

## X2 Media wants bigger dose of drug company work



By DEANNA BOTTAR

John Hornyak likens part of the work his Twinsburg company does to sports - like being in a pit crew at Indy, serving as sideline support at the Super Bowl, feeling the adrenaline rush as the time clock ticks. And he likes it.

That's why the president of X2 Media LLC is looking to increase - slowly and strategically - the number of pharmaceutical clients his company attracts so it can produce the high-pressure Microsoft PowerPoint presentations they make before advisory committees of the Food and Drug Administration in Washington, D.C.

"We're behind the scenes, and we make it all happen," he said. "There's no margin for error on our part" during the intense presentations, which are the gateway for drug companies seeking full FDA approval for their products. On average, only one of five drugs submitted to the FDA gains approval.

Mr. Hornyak in November sent X2 Media's first strategic marketing mailer to 500 to 600 domestic pharmaceutical companies and set up a web site at [www.x2media.us/fda](http://www.x2media.us/fda) with the hope of gaining a few contracts per year to produce FDA-related presentations. Previously, the company relied on word-of-mouth referrals among clients. X2 Media has three employees and does not disclose its sales, though Mr. Hornyak, who founded the company in 1994, said 2001 was a record sales year. That pace slowed this year, he said. The company is willing to bring in additional temporary or permanent workers to accommodate its transition into this niche market, though Mr. Hornyak said he is acting cautiously so as not to bring on more work than the firm can handle.

The bulk of the company's work is designing and coordinating multimedia sales and meeting presentations, developing catalogs, training materials, web sites and Internet databases, plus producing custom DVDs, CD-ROMs and videos. Among its long-term clients is Carrier Transicold, a division of heating, air conditioning and refrigeration giant Carrier Corp., of Syracuse, N.Y. The division provides refrigeration equipment for commercial vehicles.

Though the basis of X2 Media's burgeoning pharmaceutical work sounds simple enough, crafting PowerPoint presentations, the devil, as they say, is in the details. And in this case, the details greatly resemble those of a law team scrambling to assemble witnesses, exhibits and arguments before trial - often months of sifting through the drug company's facts to reduce extensive data into an understandable graphic presentation.

And once that's done, the drug companies with X2 Media's assistance stage a series of mock presentations, seeking to bulletproof their findings from the barrage of questions the FDA panel will fire at them. To do this, the companies bring in experts to simulate the advisory committee.

X2 Media's job is to organize support material so it's at the pharmaceutical company's fingertips if it needs it. "We have to be ready to present any supportive slides that they want to show," Mr. Hornyak said. "We could have as many as 2,000 backup slides to answer potential questions."

Just ask Bernadette Maida, senior director for the Clinical Research division of Wyeth, a Madison, N.J.-based research pharmaceutical company. In January, she worked with X2 Media on an FDA drug presentation. Ms. Maida is based in Colleagueville, Pa., northwest of Philadelphia.

"I've been through this a couple of times," Ms. Maida said of the FDA advisory panel process. "It's a very stressful, tedious process, and (X2 Media has) been one of the most pleasant and most accommodating groups of individuals I've ever worked with." X2 Media assembles a war room in a D.C.-area hotel in the days leading up to a presentation where "it is not atypical to be up for 24 hours," Ms. Maida said. That's where last-minute changes are made, binders filled with hundreds of pages of information are assembled and X2 Media's network of laptops is secured from hackers and corporate espionage, Mr. Hornyak said.

During the presentations, X2 Media staffers work with an elaborately backed-up system so the presentation can be transferred from one laptop to another in case of a hardware error. They also have a signaling system so the presenter can say which PowerPoint frame should be displayed when.

"Honestly, within two seconds, they have the right slide," Ms. Maida said.