

Jeffrey Simbrow Associates Inc.

Powerful Strategic Thinking

JSAI has a passion for strategic thinking that leads to results-oriented creative, creative that builds brands, increases marketshare—and keeps clients coming back for more

When Jeffrey Simbrow Associates Inc. opened for business in the spring of 1989, the company consisted of just three people sharing two desks and a single telephone. Today, it employs 75 people at its offices in Toronto and Montreal, making it one of Canada's leading independently owned communications firms—and Canada's largest communications firm specializing exclusively in health care.

For health-care marketers, JSAI's success story is one worth knowing and celebrating. But, chances are, if you're not a JSAI client, you may know little about the agency. In fact, you might not have heard of it at all.

"In 16 years, we've done virtually no self-promotion," says Executive Vice-President Karen Auslander, who works primarily out of JSAI's Toronto office. Nor, she adds, has the firm sought to draw attention to itself through the traditional agency mode of submitting creative to award shows.

"We've entered exactly one award show. We submitted our Botox DTC campaign for hyperhidrosis to the 2003 Globals, and it was recognized with a finalist certificate. We were so excited! But, the reality is, we don't rely on self promotion or awards to build our business. Our philosophy is to focus on our clients' business first and foremost, to help them succeed, and then we look for opportunities to grow by growing along with them."





The JSAI senior team.



JSAI is different

In the crowded health-care agency marketplace, JSAI stands out. Since inception, the full-service marketing and communications firm has set the goal of providing its clients with unparalleled strategic thinking—starting with learning gained from research and the generation of consumer insights and following through with differentiating positioning strategies and results-oriented communication plans.

“My background was in packaged goods and financial services marketing,” says Jeffrey Simbrow, JSAI’s president, who spent six-and-a-half years at General Foods and an equal period of time at American Express before launching the agency. “I had worked with quite a number of agencies, and I knew how highly clients valued those rare agencies that didn’t just create pretty pictures, but could provide them with critical strategic insights and big-picture counsel about their brands. As a result, when I decided to start a communications company, there was no question in my mind that it had to be obsessed with providing exceptional strategic thinking.”

In addition to its growing studio and creative teams, JSAI works with a network of writers and art directors who have extensive experience in both pharmaceutical and consumer advertising. This approach enables it to assemble outstanding creative teams whose talents and abilities are ideally suited to the job at hand.

“We put the right creative minds on the right brands to bring the underlying marketing strategies to life,” says Auslander.

Our true point of difference is that we’ve walked in the client’s shoes.

Client roster

JSAI's roster of Canadian and U.S. clients reads like a "Who's Who" of the major pharmaceutical corporations. Among the blue chip companies it works for are Allergan, Altana, Amgen, Boehringer Ingelheim, Eli Lilly, Pfizer, Solvay and Wyeth. Past blockbuster brands it has worked through to generic status include Rogaine and Prozac. In addition to Botox, the line-up of brands it is currently working on includes Enbrel, Pantoloc, Levitra, Lipitor and Spiriva, to name a few.



Bright minds and a belief in partnership

Over the years, JSAI's strategic capabilities have only grown stronger as it has staffed up with some of the best and brightest minds in the pharmaceutical industry. Most of its account directors had several years of client-side pharmaceutical experience under their belts before joining the agency. All have had nearly a decade or more of combined client-side and agency experience. And, as a firm believer in training and continuing professional development, JSAI invests heavily in providing its employees with opportunities to broaden and deepen their skill sets.

There's a reason JSAI puts so much emphasis on industry experience and up-to-date competencies.

"Our philosophy is that we can provide the most value to our clients when we work together with them in a spirit of collaboration and partnership," says Dan Denomme, senior vice-president at JSAI. Denomme, who is responsible for JSAI's Montreal-based clients, has 15 years experience in the pharmaceutical industry, including seven years spent client-side at 3M Pharmaceuticals. During four of those years, he worked in the company's marketing management department. "That means our people need to be as qualified and knowledgeable as their clients," Denomme continues. "It means thinking through all aspects of our clients' business and working hard for the client to ensure their brand success."



Impressive employee loyalty

In an industry in which employee turnover is high and job tenure brief, JSAI bucks the trend. Since founding the agency 16 years ago, Simbrow and Auslander have concentrated on surrounding themselves with a superior team of talented individuals and have experienced a remarkably low rate of employee change. At the senior executive level, the average tenure with the company is more than six years.

"We hire the brightest minds we can find in the pharmaceutical business," says Simbrow, "then we make sure they always have challenging roles. We want them to learn and grow in their careers because their development benefits them, us and the client as well."

A different approach

“Our true point of difference as a communications company,” submits Auslander, “is that we’ve walked in the client’s shoes. That means we’re able to help them with all aspects of their marketing, starting with research and brand development and following through to creative execution.”

JSAI also distinguishes itself through its policy of proactively exploring and searching for ways to improve every aspect of its clients’ business.

“We don’t limit ourselves to doing detail aids or ads in health-care publications,” says Denomme. “We think about the marketplace, the competitors, the stakeholders, the brand. We ask ourselves what are the top issues affecting the brand’s ability to grow further, then we think about strategies to address those issues. It’s involving and exciting, and if you’re a marketer who loves both the strategic and creative sides of the business, it doesn’t get any better.”

Bruce MacDonald, Pfizer’s team leader on Lipitor, is a fan of JSAI’s unique approach to serving its clients. “JSAI is different than other agencies,” MacDonalds says. “They get involved at every stage of the marketing process. In effect, they operate as an extension of our marketing department.”

When we engage with clients in an atmosphere of true partnership, we have the power to produce extraordinary results.



Bridging the gap between pharmaceutical and DTC advertising

The need for dialogue between health-care providers and end users has risen dramatically in recent years as people have increasingly taken control of their own health management. JSAI was a pioneer in the development of direct-to-consumer pharmaceutical advertising; its DTC campaign for Rogaine in the late 1980s was the first of its kind in Canada. Since that time, DTC advertising has evolved to become a critical delivery channel for pharmaceutical information, and JSAI has grown into one of its leading practitioners. The agency is currently handling DTC campaigns for a host of major brands, including Lipitor, Levitra and Botox Cosmetic.

“JSAI has been instrumental in helping Allergan turn Botox Cosmetic into an incredible success story in the Canadian market,” says Alan Chan, marketing manager with Allergan Canada. “Our sales have increased by seven times in just under four years, and we’re generating higher per-capita sales than any other Botox market in the world.”

JSAI has pulled out all the stops to ensure the Botox Cosmetic DTC

campaign continues to drive the brand forward. Recently, it hired a consumer marketing expert with 15 years of client and agency experience to head up the DTC effort.

“We’re extremely pleased with JSAI’s ability to drill down into the very heart of our target consumer, to understand her most personal and intimate thoughts, and then to flawlessly execute big-idea creative that speaks directly to her at that level,” Chan says.



The road ahead: Continuing on the path of results-oriented solutions

Going forward, JSAI is looking to continue providing results-oriented strategic thinking and creative solutions to clients who value collaborative working relationships.

“When we engage with clients in an atmosphere of true partnership,” says Auslander, “the strategic insights we arrive at together and the creative executions we develop based on these insights have the power to produce extraordinary results. They can build brands, rally internal teams, excite external customers and, ideally, have a meaningful impact on the lives of the target audiences.”

Judging by JSAI’s track record to date, it’s a safe bet that clients who join with them in the future will be glad they did. [CPM](#)

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