

Nick Calandrillo, chief creative officer; Dwayne Hann, president; and Chuck DeMarco EVP, creative director

PERFORMANCE

Up 20% at end of 2008

HIGHLIGHTS

Expanded its relationship with Graceway Pharma

Added more work from existing client Myriad

New work came in from Akrimax and Rouses Point

CHALLENGE

Finding work to replace “dormant” accounts

Finding talent with a particular skill set

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

Metaphor

Putting more effort into digital pays off as shop builds on existing business



Optimism may be in short supply among medical marketers and ad firms nowadays, but Metaphor president Dwayne Hann is choosing to keep things in perspective. “Obviously things are difficult out there, but you have to look at it from the point of view of ‘it could always be worse,’” he says. While Hann cops to “concern,” he suggests that the best way to deal with it is by focusing on the factors that are within one’s control.

“We’re in a good position. We were able to expand our client base some and we’ve kept all our major clients. A couple of them have projects coming up later this year and 2010. That’s all you can ask for in this economy.” Metaphor has grown steadily over the last few years. In terms of revenue, the firm was up 20% in 2008 (“and we were more profitable than before,” Hann chirps). The company anticipates being “at least even” by the end of 2009, but likely up 10 to 15%.

What pleases Hann is that Metaphor has posted those gains in a conservative environment, one in which clients have been loathe to greenlight the brassier, more involved campaigns that were a mainstay only a few years ago. “They’ve definitely been more analytical

regarding the tactics they want and where they’ll spend their money,” he explains. “They’re more particular about where the dollars go and where the returns come from. You always see that in times like this.”

As a result of its work with primarily smaller companies and specialty products within bigger ones, Metaphor hasn’t been hit particularly hard by the spending cutbacks. Over the last 12 months, the firm has expanded its five-year relationship with Graceway Pharmaceuticals and in particular the dermatology drug Aldara. Metaphor similarly grew its relationship with Myriad Genetics on the hereditary-cancer front and added assignments from PhotoMedex.

New clients included a Becton, Dickinson and Company unit that boasts a handful of products in the rapid-diagnostics division, as well as Rouses Point Pharmaceuticals and Akrimax Pharmaceuticals. “It was a good year in that we got in the door at a few places where we’ve been trying to get in the door,” says Hann. Metaphor didn’t lose any clients, though a relationship with Johnson & Johnson subsidiary DePuy Mitek on osteoarthritis of the knee drug Orthovisc “went dormant,” in Hann’s words. The firm maintained its size, staying at 24 full-timers with freelance support.

Metaphor’s work is tilted in a digital direction. The thinking is that clients might be able to get greater mileage out of electronic programs and tactics now that they’ve cut back so far on the size of their sales fleet. Metaphor has produced what Hann calls “lots of patient-type videos” and bolstered corporate and product sites alike. “Clients are going from ‘well, we’re here’ to ‘well, let’s start drawing people to our site and having items of interest and involvement.’”



Above: “Raise the Red Flag” campaign for hereditary cancer; Left: Part of a campaign for Atopiclair

When it comes to identifying a piece of work of which he’s particularly proud, however, Hann points to “Raise the Red Flag.” Designed to raise awareness about types of cancer that are hereditary, “Red Flag” has reached out to everyone from physicians and patients to genetic counselors and caretakers. “The reps have been able to gain entrance into places they didn’t have before,” he says. “But mostly people are learning that they need to get tested and treated if they’re at risk, and that’s the part that matters.”

—Larry Dobrow

“[Clients] are more particular about where the dollars go and where the returns come from”

—Dwayne Hann