

THE ADVANTAGES OF ALIGNED AGENCIES



Many pharmaceutical companies work with two or more agencies to preserve the necessary boundaries between their medical and commercial teams. Maintaining these firewalls is often unwieldy and ineffective. There's a more efficient alternative.

Here's a sample 3-agency setup:

- 1 A medical education company focused on independent accredited continuing education
- 2 A medical communications agency specializing in scientific and promotional initiatives, such as advisory boards; congress and convention support; speaker bureau management; and the identification, training, and management of key opinion leaders
- 3 A creative advertising agency focused on commercialization strategies, brand identities, and omnichannel marketing

Rules and regulations defined by the FDA cordon off the continuing medical education company, but there's often no such barrier between the med comm and creative agencies. Without clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, a med comm company might help create a disease-state awareness campaign, while a creative agency assists with a speaker slide deck.

This lack of clarity causes tension and dysfunction between agency partners, especially if they end up competing for the same projects. Instead of collaboration, there's competition. Instead of integration, there's inefficiency.

Miscommunication leads to duplication of work and a failure to effectively incorporate data and analytics.

The consequences: Financial waste. Missed opportunities and misjudged insights. Misaligned messaging and flawed strategy.

Aligned agencies

Benchworks, a creative agency, and the HCA Group, a med comm company, have addressed these challenges by creating a formal partnership. We don't see each other as rivals. Instead, we've created a holistic relationship that prioritizes our clients and the patients they serve.

Our cohesive team works together efficiently and effectively. Knowledge-sharing is the norm and is reflected in team meetings, brainstorming sessions, and file sharing. Our culture of collaboration prevents duplication of efforts and fosters the formation of real-time insights, allowing the brands we serve to swiftly address their market challenges.

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The synergies and expertise between Benchworks and the HCA Group bring together decades of experience with credible, evidence-based content to help healthcare professionals get the information and education they need to do their job and ultimately improve the lives of patients most in need.

– Tom McDonnell, President, BW Health Group

The BW/HCA Advantage

Benchworks and the HCA Group use the following platforms and applications to maintain efficient operations and a simpatico relationship:

1 Aligned processes

We integrate job workflow and trafficking via document sharing and organize product schedules using a master status spreadsheet and Gantt chart.

2 Aligned systems

We communicate via Microsoft Teams, manage projects with Smartsheets, and route files through Ziflow for documentation and accountability. Shared file storage ensures both parties can access the most updated client assets and core documents.

3 Enhanced communication

We use a joint Teams channel to centralize all communication and hold biweekly leadership calls. Our communication system ensures all parties are aligned and aware of the latest decisions.

These best practices lead to:

1 Innovative ideas

Quarterly brainstorming sessions generate creative concepts.

2 Smooth onboarding

As personnel changes, insights and institutional knowledge are arduous to gather and transfer. Assimilating new team members is a manual, labor-intensive process that requires gathering files, summarizing findings, and reformatting slides. We avoid this churn.

3 Time and cost savings

Improved alignment on strategy and messaging yields fewer rounds of review and less time tracking down assets. Rather than supervising multiple agency partners, the brand manager can focus on other priorities.

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The practical advantage of the HCA/Benchworks partnership is that we have eyes on the client's business from every angle. The Benchworks team is in meetings that HCA is not and vice versa. Through our processes, we share knowledge that allows each of us to provide the client with new ideas that save money, are innovative, and precisely align with their strategy.

– Larry Hamacher, VP, Strategy and Business Development, HCA Group

Case Study

Real-world application, however, best highlights the advantages of our aligned agency approach.

Despite the challenges the following situation created, we helped the client reach its performance targets and goals through enhanced communication, innovative ideation, cost savings, and other strategies.

SITUATION

Working with Benchworks as its agency of record, a large pharmaceutical company successfully executed the launch of a product for schizophrenia in March 2020. Unfortunately, the launch occurred just 2 weeks ahead of widespread pandemic lockdowns. Sales reps carrying print assets to face-to-face office calls, which originally was to comprise the bulk of marketing efforts to healthcare providers, was no longer possible. The brand was forced to quickly pivot to nonpersonal promotion, reconfiguring strategy and deploying a revised plan based on digital marketing tactics. Sales reps immediately transitioned to telesales.

Realizing the change would be challenging for reps, the client wanted to provide its sales force with additional support. They began exploring how to educate HCPs about the brand by connecting key opinion leaders (KOLs) and target prescribers in a virtual environment. To work, the approach would need a partner that had a platform in place, could handle the logistics, understood how to use existing assets in a virtual environment, and was ready to move quickly.

ACTION

Benchworks introduced the HCA Group to the client as a potential partner.

As the agency of record, Benchworks shared with the HCA Group the brand assets required to produce program materials, facilitated and navigated the initial setup with the client, and assisted with the approval process.

The HCA Group then created content and developed a speaker bureau (including faculty training) of highly respected and well-known KOLs in the field. Phase 1 took a targeted approach, executing education events called Peer Dialogues. These sessions leveraged a KOL from the speaker bureau to give an informative talk about the brand for each targeted office.

Throughout the campaign, the two agencies maintained a collaborative partnership with each other. They stayed in close contact, holding quarterly ideation sessions. During those calls, both Benchworks and the HCA Group shared insights that filled in the gaps and provided perspective on things one agency or the other might not have known.

Overall, more than 85 events were conducted in Phase 1, including 3 national webcasts and nearly 110 Peer Dialogues. The brand is now shifting to Phase 2, a broader reach strategy that kicks off virtually but tentatively transitions to in-person programming in late 2021.

Case Study (continued)

RESULT

As of April 30, 2021



HCA initially trained **13 KOLs** as speakers with **3 additional speakers** added to the bureau in April 2021

HCA organized 126 Peer Dialogues from 2020 to present

107
completed sessions

19
additional sessions confirmed



These sessions educated **nearly 500 MDs and NP/PAs** about the client's brand

>60%

As of April 2021, over 60% of prescriptions for the brand have come from HCPs who participated in one of these education programs.

Contact us

To learn more about the benefits of the Benchworks-HCA Group partnership, contact **Tom McDonnell** at tmcdonnell@benchworks.com or **Larry Hamacher** at lhamacher@hcagroup.com and visit our websites, hcagroup.com and benchworks.com