

# KANSAS CITY BUSINESS JOURNAL

## Thriving in a time of change

DOBIES HEALTHCARE LEARNS TO ADAPT TO SEISMIC SHIFTS IN ITS INDUSTRY

From the advent of electronic medical records to health care reform, Carol Dobies has lived it all since she founded Dobies Healthcare Group in 1992.

As Kansas City-based Dobies Healthcare learned, to stay relevant in an industry undergoing seismic changes, you have to be nimble and adapt.

Dobies Healthcare works with clients on marketing, branding and advertising to “create healthier companies.” Clients include providers, health care/hospital trade associations and certifying boards, health IT companies and professional services firms that deal with health care.

Because of the nature of her business, Dobies not only has had to adapt her company to fit industry changes, but she has had to help other companies reflect the shifting landscape.

And those industry changes aren’t subtle. They include reimbursements going from fee-for-service to performance- and value-based; access to care shifting from primarily a hospital to convenient cares and virtual platforms; and a focus on population versus individual health, to name just a few.

“It always used to be about health care, and now we’re seeing it morph into life care ... and being able to take care of the patient beyond just when they’re ill, but keeping them healthy for a lifetime,” Dobies said. “One of the hardest things for us is to stay ahead of the curve and or stay with it.”

To accomplish that, Dobies emphasized that collaborating with smart (and fun) co-workers and clients is the most important piece.

“From the very beginning, we surrounded ourselves with really, really smart companies. If we didn’t have a client that



ANDREW GRUMKE

*Carol Dobies has seen it all since she founded Dobies Healthcare Group in 1992. Her company has learned to evolve and adapt to the many changes health care has seen in the past 24 years.*

had a visionary outlook and the ability to pivot and change, then our work product wasn’t as solid. We had to find those clients who were smart and had the will to change.”

Part of finding those smart clients and people is being selective, Dobies said. Many entrepreneurs want to build revenue right off the bat, but it’s important, especially when an industry is changing, to find clients that will be flexible enough to adapt.

Because Dobies was selective with her clients starting out, she’s built a national brand reputation. Now, clients seek her out.

Selectivity is important for the organization, too. At the leadership level, you need a visionary and an integrator:

someone who looks for the next step, and someone who makes it happen.

Entrepreneurs also have to stay up to date with changes and be knowledgeable about their industry, Dobies said.

“You have to be a voracious reader and pay attention to what’s happening in the market. And then you have to put strategy first. It’s taking the actions and the behaviors and marrying them with the communications and creating those new brands in the markets. The (clients) have to fundamentally change and wake up in the morning and be something different.”

Dobies said she hasn’t noticed a change in the types of people she’s hired, but to adopt change, all ideas have to be welcome.

— Dora Grote