

Red Door. Communications spreads its wings



Catherine Warne, RDC founder and Managing Director

Specialist healthcare PR consultancy Red Door Communications says it feels like only yesterday that it launched itself into the pharmaceutical arena as the ‘new kid on the block’. So how is it faring nine years on?

Red Door Communications set itself a tough challenge at launch – to be the best, not necessarily the biggest – and maintain its people focus to deliver first-class communications programmes for its clients. But now, nine years later, with a turnover of more than £6 million, RDC finds itself one of the most established and successful companies in its sector and the inspiration for a succession of new boutique consultancies.

The agency has been nominated as PR Consultancy of the Year at the annual Communiqué Awards for the past seven consecutive years – an industry record – winning twice and being highly commended for the past two years.

The secret of its success, according to RDC founder and Managing Director Catherine Warne, is sticking to its guiding principles. “Quality of work is at the forefront of what we do,” she says. “We may be criticised for being

too tough on ourselves in that respect, but at the end of the day our focus is consistently on not only meeting, but exceeding, our clients’ expectations.”

A key factor in sustaining this for the past nine years has been by attracting and retaining quality staff. “We have a team of more than 40 account handlers who between them possess a wide range of skills, but what they share is a common passion for what they do,” says Warne.

Indeed, RDC has gained accreditation from Investors in People three times. “It is important the team feels motivated, nurtured and careers develop, while at the same time achieving a proper work-life balance,” says Deputy Managing Director Catherine Oliver. “A lot of organisations pay lip service to this, but the reality is different – not so at RDC where our promise to people is honoured.”

Perhaps it’s for this reason that RDC has both attracted and retained a high proportion of senior staff – with more than 50% at Account Director level or above.

The core business has traditionally been UK ethical PR programmes – and this currently accounts for about 55% of RDC’s annual turnover – even though its fee levels have grown in real terms year-on-year since the company launched.

Heading up the UK operation is Catherine Oliver together with a team of four experienced Associate Directors, including RDC’s latest recruit Sarah Swift, who until recently fulfilled a similar role at Resolute Communications.

The other associates are ‘home grown’ RDC managers who have been with the company for an average of six years each – Nicola Walsby, Tracy Willmott and Rachel Vrettos.

The largest growth area for RDC over the past two years has been its international healthcare division, which has evolved under the guidance of Director Phil Sheldon, supported by Associate Director Joanna O’Donovan.

International network

Since Phil’s arrival in 2007, not only has there been a sharp increase in programmes directed out of the UK, but RDC has also developed an international network of PR consultancies.



The Red Door team

“We’ve worked hard at establishing a network of like-minded consultancies, and we talk and meet as regularly as we can to help achieve excellent results for clients,” says Sheldon. “The Health Collective Network is a group of companies that shares the same passion for what they do – we’re not only colleagues but friends, indeed our Australian partner is headed by an RDC alumni so we know we’re working to shared standards.”

As well as growing a healthy client base, the international team has also developed a new service for clients going through the EMEA Oral Presentation regulatory process – preparing them for what to expect, training them, developing materials and providing them with a dress rehearsal.

During a tough economic climate, RDC has successfully launched new offerings including a dedicated medical education company, called ROCK Medical Communications, under the leadership of established practitioner Joanne Satchell.

“We believe medical education is the foundation on which a brand can grow – no matter what stage in its lifecycle,” says Joanne. “Impactful educational programmes built on true insights and market experience can help products establish their place and fulfill their true potential.”

As a Creston Health company, RDC

works closely with sister organisations that have an interest in health, specifically PAN Advertising and tmwdigitalhealth, with which it has developed a digital offering to help clients understand the change and opportunity around how healthcare professionals and patients seek out and receive information. The service creates unique customer relationship management strategies for the pharmaceutical industry, blending tools and techniques traditionally used to drive consumer insight.

Operating across both UK and international accounts, RDC also has a highly successful consumer health team who work directly for a range of high-profile brands, including Benecol, Ella’s Kitchen and Corsodyl. Julia Harries, Director of Client Strategy, oversees the consumer business with Associate Director Jane Seaton.

For RDC MD Warne, the future lies not only in the diversity of the company’s communications expertise, but also in the quality of the team that underpins it. “Our passion for excellence never dims and our investment in our new medical education offering, international network, digital and CRM has ensured our positioning in this competitive marketplace is clear and, we hope, recognised,” she says.

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