

Career Case Study



Jo, Director, Agency

Job overview

Running a team of 40 specialist healthcare PR executives within a multinational full service PR consultancy. Providing senior counsel on client programmes - setting strategy and advising on tactical execution. Ensuring financial success and developing the overall direction of the consultancy via role on the Board of Directors.

Career path to current role?

Began life in the NHS as a communications assistant for a hospital trust following graduation (health and social science BSc). Progressed to the role of PR Manager, managing the hospital press office and marketing function, whilst undertaking a post graduate qualification in management studies in

order to broaden my business and marketing knowledge. After four years I wanted to work within a larger PR team so that I could learn from others as well as relying on my own experience, and I also felt that I wanted a better balance between proactive and reactive communications so I sought out a position in a healthcare communications consultancy. Since then I've never looked back and have since spent eight years in the consultancy arena, working for a range of public and private sector healthcare clients.

Why I chose this career?

Not sure I ever set out to work in healthcare PR from day one, but gradually I discovered that this was the perfect role for me. The variety of job role and task appeals to my hunger for learning, I am always surrounded by people that inspire and challenge, it offers the perfect balance of strategic thinking yet remains grounded in tactical execution and achieving results, and to top it all, the fact that it is specific to healthcare appeals to my need to have a career that I believe is worthwhile to society.

Typical day?

There is no such thing. One day I might be with a client discussing a particularly challenging issue for their business and helping to identify workable solutions, another might be spent onsite at an event the team has orchestrated. My working week can encompass anything from writing reports, hosting meetings or brainstorming, or travelling to meet doctors or clients halfway round the world, to meeting journalists for a quick bite to eat, studying financial spreadsheets, surfing the net to check out the latest media technology or holding an appraisal with a team member. What I like most about working in a PR consultancy is that we get so much exposure to the whole range of job tasks – from honing business skills so that we can run a client account right through to the tactical delivery of communications vehicles. This sets it

apart from other marketing, advertising and even medical education consultancies where the creative and account handling roles are often handled by separate staff.

Who do I get to work with?

This is a people industry so you need to be the type of person that gets a buzz out of meeting new people. As well as working alongside a really creative and clever bunch of people within the team, the job means that you have to work very closely with your client partners – whether they are PR specialists or marketing managers. Understanding their roles and everyday pressures is essential if we are to offer what they need. Working with frontline healthcare professionals, from eminent professors to GPs, keeps you focused on the ultimate goal of improving patient care, and can be a really humbling experience, however there is a real respect among all those working in healthcare that each individual plays their own role – we all have something to give. And of course journalists writing stories about healthcare are part of that too, so developing good working relationships across the board is essential for healthcare communicators.

What I love about my job / best bits?

What I love about my job is that the people I work alongside everyday give 100% because they want to – not because they are told to. This is a profession where self-motivation is so apparent, and this level of enthusiasm can be really infectious!

What don't I enjoy / worst bits?

I choose to commute into London where my office is based and the travelling can take its toll on my sanity at times. Saying that, it's great having a balance of city working life and a more peaceful home life.

Proudest moment?

Couldn't possibly choose one thing:- work that has generated meaningful results, seeing the impact of great team work, contributing to fantastic creative thinking, and more... but to be honest, the fact that I still have passion and enthusiasm for what I do twelve years on since I stumbled into healthcare communications is what's most important to me.