



# EURO RSCG LIFE

## The Agency We Always Wanted to Hire



From Left to Right: Mark Makuch, Director, Interaction; Priya Davies, Office Manager; Greg Rice, VP, Director of Client Services; Chris Lemme, President; Peter Mazzotta, Manager, Graphic Services; Lisa Williams, VP, Finance; Suk-Hi Creighton, Director, Medical Education; David Sharpe, VP, Creative Director.



### *Talking with Chris Lemme, President of Euro RSCG Life*

When *Canadian Pharmaceutical Marketing* asked us to write this piece, they left the field wide open. We looked through previous articles and found (no surprise) that all agencies want to build the client's business with great ideas that are on strategy, on time and on budget.

This is hard to argue with, but it's a bit like clients saying that they want to help patients by providing drugs that are effective, safe and tolerable. The benefits are essential, but they are price of entry. This got us thinking about how an agency can differentiate itself, and that's the theme we'd like to develop here.

Some years ago an anecdote circulated in the marketing community. It described three consumer agencies, all well-known at the time. We'll mask the names, but you'll still get the point.

A client goes to three agencies and asks them the time. Agency A says, “What time would you like it to be?” Agency B says, “First, we need to discuss what you mean by the question.” And Agency C says, “You don’t need to know the time!”

The story is tongue-in-cheek, of course, but there’s truth in it. There are *big* differences between agencies, even though we all believe in great ideas that are on strategy, on time and on budget.

During my time as a client (over 20 years, mainly at Astra and Boehringer Ingelheim) I saw this pattern many times over. Some agencies told us what they thought we wanted to hear. Some made things far too complicated. And some forgot who was paying the bills. Of course, there were also high points, with agencies coming up with great ideas that truly did build the business.

One example was my last assignment at Boehringer Ingelheim. We had to launch Mobicox® in the COX-2 market. We faced a host of obstacles. First, we were up against Pfizer and Merck, who don’t take kindly to trespassers (this was when Vioxx® and Celebrex® were riding high, well before the later COX-2 troubles). Second, Mobicox® was an old molecule with a less than stellar reputation. Third, we had a very short window of opportunity before the patent ran out. Fourth, we had limited budgets. Fifth, we had just four months to get the launch campaign together. Sixth, we were extremely short staffed.

The launch was very successful and, as it happens, Euro RSCG Life was the agency. Some of you will remember Victor Kiam. He liked his Remington razor so much that he bought the company. Well, I certainly couldn’t do that, but in 2002, once Mobicox® was well on its way, I decide to join Euro.

In 2004, I took over as President, and we asked ourselves the differentiation question.

Euro RSCG Life is the largest, most integrated global healthcare network, with over 45 agencies dedicated to healthcare, but our name recognition was low—so we couldn’t rely on that. We decided to do for ourselves what we do for our clients. At the start of major assignments we recommend a Best Brains Early Session. This is like a controlled brainstorm with the key players—and it’s great for unlocking insights. We also did a version of our Stakeholder Forums. These are informal focus groups or one-on-one interviews with the target audience.

As it happens, many of our senior people have been clients (how else do you explain the happy, smiling faces in the photograph!). We’ve often exchanged stories about the good and not so good experiences we’ve had with agencies.

We loved the good stories. But on the not so good side there were a lot of questions. Why did senior agency people so often disappear from the business? Why did recommendations so often assume that advertising was the answer? Why was there





always that “gap of silence” between a creative brief and the agency presentation? Why, despite the claim about being on strategy, were ideas so often off the mark? And speaking of ideas, surely, once in our lifetimes, a client could contribute an idea that an agency would actually like!

We contrasted this to times when the agency really did understand. Where we, as clients, could discuss strategy with senior people—people who drew on *experience*, not just opinion. And where the agency would bring ideas to life across the whole marketing mix.

That’s when it hit us. We would make Euro the agency that we, as clients, always wanted to hire. We would keep the good and remodel the rest. We would be partners to our clients. We would structure ourselves so that Greg Rice and I would stay active on client business. We would be “channel-centric” and not “ad-centric”—with strength in advertising and selling ideas of course, but also with a thriving team in the interactive and medical education areas. We would make clients part of the creative process, and end that gap of silence. We would be straight shooters. We would make work fun. And once in a while, we would even like a client idea!

Of course, this is a simplification, and there’s a lot more to agencies than I’ve covered here. But it seems to be working for us. Five years ago, we had 20 people on staff. Now we have more than 50.

**CPM**



The staff of Euro RSCG Life.

*Euro RSCG Life is one of the leading healthcare agencies in Canada with offices in Toronto and (soon) Montreal. It handles HCP and DTC promotion for a wide range of GP and specialty brands. It is part of Euro RSCG Life Worldwide, the largest, most integrated global healthcare network, with over 45 agencies dedicated to healthcare. It is headquartered in New York. Its mission is to develop Creative Business Solutions that increase the client’s business, ultimately making Euro RSCG Life an indispensable business partner. Creative Business Solutions are creative ideas that combine strategy and communication channels to drive long-term growth and sales beyond client expectations. Chris Lemme can be reached at (416) 933-4777 or [chris.lemme@eurorscg.com](mailto:chris.lemme@eurorscg.com).*