

ON THE

▶ CLIENT'S SIDE

BY TAREN GROM

PharmaVOICE is pleased to publish this special feature showcasing the agency executives who are charged with fostering the all-important workings of the client/agency relationship. **A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP CAN LEAD TO BRAND SUCCESS.** Conversely, dysfunction among team members can prevent a brand from achieving its best results in the market.

More than 25 advertising executives reveal their client service secrets: what it takes to keep clients happy; how this important discipline is changing with the times; and who the "client" is.

▶ **NANCY BEESLEY**

HC&B Healthcare Communications

The demand to create original conceptual thinking is very high, yet most clients don't want to wait very long for it. It's not a criticism of clients, per se, but rather an expectation set by quicker and quicker delivery by agencies that want to keep clients satisfied in an era of real-time everything.

A SHIFTING LANDSCAPE

We asked our agency executives to evaluate what they believe have been the biggest shifts in client service in the past five years. We also asked them to project what they believe the client service role will encompass in the next five years.

▶ **HOW DO YOU MANAGE CLIENT CHALLENGES?**

DUNN. VOX MEDICA. Time is, and always has been, the enemy. The rise of information technology and the expansion of readily available information on the Internet were meant to help solve some of our time woes. And while we have been able to streamline certain activities, our clients are faced with increasing demands that far outstrip the savings afforded by technology. They spend their days running between meetings and managing dozens of projects spread among various agencies or other partners. They no longer have the time to devote to managing any given project or to ensure that all of the moving parts fit together neatly without overlap. These time constraints are similarly affecting client services. Client service historically has existed in the space between the agency and the client: when with our clients, we are charged with representing the views of the agency; when back at the agency, we are charged with representing the views of our clients. As our clients become less available in the face of ever-compressing timelines, client service personnel find themselves at risk of upsetting the delicate balance of their position and assuming the client perspective too strongly. This shift facilitates the completion of projects, but can inhibit the creativity on which we pride ourselves. Over the past five years, we have seen client service personnel and agencies struggle to find their way to a workable position in this changing dynamic. Our work will always be about negotiating the best possible solution. We believe in the next five years client service personnel will need to redefine their positions and focus, and address issues



BRIAN DOHERTY

Noesis

Creating the strongest sense of shared ownership across the client/agency team generally comes after candid debate, but when that debate is grounded in a common understanding of brand vision and construct it will invariably prove healthy for the client/agency relationship and should lead to the strongest communication.

vices role will expand to encompass an even greater knowledge of all media channels, including digital, as clients look to ensure their marketing strategy is cohesive across all message touchpoints.

SCHULTZ. MENTUS. There has been an increased role in consultative services surrounding regulatory issues, launch strategies, and brand management. Clients depend on senior-level talent to play a very hands-on role. I believe this is the case because the number of companies commercializing products is increasing and many companies have not yet brought that talent in-house. Over the next five years, I see a continued need for higher levels of consultative services.

MELLAS. WISHBONE. The biggest shift over the past five years has been the growing pressure to deliver the same superior service at lower cost. Even with clients who are pleased with an agency's work, the emphasis is on how much more can they get for less. Cost pressures will continue, but clients will hit the wall on how much further they can squeeze costs without impacting the quality of the product or thinking.

RALSTON. MEDERGY. The biggest shift has been to provide a more sophisticated service that delivers greater value, however a client may choose to define that, at essentially the same purchase price as five years ago. From the agency side this means the role has become broader and more demanding, and, more than

THERE IS GROWING PRESSURE TO DELIVER THE SAME SUPERIOR SERVICE AT LOWER COSTS; THIS IS A TREND THAT WILL CONTINUE.
RENEE MELLAS

MATT BROWN

GSW Worldwide

Client service teams that are communication channel agnostic can better serve their clients by not only recommending the most effective communication tools for their brands, but by providing guidance on how all of their communications will work together.

as a neutral third party that considers the perspectives of the client and the agency. We must become "solutions managers," not "client services." This next shift may be the best thing we can do to serve our clients effectively.

BEESLEY. HC&B HEALTHCARE. The biggest shift is the marked change in the amount of time given to complete any project. What used to be expected in two to three weeks now is expected in two to three days. The advent of technology has made those of us in advertising much more efficient in getting deliverables to clients faster and faster. The challenge that we now face is the expectation that the creative process is somehow shortened as well. Client services is now having to negotiate enough time from the onset of a project while defining for the clients what they can expect. I think this expectation, and the role of the client ser-

vices professional, will continue to shift into quicker turnarounds and faster results.

LANNINO. SUDLER & HENNESSEY. Even as little as five years ago, the speed and flow of information changed the business dramatically. Constant communication and availability are expected 24/7. In many cases, the speed of communication and required response times have left agencies with little room to think. Unfortunately, this affects the thinking that goes into the strategic planning and creative execution that make an agency unique. Additionally, the role of the patient as a key decision maker and even influencer has evolved over the last several years. Developing patient-oriented programs to meet their needs, address their concerns, and foster better dialogue with physicians will be key to the ongoing success of patient communications.

MAGNUSON. BRAND PHARM. There has been a shift to more of a project mentality while still expecting account services to provide strategic direction, market knowledge, etc. Increasingly, clients are applying account service time against the creative projects for budgetary purposes while reducing "retainer" fees. In the future, the client ser-

ever, client service is not only the responsibility of dedicated client service staff but the entire agency team.

PERLOTTO. ADAIR-GREENE.

The biggest evolution has been in how clients define “client service” from their agencies. In recent years, many of the bigger pharma companies have scaled back on services procured from agencies; they tend to just look for big strategic ideas and big creative ideas, while assuming more and more of the execution and implementation internally. On the other hand, small to mid-size companies that don’t have the resources to create a large internal infrastructure expect client service to extend across strategic thinking, creative, and implementation, which had been the more traditional agency/client relationship. What is interesting about the move by big pharma organizations is that carrying that infrastructure internally seems to be more in keeping with the blockbuster model than that of a lean, agile company model that has been proposed for the future. Going forward, the traditional agency-client service model based on a more complete offering of services, while carrying the staffing burden for the client, will likely experience growth across clients of all sizes.

DRUMMY. HEARTBEAT DIGITAL. By far the biggest shift has been clients’ demand for channel-neutral integration, meaning clients now want their partners to develop solutions that can be applied across the entire spectrum of marketing channels. This is a huge change in mindset for pharma brand managers, who previously were satisfied to have “TV-think” dominate the entire media strategy. We used to see creative from TV campaigns crow-barred into every other channel, simply (and foolishly) in the name of brand consistency. Now, with more and more marketers interested in reaching both patients and professionals through a variety of media — Internet, mobile, point-of-care, as well as TV and print — they realize the importance of conceiving an overall brand strategy that can be applied appropriately from channel to channel. That might sound obvious, but the fact is that until the last two years or so, people paid lip service to integration but didn’t actually do the hard work required to make sure it happened. Specifically, clients are demanding that agencies work together to develop an inte-



KEN BEGASSE JR.

Concentric Pharma Advertising

My suggestion to all clients is to strive to build an internal and external team aligned under a common team and brand vision. Instrumental to achieving this is proper strategic planning, frequent strategy sessions, and a clear development process with well-defined roles and responsibilities that empower agencies and marketers to do what’s best for the brand and the partnership.

grated plan, rather than holding the quarterly “come to Jesus” integration meeting, after which the traditional agency goes back and does whatever it intended to do in the first place. So the shift in client services requires thinking about a client’s business holistically, rather than as a series of disconnected pieces. I believe this will become the prevailing approach over the next few years, especially once marketing budgets shift further toward nontraditional media.

HEMPSTEAD. STRATEGEM. The client services role has broadened in the last five years to encompass a need for specialized knowledge and experience in both offline and online media. Today, no fully integrated campaign achieves maximum results without some type of interactive component. Healthcare marketers are just starting to embrace Web 2.0 initiatives and realize the opportunities this provides to develop conversations with customers and prospects, rather than simply talking at them, and to advance these conversations in a meaningful way.

ASSELIN. JUICE PHARMA. There has been a shift toward developing multichannel marketing solutions to reach customers where and when



BILL MCELLEN

Torre Lazur McCann

A good agency should take on a client’s brand challenges as its own. And a good client should treat its agency as part of its own team.

they’re seeking information about healthcare decisions. More and more patients and physicians are going online to learn about healthcare needs and to get information that can affect their healthcare choices and decisions. Patients are well-informed and play an influential role in the decision-making process regarding their health. This patient-centric environment has motivated clients to ensure their marketing approaches reach this critical audience while complementing these efforts with programs for healthcare professionals, allowing for a holistic marketing approach. As patients and healthcare professionals continue to become more savvy there will be increased focus on customizing communications based on their needs.

CARTER. ABELSONTAYLOR. There is a movement toward mimicking the consumer side of our business and adding the account planning function in a more wholesale fashion. In terms of the professional side of our business, this is driven by the recognition that doctors are people too. With any type of purchasing or prescribing decision, attitudes and emotions, as well as rational arguments, drive acceptance and influence decisions. This is as true for consumers as it is for physicians. So the more we understand our customers and what drives

CLIENTS WANT CHANNEL-
NEUTRAL INTEGRATION
— SOLUTIONS THAT CAN
BE APPLIED ACROSS THE
SPECTRUM OF
MARKETING CHANNELS.

BILL DRUMMY

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voxmedica

Health-Care Communications

▶ **MARK PERLOTTO**

Adair-Greene McCann

Marketers are being challenged by their management to demonstrate value in the dollars they invest in their brands. But often measuring those returns is an imperfect science at best. To that end, clients and agencies need better ways of measuring and demonstrating ROI.

them, both rationally and emotionally, the more we can develop communications that hit their sweet spot. This is especially critical in today's market, where more me-too drugs are making it difficult for pharma companies to differentiate these brands from similar products. It's also a key reason that these companies have been hiring more people with consumer marketing backgrounds and demanding greater customer/consumer insight.

DOHERTY. NOESIS. Probably the greatest impact to client relations has been the slow erosion of genuine contact because of the convenience of e-mail. While it has become an invaluable tool for instant messaging and for mass distribution, e-mail by its very design is counter-productive to building relationships with clients. Despite the many technological advances in recent years, there still has not been an effective substitute created for live interaction. It's the live interaction that helps to nurture the relationship, imparts the correct tone and ultimately makes the sale. Like muscles that deteriorate when they go unused, our client service skills atrophy in the shadow of

an increasing dependency on e-mail. What we'll see in the near future, and our client feedback already supports this, is that the client service representative who continues to master the art of personal contact will stand apart from the crowd. The executives who demand this from their teams, equal to the degree that they demand clinical understanding of client brands, will build agencies well rooted in client partnership.

NIGRO. MICROMASS. Client services have been shifting for more than five years. In this time, the biggest change we have seen is that the general agency, as the "only agency" player, has started to become the exception. Since the norm now is for brands to work with several agency partners, client service has, in some way, become very specific to the individual agency's expertise and role in the brand's total marketing.

We have fractured our own industry and craft, resulting in many different versions and approaches to client service. The role that client services will play over the next five years most likely will focus on areas such as addressing efficiency — a main challenge both on the agency side and for the client's business. Client services will be about proving the tangible value of staff, skill sets, technology services, and spend — on a regular basis, not just during reviews. And, there will probably be a return to the basics of good service: responsiveness, price/value balance and transparency, proactive investment in the clients and their businesses, meaningful relationships, and trust.

KEWIN. TOPIN. The biggest evolution in client services in recent years has been driven by greater turnover on the client side. It seems that the time a particular individual spends in a product manager role on a particular brand, for example, is much shorter than it used to be — sometimes just a year or two. This means two things for an agency, particularly for client services. First, our contacts may have less experience, so they rely on the agency for more. There's also a bit of education that's needed with less experienced clients relative to how agencies work, project timing, and so on. Greater turnover also often leaves clients stretched thin, having to take on more responsibility with less support internally. So they

▶ **JOLEEN SCHULTZ**

Mentus Life Science

Clients today are more sophisticated and appreciate the value of creating a true brand for the company or product.

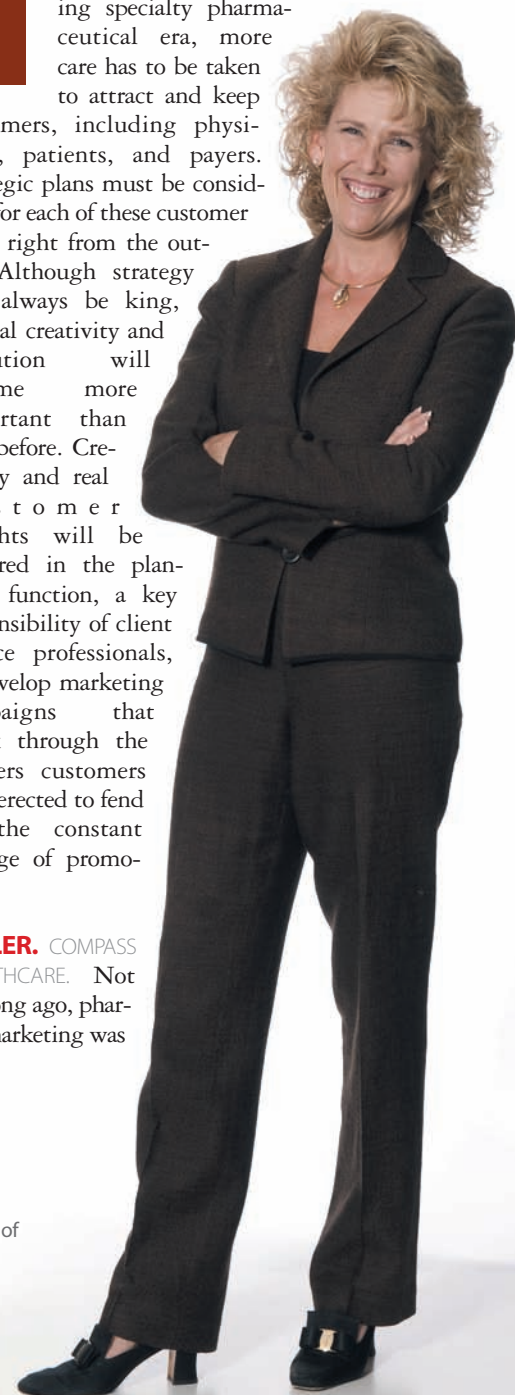
turn to us for that support, for everything from help with internal presentations to budgeting.

BEGASSE JR. CONCENTRIC. The shift in the role of client services has been driven, as it should be, by changes in the pharmaceutical industry. With the close of the blockbuster era and emergence of the electronic communications age, client service professionals have had to add customer relationship marketing and new media expertise to the already long list of capabilities. The introduction of mega brands — PCP-driven prescriptions for chronic conditions that affect the masses — made brand building and mass marketing tactics a fundamental skill set. But in the emerging specialty pharmaceutical era, more care has to be taken to attract and keep

customers, including physicians, patients, and payers. Strategic plans must be considered for each of these customer types right from the outset. Although strategy will always be king, tactical creativity and execution will become more important than ever before. Creativity and real customer insights will be required in the planning function, a key responsibility of client service professionals, to develop marketing campaigns that break through the barriers customers have erected to fend off the constant barrage of promotion.

KELLER. COMPASS HEALTHCARE. Not too long ago, pharma marketing was

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WHO CONTINUES TO
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THE CROWD.
BRIAN DOHERTY





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a rep with a detail aid and some journal ads. Today it's targeted, segmented marketing via a variety of online and offline vehicles, from NASCAR sponsorships to Wikipedia definitions to interactive Websites. Patients can use interactive tools to determine their risk of a disease or whether they are candidates for a clinical trial. Physicians can use Websites to research treatments and find appropriate clinical trials for their patients. To be a valued partner to the pharma client, people in client services today need to have better knowledge of more and varied marketing options that the brand could use or currently employs. They also need to understand each of the brand's target audiences and the type of information each audience wants. This means moving beyond the brand, disease and science, beyond what the messages should be to how they are delivered. People in client services must understand all of the different marketing tools available and how these tools can work together for a brand. This integration will become more critical over the next five years as the number of options increases. People in client services do not have to be experts in each marketing tool, but they must know how the tools work together, and the roles and limitations of each tool. While some marketing services — online marketing and promotional marketing — require specific knowledge and/or a specific type of agency, the account services reps within these organizations must be aware of how their services interact with the brand's other marketing initiatives.



▶ RENEE MELLAS

Wishbone

The pressure to deliver has never been stronger. Clients are driven to achieve their targets. It is about performance today — not what happened last year. Therefore, clients want agencies that are going to really partner and share those pressures with them.

MCELLEN. TORRE LAZUR MCCANN. I believe the core role of client services remains constant over time: simply, to deliver compelling solutions that drive demand for clients' brands. Now, and in the future, the largest shift will come in balancing a brand's need for innovative thinking with a client's need for proven results. The current healthcare environment is increasingly fast paced and competitive — a brand can't afford to take a chance on an option that is not rooted in past success. Any perceived margin of error can become an unacceptable risk instead of an opportunity for fresh thinking. To ensure new ideas see the light of day, client service managers will need to be assertive with their recommendations and resourceful with their rationale for how their teams' solution is proven and measurable.

IN THIS COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT, A BRAND CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE A CHANCE ON AN OPTION THAT IS NOT ROOTED IN PAST SUCCESS.
BILL MCELLEN

WATSON. FLASHPOINT MEDICA. The biggest shift in the role of client services has been the management of multiple customers. At one time, the pharmaceutical industry marketed primarily to physicians via the salesforce. It now markets to advocacy groups, consumers, hospitals, managed care, pharmacists, and oth-

ers all through different vehicles and channels. Additionally, in many cases, where once a brand team worked with a single agency, it now works with multiple agencies, each of which focuses on a different aspect of the business. As such, two things have happened. First, advertising agencies have become more specialized. No longer is it enough to specialize in pharmaceutical advertising. Now client service teams are focusing specifically on the professional, the consumer, or managed care audience, or they are becoming experts in particular channels — online, point of sale, or medical education. Second, as more and more agencies come to the table, integration and unification between them takes on an increasingly important and complex role.

Clients are looking for integrated solutions and agencies need to be able to maximize synergies across channels. This means that agencies must understand not only how they should manage themselves, but they must also understand how to manage within the larger group that has different teams or functional groups that are working together to achieve what's best for the brand.

WHAT CLIENTS WANT AND NEED

We asked our agency experts to outline what their clients' needs are today and how these have changed in the past five years.

▶ HOW ARE YOU ADDRESSING YOUR CLIENTS' EVOLVING STRATEGIES?

MAGNUSON. BRAND PHARM. The most common client needs today include strategic planning, tactical planning, budget management, and process management. Since clients continue to recruit marketing team members from the salesforces, it falls upon agencies to provide the training to develop and implement the marketing programs that will help them be highly successful.

DESANTIS. GUARD DOG. Our clients' needs have become progressively partner-like with blurred lines between disciplines. What were once very clearly delineated roles and responsibilities on the teams have become more of an ego-less blend to ensure that what is best for the brand always comes first and who is creating that strategy or building that tactic is secondary.

SCHULTZ. MENTUS. Clients are increasingly looking for an agency relationship that can meet all of their needs, including research, branding, advertising, and public relations. I

believe clients today are more sophisticated and appreciate the value of creating a true brand for the company or product.

MELLAS. WISHBONE. The most common need is for innovative tactics that bring the strategies alive in a different way. It is not about just adding more reps or a bigger journal spend. Meaningful programming that really drives client's business is critical to achieving sales goals.

DRUMMY. HEARTBEAT DIGITAL. Some things never change. The most common client needs are more money, more time, and more understanding from their bosses. But what's different today is the focus on return on investment. With all the new choices available to marketers, clients are really uncertain about which way to turn. The sheer number of options is overwhelming: a mobile campaign, a digital billboard, a viral video, a Facebook mini-site, etc. Clients are now asking for a reliable way of measuring the return on these tactics, so



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RHODA GAIL DUNN

Vox Medica

In an increasingly regulated and managed healthcare environment where uncertainty is the only certainty, clients are struggling with how to demonstrate company and product value.

We must find a way to refocus the conversation away from price as the ultimate arbiter of value.


LORI KEWIN

Topin & Associates

Agencies are looked at a lot more closely than they used to be in terms of billing rates and hours. Our job is to help clients understand the costs and fees so they see the value of their investment in communication, and in us.

they have some way of knowing the relative value of one technique over another. That never used to happen. When was the last time some senior executive asked about the ROI of a 60-second spot on the Nightly News? But in the digital world, they want us to be able to prove ROI for everything we do. We anticipate the need for measurement will only get greater as the options continue to proliferate and as the pressure on marketing budgets continues to increase.

BEESLEY. HC&B HEALTHCARE. The demand for digital services has become very high. The challenge in pharma and medical device marketing is that the marketplace hasn't established which digital products work and which do not. No one wants to be the first one on the block to spend \$250,000 to learn that a microsite isn't the right solution. What we are finding is that the early adopters are setting the pace and taking risks while the rest are watching and waiting. Additionally, I think there's a higher demand for metrics than there was five years ago. All of our clients want to validate their spend and know what their ROI is on any given project. While there are many things we can measure, the nature of this beast called "advertising" is that not everything is measurable. Some of the mindshare we get out there is hard to quantify. Successful agencies will be the ones that figure out how to measure the immeasurable.

HEMPSTEAD. STRATAGEM. There is an ever-increasing need for solid metrics to document the ROI generated by marketing and market-

ing communications programs. This isn't new, but it has intensified over the last few years. In a number of specialty pharma and biotech companies where marketing staff is very lean, the client contact may be the only marketer within the company. As such, client services personnel truly do become an extension of the client marketing department. They provide a cogent sounding board and operate as a brainstorming partner and costrategist.

CARTER. ABELSONTAYLOR. Clients today, versus five years ago, tend to be better marketers. They want more marketing advice, and they want recommendations on how to optimize the promotional opportunities available to them. In the past, many were reps from the field who were totally focused on meeting the needs of the salesforce. Even product managers direct from the field today are more globally focused, because their managers are. They are also much more likely to engage their client services teams in a dialogue about pros and cons of a variety of positioning methodologies and processes.

NIGRO. MICROMASS. Clients need to see results from agencies. These results need to come from both the tactical deliverables and the perceived sense of value associated with the team — the people. Clients need to see and feel results that are a direct outcome of the agency partnership. What does this mean for those of us in the client services role? We need

to play a role in the day-to-day, as well as the overall, management of the book of business. Only then will we truly be able to ensure that the value and the end results are being delivered consistently. A big shift in client needs will be precipitated by the economy, political and regulatory shifts, and patient and healthcare professional attitudes toward pharmaceutical marketing. There will be much more emphasis on educating patients and investing in developing a deep understanding of their behavior toward disease, treatment, drugs, and healthcare professionals. And ultimately the marketing of prescription drugs will be driven by the sheer willingness of pharmaceutical company leaders to keep pushing the envelope, rather than reverting back to the path of least resistance.

BEGASSE JR. CONCENTRIC. The evolution of the healthcare dynamic has placed considerable pressure on clients for truly integrated strategies that consider all three customers — physicians, patients, and payers — simultaneously. This requires agencies to be better equipped to understand each customer not only independently, but also as part of the patient/health system dynamic that influences prescribing decisions and patient compliance.

ASSELIN. JUICE PHARMA. Clients now need customer-centric multichannel solutions that exude innovation and can be executed with integrated precision across platforms. Five years ago an interactive tactic connoted a CD-ROM with a talking head delivering slides to a customer. Today, agencies deliver sophisticated creative solutions that span an array of print and interactive tactics and integrate online and offline promotion.

WINN. HAL LEWIS. The biggest need we see is for client and account services to justify expenditures at all levels — not just big ticket items — and to make compelling cases for spending on any given project or tactic. There is no longer an auto pilot or formulaic approach when it comes to promotion, for example, annual campaigns, POA meetings, etc. Today, tactics and budgets are scrutinized much more carefully and agencies need to think about ROI and market impact when making any recommendation.

KELLER. COMPASS HEALTHCARE. Five years ago, clients had more time and resources than they do today. They had fewer audiences to reach via fewer programs. With the multitudinous programs — and therefore vendors — they are now managing, clients need agencies to sup-

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CAREFULLY.
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**LARRY LANNINO**

Sudler & Hennessey

Clients and their agency partners are looking for ways to purely differentiate their brands. Whether it's strategically through branding or developing new program ideas through different channels, many clients are looking to provide unique applications to their brands.

**JULIA RALSTON**

MedErgy HealthGroup

The client point of contact has not really changed. Our clients could be marketing or clinical/medical personnel. They are typically more senior, and they are looking for, and recognize, a higher value component to the deliverable.

**STU KLEIN**

Alchemy

In years past, a positive ROI was both relatively easy to attain and was therefore not as heavily scrutinized, especially for large-scale campaigns in disease states with millions of sufferers. But in the past year the internal willingness to initiate/sustain DTC programs has grown more tepid as market conditions have chipped away at the long-held formula of "increased brand awareness leads to increased patient interest leads to increased physician inquiries leads to increased prescriptions."

port the integration and management of programs more than ever. Agencies need to work independently with other agency partners and brand stakeholders so clients aren't babysitting and project managing all day and can focus on their true brand responsibilities. Clients are also expected to understand and report on program results and metrics. This means agencies must provide clients with clear and accurate performance data, or risk putting the program and the client at risk.

MCELLEN. TORRE LAZUR MCCANN. With streamlined salesforces and condensed detail face time, delivering a compelling, impactful message is becoming an increasing challenge. In addition, over-saturated audiences create an environment that makes it difficult for brands to stand out. Offering clients services such as strategic planning — understanding customer insights and the motivation behind an audiences' decision-making behavior — is critical. While this need certainly existed five years ago, it is becoming increasingly acute. Clients need to arm their salesforces with messages that cut to the core of their audiences' desires succinctly. Fortunately, adaptable technologies such as closed-loop marketing platforms have provided many opportunities for representatives to do just that.

RALSTON. MEDERGY. Clients face greater pressures, resource restrictions, and regulated situations than ever before. In light of this environment, the simple reality is that they

have to secure the deliverable they want via a client services team with a greater emphasis on quality and timeliness. That team must have the overall depth of added consultancy or guidance to bring different experiences to the table and challenge and think outside the box. Over the years, I think the concept of client service has changed from scenarios where it was the responsibility of select members of the agency team to today's scenario where the entire team must be client services savvy. Clients are working on the premise that a well-balanced team will add more value at the client table than a client service individual no matter how good he or she is. I think that over time this also has changed how agencies view hiring and staffing. Agencies now look at the collective impact of a team, and ultimately it is the entire agency ability to add value in terms of client service.

WATSON. FLASHPOINT MEDICA. Enhanced communication is a critical need. As marketing responsibilities increase, many teams become siloed and suffer from a lack of communication. Clients now rely on the agency as a key conduit of information about the internal workings of the client's own team, from best practices to opportunities for further synergies.

SOTO. DORLAND. One of the most important needs today is the requirement for innovation

efficiency. Five years ago the market may have been driven by pure innovation, but lately it's been under tremendous cost pressures as well. Everything has to be managed to demonstrate maximum value. It's not enough that a product has an incremental improvement over what is currently available; creating breakthrough innovation becomes far more important. Many pharma/biotech companies may have to make major investments in R&D that may take longer to realize returns. This puts tremendous pressure on the marketing departments to get it right, because there's no time for a second chance. Commercialization strategies must demonstrate early and quick uptake, and again, any investment must continue to easily demonstrate value to not only the physician, but to the healthcare provider, the patient, and other stakeholders as well. Another very important need is to become more adept in specialty marketing, and to deepen our therapeutic knowledge and understanding as the science continues to change, and sometimes surprise us. The more we understand about the underlying etiology of disease states, the more we uncover the need to develop more special-

ized products — niche busters, versus blockbuster. This, in turn, requires that the clients' expertise, as well as that of their agency partners becomes more specialized. This is happening in every therapeutic area. In oncology, for example, a broad-based blockbuster agent

COMMERCIALIZATION
STRATEGIES MUST
DEMONSTRATE EARLY
AND QUICK UPTAKE, AND
ANY INVESTMENT MUST
DEMONSTRATE VALUE.

JOE SOTO



BILL DRUMMY

Heartbeat Digital

As a digital agency, it used to be our client was most often the e-business director, since many companies had created a specific area designed to deal exclusively with new media. That's changed dramatically. Now, senior marketing executives want to be more directly involved in the digital decision making.

doesn't really exist anymore. As we understand more and more about tumor behavior, we begin to understand that some products may be appropriate for one set of patients, but have marginal use in other patient subsets. Many of these products may not have even been



SUSAN HEMPSTEAD

Stratagem Healthcare Communications

The biggest challenge for clients is often selling a marketing program to their executive staff and they look to agency client services staff to help them do so.

approved years ago; today, however we see where and how they may save or extend life. Developing and marketing these products takes a highly specialized and targeted approach, which is challenging when the marketing dollars are so tightly controlled. There is nothing to spare for trial and error, so to speak.

LANNINO. SUDLER & HENNESSEY. Outside of the need for immediacy, the most common client needs haven't changed. They are still looking for brand differentiation, the big idea,

and their agency partners to provide ongoing value. What has changed for agencies is the rise of specialized service companies that only work in specific areas, such as relationship marketing, direct mail, or strategic planning. Five or more years ago, most agencies provided all of these services for their clients and many can and still do so today. But in some cases the client mentality toward these deliverables and who has the "expertise" to deliver them has changed. In the next few years, the salesforce will continue to evolve. It will probably be smaller in size and more targeted. Agencies will have to look at helping clients achieve greater salesforce effectiveness with better tools. Additionally, agencies will need to provide clients with effective nonpersonal selling options that can be integrated into the overall brand message.

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▶ HOW ARE EVOLVING MARKET PRESSURES IMPACTING YOUR CLIENTS?

SCHULTZ. MENTUS. The biggest challenge, as it relates to reaching the market with product information, is cutting through the clutter of information overload. There are no longer a few primary sources for information, such as print advertising and trade shows. Clients must consider a much broader marketing mix, including online advertising, Podcasts, e-detailing, and so on.

PERLOTTO. ADAIR-GREENE. Top of mind is replacing salesforce-driven initiatives with effective non-salesforce marketing initiatives. The reality is that the industry is finally coming to terms with the fact that the salesforce arms race is essentially over, and going forward, everyone loses if it continues. Throwing more and more representatives at the promotion of a brand has not only had diminished returns, it has created an increasingly hostile environment with many physician customers. Finally, marketers are looking at salesforces as one of the marketing tools at their disposal rather than the “be all, end all” of their marketing efforts. They are looking to equip them appropriately with the tools they need, but not

overdoing it with every possible item that anyone could come up with, as was often seen in the past.

NIGRO. MICROMASS. Resources, both human and monetary, are the real challenges. Time to market and the ability to justify spend are critical and becoming more important daily. Everyone is looking for the latest, best, and most scalable marketing model.

MARKETERS ARE
LOOKING AT
SALESFORCES AS ONE OF
THE MARKETING TOOLS
RATHER THAN THE “BE
ALL, END ALL” SOLUTION.
MARK PERLOTTO

Real pressure revolves around how to apply best practices to manage the life cycle of the brand to get the most out of it. Clients are still looking for the next big idea, but are really more concerned about being able to leverage best practices to benefit their brands. It's a balance. Clients also want more specificity and more personalization in marketing their brands. A one-size-fits-

all approach is no longer enough to solve the drug adherence issue that remains one of the pharmaceutical industry's biggest hurdles. And addressing adherence is a more complex marketing scenario than generating awareness for a drug in the marketplace; it requires relationship management and engagement with the audience beyond traditional DTC advertising. More than ever, clients today are looking to find a proven approach that engages customers throughout the customer experience and improves patient outcomes while still meeting brand objectives.

BOBEAR. PALIO. While every brand is different, there are two common themes across many clients. First, clients are under increasing pressure to do more with less. As marketing teams get leaner and timelines are compressed, clients tend to have less time to step back and really think about their brands. I frequently see teams struggling to find time to do strategic planning and bring fresh new

▶ JOE SOTO

Dorland Global

There is no such thing as standard client services anymore. One of the lessons learned over the years is that it's no longer about buying lunch or dinner — today it's about bringing solutions.



▶ KRISTIN MARVIN KELLER

Compass Healthcare Communications

Clients that want to successfully market their brands should work in partnership with their agencies, fostering close communication and helping agency staff acquire in-depth brand knowledge.

ideas to help drive their brands in the marketplace. As a result, clients are increasingly looking to their strategic partners to help shape and drive brand strategy. Second, there is increasing regulatory and legal scrutiny. There is a great deal of ambiguity about what the rules are on how to best commercialize a pharmaceutical brand. This has caused clients to reevaluate “acceptable” marketing practices and companies are becoming more conservative in their promotional approach.

KEWIN. TOPIN. Clients are often stretched so thin that it's hard for them to give the agency the time it needs. And working with us is just part of their job. They're also being asked to meet some pretty ambitious goals with smaller and smaller budgets. We also see some unique challenges faced by clients who engage in global branding and promotional campaigns. Getting many regions or affiliates to agree on a single approach — whether it be positioning or creative execution — is much more difficult than it sounds. It's hard for the clients to put the global brand before the needs of their local regions. Finally, short-term goals represent a big hurdle for clients. Many of our clients are faced with very aggressive financial targets and tremendous pressure to meet them. That pressure really hinders long-term, investment-level thinking for brand communications.

KLEIN. ALCHEMY. While the pharmaceutical industry has always been more demanding of ROI than other industries when it comes to approving/evaluating DTC programs, the





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**BARRY WINN**

Hal Lewis Group

The point of contact hasn't changed, but it has multiplied. As agencies continue to expand their capabilities beyond traditional media, our points of contact have extended into areas such as e-business, information technology, and procurement.

analysis of this metric has intensified in the past year. This trend is clearly a result of the current state of the industry, where highly effective generic alternatives to branded drugs are now prevalent across a wide range of therapeutic categories. In years past, a positive ROI was both relatively easy to attain and was therefore not as heavily scrutinized, especially for large-scale campaigns in disease states with millions of sufferers. But, in the past year, the internal willingness to initiate/sustain DTC programs has grown more tepid as market conditions have chipped away at the long-held formula of "increased brand awareness leads to increased patient interest leads to increased physician inquiries leads to increased prescriptions." A significant factor that has contributed to the inability of this formula to deliver with the same predictability appears to be increased pressure to switch from branded products to generics at the pharmacy, driven of course by managed care, but also by retailer incentives for their pharmacists to deliver a higher percentage of higher margin generics. This has become especially evident in categories where former "top three" brands are now available generically. As this trend will only accelerate in years to come, it is incumbent on the agency to help clients present business cases that are air-tight in their logic and documentation. Critical to this success is the ability to draw learnings from multiple categories.

BEGASSE JR. CONCENTRIC. Paramount and universal is the difficulty clients have breaking through with unique and thought-provoking messages. Much of this is a direct result of a healthcare system dynamic that has limited physician time and decision-making authority. Physician access and the value of the physician/representative relationship have suffered in the aftermath of the salesforce arms race, during which time sales calls doubled while sales increased only 10% — a poor return indeed.

Essentially, physicians have put a "spam filter" on rep visits. Pharmaceutical marketers need to become more adept at using nonpersonal, on-line tactics to deliver their messages. Beyond selling their brands, they need to help physicians efficiently manage their clinical practice, ensure positive patient outcomes, and minimize the burden of managed care on their prescribing. In essence, the marketing effort needs to be more consultative and less about "the close." Efforts also need to be made to include a broader range of healthcare providers in the dialogue. High-touch relationships with physicians and practice extenders such as physician assistants, nurse practitioners, resource managers, and reimbursement specialists are essential. These practice extenders represent great opportunity for pharmaceutical companies, since these people are often key influencers in physician prescribing behavior and the primary caregiver for many patient groups.

ASSELIN. JUICE PHARMA. One of the challenges clients face today is the need to optimize their marketing mix across multiple channels and audiences. In addition, they must ensure that their platform is integrated, consistent, and that it maximizes their financial investments. Clients also face tough challenges when it comes to implementing highly innovative solutions within the confines of a regulated and heavily scrutinized industry. An agency's job is to continually push the envelope on creative solutions that maximize innovation while maintaining the integrity of the branding and marketing requirements.

WINN. HAL LEWIS. Brand teams are smaller and are taking on multiple responsibilities while promotional marketing and salesforce budgets are challenged and reduced on an annual basis. Senior brand management is working in the

**CHERYL NIGRO**

MicroMass

"The client" today encompasses stakeholders from across the organization, each with a vested interest in the agency's role and value. They come from the brand, the field, operations and sourcing, business analytics, and regulatory areas. They range from those who are new to their role to those who are very seasoned.

trenches alongside their subordinates. Clients are expressing the need for account teams that are willing to think beyond their traditional roles and jump into the trenches with them. Another challenge is the ever-growing number of marketing channels and learning/understanding how the FDA addresses these. New opportunities in areas such as mobile marketing or social networking require more than just an understanding of how they work.

KELLER. COMPASS HEALTHCARE. The clients' world is getting more complex. Clients have too little time and too few resources, coupled with the need to reach more segmented target audiences via diverse marketing initiatives. At the same time, corporate expectations are higher. There is less time and ability for clients to focus deeply on any one given responsibility; they seem to be in almost constant crisis-management mode.

RALSTON. MEDERGY. Clients are facing more pressure to deliver with fewer resources, including staffing and budgets. And while they clearly

understand the role of an account manager per se in the client services dynamic, they will quickly acknowledge how all members of an agency team, including medical and creative personnel, contribute to client services via the overall value an agency provides.

BROWN. GSWORLDWIDE. The competitive

CLIENTS ARE FACING
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RESOURCES, INCLUDING
STAFFING AND BUDGETS.

JULIA RALSTON



MELISSA WATSON

Flashpoint Medica

Excellent client services means delivering not only what is promised, but also anticipating future needs, sometimes things that clients don't even know that they want yet. Agencies need to understand what clients' key challenges are and ask what's keeping them up at night. At the end of the day, it all comes down to asking the right questions.



CAMILLE DESANTIS

Guard Dog Brand Development

Each situation is different, each brand is different, and while one can bring experience to the table, that experience should never get in the way of fresh thinking.



JENNIFER ASSELIN

Juice Pharma

For clients that market global brands, there is an increased need to ensure that global branding and marketing choices align with, and reflect, the nuances of the market dynamics across the globe. A global mindset is becoming the new expected commonplace.

landscape continues to change. Customers often have too many buying choices and too little time. Many competitive offerings have similar qualities and features. Building a great brand today means that it is of even greater importance that clients look deeper for insights into why their customers buy. But that's easier said than done, considering clients have less time and fewer internal resources to complete a rich discovery. Client service teams, by acting as an extension of the brand team, can and should use their resources to mine for these insights to help establish an effective strategic position.

SOTO. DORLAND. Our clients are managing much tighter P&L statements lately. That's not to be confused with not having resources, however, given the climate in the industry, and pressures from patient groups, health authorities, etc., clients have had to become more accountable to an ever-increasing number of constituents. Again, they must continually demonstrate the value that their products bring. To that end, when agencies present strategic and tactical plans, they need to be cognizant of this and offer more than tactical programs. We need to offer solutions that add direct value to clients' audiences. Another challenge remains the need to become more global. Agency networks are increasingly able to access global resources, which can be cost-effective for clients, but the learning curve — for the clients and for agency partners — is often steep.

A CHANGING CLIENT PROFILE

As roles and responsibilities change, campaigns evolve into different media, and additional stakeholders are added to the mix, some agencies are finding that their Rolodex is in constant flux.

▶ WHO IS YOUR "CLIENT" TODAY? WHO ELSE IS BEING INVITED TO THE TABLE?

DESANTIS. GUARD DOG. We have found that our point of contact has expanded to encompass clients from all phases of drug development, whereas years ago, it probably would have only been a brand manager.

DUNN. VOX MEDICA. The notion of a single point of contact is fading. Again, this is a function of too much to do in too little time. Clients delegate when they can, often leaving us answering to multiple points of contact spanning all departments within their organizations. As a result, we are increasingly in a position where we must approximate collaboration by conveying different points of view on behalf of multiple stakeholders. This is a complex and time-consuming process that requires extraordinary trust. The ideal is to continue to involve these multiple stakeholders, but to do so in a more structured forum.

MAGNUSON. BRAND PHARM. While our primary contacts remain the client marketing teams, points of contact have expanded to encompass medical, legal, regulatory, sales

management and sales training, as well as market research.

MELLAS. WISHBONE. The point of contact today tends to be the people who are actually doing the work. Previously, there were executive-to-executive lunches to negotiate the business and then execution occurred on a lower level. Today, our primary contacts are the decision makers who also are responsible for driving the business day in, day out.

HEMPSTEAD. STRATAGEM. Today, our primary point of contact is often at the VP level. And these folks expect someone at least as senior as they are partnering with them on a day-to-day basis on the agency side.

BOBEAR. PALIO. Increasingly, senior management wants more contact and involvement and less buffer between themselves and the agency. As this occurs, they generally seek more of a relationship with their agency partners so they can get assistance in dealing with issues and gain a fresh perspective about their

brands. As a result, there are more touch points with a client than in the past.

BROWN. GSW WORLDWIDE. The primary client contact hasn't changed but it has broadened with the addition of client contacts in multiple functional areas. Client services is playing a singular point of contact across multiple functional areas within a client's organization — marketing, sales training, research, in-house production teams, event planners, regulatory, medical, sales, technology, and even HR. This requires client service teams to be brand experts, culturally in-tune, organized, and excellent communicators.

SOTO. DORLAND. We've extended our reach and

relationships to other stakeholders on the client side, especially key decision makers in procurement departments. Often, these departments head up the agency search and review process. Therefore, it's important for them to see the value an agency brings to the partnership, so after coming on board, we can't forget them, since we need to continue this relationship. Another shift we have seen over the years, is that agencies are getting involved with clients at a much earlier stage in the product's life cycle. This has led to an extended client contact base to include members of new business development, medical affairs and, at times, R&D.



JAY CARTER

AbelsonTaylor

Clients who treat their agencies as partners have not just the minds but the hearts of their client service team. People who are treated as partners will go the extra mile for their clients in times of need.

BEST PRACTICES

PharmaVOICE asked agency executives to reveal their best practices for providing excellent client services. We also asked them to provide some advice on how clients can be better clients.

▶ WHAT ARE YOUR SECRETS FOR SUCCESS?

DUNN. VOX MEDICA. My best advice to clients is to bolster their leadership by ensuring that their internal teams and external partners are positioned to collaborate successfully; work rarely exists in a discrete setting. By helping agencies to interact with each other effectively, clients will not only increase the quality of the end product, they may find themselves with more money and time at the end of the day.

BEESELEY. HC&B HEALTHCARE. Being able to manage a project is just a small part of what really makes great account people. More important is the deep connection they build with clients, who see them as integral parts of the process. When clients call them to get their input, insight, and advice — before going ahead with a project — then they know they've succeeded. When things go wrong on a project, they look for solutions, not someone to blame. When things go right, they acknowledge the teamwork that made the success happen. Above all, they treat everyone with the respect and attention they deserve.

respect, and an environment that is conducive to generating great ideas. With this in mind, there are five critical components to providing great client service, and more importantly, to creating a highly effective client/agency team. First, get off to a good start. It is critically important to set mutual expectations right at the beginning of the partnership. Second, it's all about the people. An agency is people. There are no products sold off the shelf, the real assets are human resources. Third, it's vital to foster honest and open communication. The fourth step is planning. Proper planning allows people on both teams to plan resources and time, and ultimately results in a much higher quality of work. The fifth critical element is proper engagement. A good agency will have a lot of really smart people with diverse and rich backgrounds in medical strategies, brand planning, creative, and account services. Clients need to insist that these cross-functional team members have a seat at the table during the appropriate discussions. Once again, it's all about diversity of perspectives and ideas.

CLIENTS NEED TO INSIST
THAT CROSS-
FUNCTIONAL TEAM
MEMBERS FROM THE
AGENCY HAVE A SEAT AT
THE TABLE.
DAN BOBEAR

BOBEAR. PALIO. The most important component of providing excellent client service is to break down the barriers that can form between client and agency. The fact of the matter is that a good client/agency team absolutely needs to share a common vision, goals, and objectives. It is critical to establish a structure that enables open communication, mutual

DOHERTY. NOESIS. When there is a struggle between agencies and their clients, it's rarely a one-sided situation, so it's difficult to suggest broad ways for clients to improve. In my experience, the greatest progress comes from applying the old sales axiom that "an educated consumer is our best customer." By helping

clients understand the approach to building brands and by involving them early in the creative process, we strengthen the team, the relationship, and the enduring creative. This approach to education and inclusion helps to expand client services. Sure, the account people remain the chief points of contact with the client, but the more clients see and the better they get to know a creative team, the stronger the service becomes.

BROWN. GSW WORLDWIDE. One of the most important things that we, as client services leaders, need to focus on is the development of our client service teams. Not only are they our future leaders, but they spend a significant amount of time with clients addressing their needs. The following are a couple of tips for client service teams. Master the fundamentals: as critical as it is for the team to know the client's business, members must know their own agency's business — project management, billing, timelines, roles/responsibilities, resources. Next, they need to listen like they mean it. Listen closely, not only to what is being said, but what isn't being said. As trust and confidence build between client and agency, avoid the temptation to be the only source of the solution. A client will be impressed and appreciative that the client services team reached out to other experts within the agency or network.

DESANTIS. GUARD DOG. One of the best prac-



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tices I have found is to listen first. I am always struck when I realize that so many people just do not listen to what a client is overtly, and sometimes not so obviously, saying. I try to never go into a conversation with a pat answer or a pre-fabricated plan for a client. Importantly, I also have learned to never say I can do something if I truly cannot. Nothing breaks trust faster than not being able to deliver on one's word. Lastly, to create best-in-class teams may mean bringing partner agencies to the table who have complementary expertise to ensure the client benefits from the best thinking presented to him or her in the most efficient and effective way.

DRUMMY. HEARTBEAT DIGITAL. I could write a book on client services best practices, but it really all comes down to this: forget about yourself and live your clients' reality. This is easy to say, harder to do. Since human beings are innately solipsistic, it requires a real effort of will to transfer our own concerns for those of our clients. (I could have also said walk in your clients' moccasins, but then I would have missed the chance to use the word solipsistic.) Of course, for clients to be better clients, my advice is exactly the converse: our most bril-

**DAN BOBEAR**

Palio

Today, pharma advertising agencies need to understand exactly what the real "product" is. Increasingly, it is much more than advertising. Now, more than ever, agencies need to be a true strategic partner and help clients to answer the tough questions. Fundamentally, agencies need to have a broad view and help to deliver insights that drive a brand's success in the marketplace.

liant customers — and those who get the best work and the best value from us — are those who actually consider things from our point of view. Agencies will actually be both startled and grateful if clients do such an unusual thing, and in return they will run through walls for their clients.

CARTER. ABELSONTAYLOR. Clients who treat their agencies as partners have not just the minds but the hearts of their client service

team. People who are treated as partners will go the extra mile for their clients in times of need.

KEWIN. TOPIN. The agency-client arrangement is a relationship, so best practices are the basics that make relationships work. First and foremost is honest, open, ongoing communication. That helps foster a good relationship and allows problems to be solved quickly when they arise. Another best practice is building an agency-client relationship that goes beyond account

EXPERTS

JENNIFER ASSELIN. Director, Client Services, Juice Pharma, New York; Juice Pharma is a creative strategic advertising agency that provides highly disciplined and evidence-based solutions by integrating the latest wave of emerging technology covering the complete spectrum of solutions: new media, tablet PCs, Web, and print. For more information, visit juicepharma.com.

NANCY BEESLEY. Executive VP, Client Services, HC&B Healthcare Communications, Austin, Texas; HC&B is an independent, full-service healthcare advertising agency. For more information, visit hcbhealth.com.

KEN BEGASSE JR. Chief Operating Officer and Director of Client Services, Concentric Pharma Advertising, New York; Concentric is an independent healthcare advertising agency. For more information, visit concentric-rx.com.

DAN BOBEAR. Executive VP, Managing Director of Client Service, Palio, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.; Palio is a full-service healthcare advertising agency. For more information, visit palio.com.

MATT BROWN. Senior VP, Managing Director, GSW Worldwide, Newtown, Pa.; GSW, with headquarters in Westerville, Ohio, is a full-service advertising agency that provides liberating ideas to health-and-wellness clients through extensive resources in all major markets in the world. For more information, visit inventivhealth.com.

JAY CARTER. Senior VP, Director of Client Services, AbelsonTaylor, Chicago; AbelsonTaylor is a healthcare advertising and communications agency. For more information, visit abelsontaylor.com.

CAMILLE DESANTIS. Copresident, Managing Partner, Brand Strategy and Client Services, Guard Dog Brand Development LLC, New York; Guard Dog Brand Development specializes in creating, revitalizing, and protecting the healthcare brand identities of biopharma and biotech companies, hospitals and health systems, medical technologies, novel therapeutics, pharmaceutical companies and their products. For more information, visit guarddogbd.com.

BRIAN DOHERTY. Executive VP, Director of Client Services, Noesis, part of CommonHealth,

Parsippany, N.J.; Noesis is a full-service healthcare communications agency providing professional advertising, strategic positioning, and global branding. For more information, visit commonhealth.com/noesis.

BILL DRUMMY. CEO, Heartbeat Digital, New York; Heartbeat Digital is an interactive agency that triggers viral media, tracks blogs, and constructs eCRM programs to help clients prosper in the digital age. For more information, visit heartbeatdigital.com.

RHODA GAIL DUNN. Senior VP, General Manager, Vox Medica Strategic Solutions, Philadelphia; Vox Medica is a full-service, independent healthcare marketing, advertising, and communications, agency. For more information, visit voxmedica.com.

SUSAN K. HEMPSTEAD. Principal, Account Services, Stratagem Healthcare Communications, San Francisco; Stratagem is a full-service healthcare advertising agency serving clients in the pharmaceutical, diagnostic and device, and consumer healthcare industries. For more information, visit stratagem-hc.com.

KRISTIN MARVIN KELLER. VP Client Services, Compass Healthcare Communications, Princeton, N.J.; Compass Healthcare is an independent, full-service online and relationship marketing agency exclusively supporting brands in the healthcare industry. For more information, visit compasshc.com.


KATHY MAGNUSON

Brand Pharm

Clients' biggest challenges are driving sales with ever shrinking dollars while being hit with increasingly complex market forces.

management. We find that when our clients know their creative and project management teams (and vice versa), it makes the process smoother. There's more give and take, better

collaboration, and ultimately better work. Adhering to the agency process (and each agency probably has its own) is also vital to providing excellent client service. The importance of creative briefs, approvals, and contact reports can't be overstated. Clients should know that agencies have processes with the best interests of their clients in mind. As to how to be a better client, we'd probably tell clients to give agencies both the time and trust they need to do what clients pay them to do. Realize that while agencies aren't the experts in every facet of a client's business, they are experts in branding and communications.

WINN. HAL LEWIS. Proactivity is always the key. Being out in front of the client and not waiting for them to call on you is the No. 1. best practice. Client service teams have a great vantage point of the brand's business needs. Don't let thinking get bogged down over worries about med-legal approval. Invite service providers to present at the agency, explore their Websites, etc. And share this information, as well as your enthusiasm, with the client. Schedule time for your staff to hear what's going on and to offer coaching and mentoring. Have one-on-one meetings on a reg-

ular basis with each member of your team. There doesn't have to be a formal agenda; just make time to catch up, share ideas, talk about and plan professional development, etc. These meetings build good relationships with your staff, but also make them better resources for clients. Just make sure you do way more listening than talking. The advice I'd provide to clients: follow through on your plan. Don't dwell too long in the planning and analysis mode. There are some things you have to try to gain empiric knowledge about. Have the courage to try new things, pilot programs. Success means looking ahead, not staying stuck in the past.

MCELLEN. TORRE LAZUR MCCANN. My advice to brand managers is to take the extra step to include the agency team in all brand activities. ♦

PharmaVOICE welcomes comments about this article. E-mail us at feedback@pharmavoiced.com.



To access a FREE Podcast featuring Camille DeSantis of Guard Dog Brand Development go to pharmavoiced.com/podcast.

LORI KEWIN. Director of Account Services, Topin & Associates, Chicago; Topin is an independent, full-service, medical marketing communications company. For more information, visit topin.com.

STU KLEIN. Executive VP, General Manager Alchemy, New York; Alchemy is a healthcare communications agency. For more information, visit alchemy.com.

LARRY LANNINO. Managing Partner, Sudler & Hennessey, New York; S&H is a strategically connected, creatively recognized healthcare communications network with offices covering more than 90% of the global healthcare market needs. For more information, visit sudler.com.

KATHY MAGNUSON. Executive VP, Managing Director, Brand Pharm, New York; Brand Pharm is a full-service healthcare communications agency. For more information, visit brandpharmusa.com.

BILL MCELLEN. Executive VP, Managing Director, Torre Lazur McCann, Parsippany, N.J.; Torre Lazur McCann focuses on one core service — healthcare advertising and communications delivered to professionals and patients via print, video, and digital media. For more information, visit torrelazur.com.

RENEE MELLAS. Partner/General Manager, Wishbone-ITP, New York; Wishbone-ITP is an independent, full-service healthcare advertising agency.

For more information, visit wishbone-itp.com.

CHERYL NIGRO. Executive VP, Client Services, MicroMass Communications, Cary, N.C.; MicroMass provides behavioral science-based relationship marketing for the healthcare industry. For more information, visit micromass.com.

MARK S. PERLOTTO. Executive VP, Managing Director, Adair-Greene McCann, Atlanta; Adair-Greene McCann is a full-service healthcare communications agency. For more information, visit adair-greene.com.

JULIA RALSTON, R.PH. President and CEO, MedErgy HealthGroup, Yardley, Pa.; MedErgy is a medical marketing agency that converges the art and science of healthcare marketing. For more information, visit mederggroup.com.

JOLEEN SCHULTZ. Principal, National Practice Leader, Life Sciences, Mentus Life Science, San Diego; Mentus delivers integrated strategic marketing communications to biopharmaceutical, medical-device, and healthcare companies. For more information, visit mentuslifescience.com.

JOE SOTO. Executive VP, General Manager, Dorland Global Health Communications, Philadelphia; Dorland, a Huntsworth Health company, offers a full range of communications services for its clients, which include multinational pharmaceutical companies, biotech firms, diagnostic and device manufacturers, drug delivery systems, and healthcare service organizations. For more information, visit dorland.com.

MELISSA WATSON. VP, Account Group Supervisor, Flashpoint Medica, New York; Flashpoint Medica's strategy is to help brand managers identify — and take advantage of — critical moments of opportunity that can ignite growth and shape a product's sales trajectory during a brand's life cycle. For more information, visit flashpointmedica.com.

BARRY WINN. Director, Client Service and Interactive Marketing, The Hal Lewis Group, Philadelphia; HLG is a healthcare advertising agency specializing in pharmaceuticals and life sciences. For more information, visit hlg.com.