



Co-founder and director Jo Neave

A ROCK solid approach

ROCK medical communications explains why a good medical education campaign is the bedrock of successful pre- and post-launch brand messaging and positioning

It's scarcely been a year since ROCK medical communications, was launched as a new player in medical education, in the unflinching belief that medical education is the foundation of medical communications and is essential for brand growth no matter what stage in its lifecycle.

And in the first 12 months, ROCK – the specialist medical education division of award-winning PR agency Red Door Communications – has already become an established brand, with a team of 12 medical education specialists, turnover of more than £1 million and a client base that includes AstraZeneca, GlaxoSmithKline, Pfizer and ViiV Healthcare.

So what is the secret of its success? According to co-founder and director Jo Neave (née Satchell) the company has responded to the industry's needs with intelligence, creativity and above all, market insight. "Pharmaceutical companies are quite rightly looking for greater partnerships from their agencies to ensure their corporate and brand's educational objectives are met and carried out to the highest quality."

"Therefore it is essential this is done by real specialists in the area who can draw on their knowledge to offer the right answers and/or raise the right questions. Keeping your powder dry and doing what you are good at ultimately limits the risk in what has been a financially unsettling time."

Medical education is a specialist skill and ROCK has recruited writers, scientists and communicators with an agency background and experience in global, European and the UK markets. As Neave explains: "We employ the very best talent at ROCK, those who can challenge and provide a stimulating environment for our clients to seek out the killer strategy or test their current foundations. The effectiveness of this approach has resulted in significant growth and client confidence."

And it is clearly striking a chord. A recent audit showed clients consider ROCK to be 'visionary' and 'leading in its field' while still 'producing quality outputs' and retaining its 'customer-friendly approach'.

Neave continues: "A good medical education campaign is the bedrock of

successful pre- and post-launch brand messaging and positioning. Impactful educational programmes built on true insights and market experience is critical for products to establish their place and fulfil their true potential."

Medical education is about sharing knowledge in an ethical and transparent manner, but it doesn't have to be boring. "We pride ourselves on thinking creatively about the most effective way of entering into a dialogue with key customers about a disease area and the product choice. It's all about meeting their needs," comments Neave.

"And while medical education may be the bedrock on which everything else in the marketing mix is built, it shouldn't be forgotten once the product is launched. We believe medical education has an important role to play throughout the product lifecycle as new evidence arises, opinions change and products are restructured. It is the duty of pharmaceutical companies to provide excellent ongoing education to ensure every healthcare professional is fully aware of its position within treatment pathways," she adds. Through analysing

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clinical trial data and market opinion, an effective clinical story flow for the product can be developed to help other members of the marketing team deliver a strategic promotional plan.

"As we all know we have moved away from the blockbuster to a nichebuster environment," says Neave. "So having the communications skills needed in orphan and ultra-orphan products, as well as in other technical and specialist areas, is critical. Again it shows the need for agencies to offer their clients the right mix of specialists, especially at the senior level."

Neave was taken on as head of medical education at sister agency

Red Door Communications two years ago with a clear brief to audit the medical education work done within the agency and come up with a strategy for the future – ROCK medical communications was launched a year later.

While ROCK offers clients a separate dedicated medical education team, it can also recommend PR support from Red Door Communications and vice-versa. But the sibling companies don't have to be bought as a package.

"It comes down to a matter of client choice," explains chief executive Catherine Warne, who oversees both companies. "For some clients an integrated team is essential and the

internal dialogue between the two companies is therefore very attractive. For others it's the individual talents of one team that can help achieve their goals."

"We offer the best of both worlds. The two companies have separate teams, resources and front doors, but still remain linked by a common bond of passion and excellence in delivery. The same applies to our relationship with the other Creston companies who operate in the pharmaceutical market, notably PAN Advertising and Digital TMW."

Neave is rightly proud of the company's achievements: "It's been a fantastic year and we must say thanks to our clients who have entrusted and worked with us to develop programmes that have had a truly positive impact on clinical practice. We are excited about next year and can't wait to get involved with new clients and together make their brands' foundations ROCK solid."

To read more about ROCK Medical Communications, go to www.rockmedcomms.com



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