



FEATURES

Agency 100 2019: HealthWork

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Mickey Brown | July 8, 2019 | 3:27 PM

With influencer marketing often rubbing audiences the wrong way, you would think healthcare marketers might be hesitant to use celebrities and other notable figures to help promote products that are already under considerable regulatory scrutiny. But at the CDM/BBDO joint venture HealthWork, influencer marketing is one of the cornerstones of the company's overall approach.

Owing to its Omnicom parentage, HealthWork is able to draw on the collective might of its sibling agencies and harness their full reservoir of resources.

“Through CDM, we have a deep understanding of key opinion leaders and digital opinion leaders. From BBDO, we know how to create opportunities with other influencers or celebrities,” explains HealthWork associate partner, managing director Denise Henry. “We’ve been able to fuse those two together and come up with our point of view on how to create and leverage influencers across the market.”

Henry says that, by bringing together the creative team at BBDO and the medical and scientific affairs group at CDM, HealthWork can identify and prioritize consumer groups and digital opinion leaders who are most closely aligned with a brand’s identity. From that information, the agency creates a “quotient” that it then brings to clients to help them shape their communications strategies.

While HealthWork’s staff count (45) and revenue (an MM&M-estimated \$30 million) were flat in 2018, the agency brought in four substantial pieces of new business: one from Genentech (in virology) and three from Pfizer (in vaccines and rare disease). Both clients have worked with HealthWork for years, and CDM CEO Chris Palmer points to the additions as signs that the organic growth will continue.

“Our belief is to grow within clients as much as we grow the overall number of clients,” he says.



HealthWork grew its geographic footprint as well in 2018, opening offices in Paris, Barcelona, London and São Paulo. Henry adds the agency is eyeing Asia (and specifically Tokyo) for its next outpost.

Given its work with Amgen on blockbuster post-chemotherapy drug Neulasta, HealthWork hopes to push even further into oncology in the months and years ahead. “Like anybody else who’s in this space, you’ve got to be in oncology if you’re going to be part of the current conversation in healthcare,” Palmer says.

As for the broader challenges that lie ahead for the industry, Palmer stresses that agencies such as HealthWork cannot consider themselves just healthcare marketers. More than ever before, they need to have a more holistic view of themselves and their position in the marketplace.

“We have to understand that a consumer who has some sort of best-in-class experience — let’s say, in retail — is

going to expect that from a healthcare brand,” he explains. “We can’t pretend that we’re different anymore. If we really want to understand our customers, we have to start behaving like brands in ways that they expect.”

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