



CHALLENGES

- Communicate the value of the R&D division to the rest of their company (pharmaceuticals)
- Do so by telling six innovation stories through video, using the insight of 21 researchers
- Meet a tight deadline for the first story



SOLUTION

- A well-tested, flexible process for video production, from which other assets can also be created
- Content experts who can turn complex subjects into engaging narratives
- Creative flair to make content and visuals work together to convey innovation



RESULTS

- Fast, smooth approvals
- Deadlines met
- Positive reception for all videos
- Articles created without further interviewing required

Show, don't tell

Using video to bring messaging to life

“We're not communicating our value clearly or consistently enough to employees.”

This was the challenge that led the R&D division of a global pharmaceuticals company, with the support of its change management partner, Swallows Flight Associates, to implement a new internal communication plan.

A bit more visibility, please

The R&D division in question has thousands of researchers and support staff around the world. Although the division is the powerhouse of the pharmaceuticals company, at the time it was largely invisible to colleagues in other parts of the company.

The purpose of the new plan, therefore, was to change this: to ensure that every employee could be an ambassador for the innovation at the heart of the company. This was vital to attract the kind of employees and partners who would keep the company at the cutting edge.

Wanted: a fresh approach

The new plan had many interlocking parts, including an editorial plan to consistently communicate the key messages. Managing this part of the plan was Lucy Atkinson, Director of Swallows Flight Associates.

When the plan called for a series of six videos and articles, each telling a different aspect of the innovation story, Lucy got in touch with HN Marketing and two other agencies. The other agencies had worked for her pharmaceuticals client before, which made them an easy, convenient choice.

“But they were a bit stuck in the past, used to a particular sort of corporate style and approach,” says Lucy. “We wanted the visual style of the videos to communicate the theme of innovation, and HN knew how to push the envelope creatively. HN immediately understood what we were trying to do and challenged us, in a good way, to clarify our thinking.”

How many people are we filming?

This was a big project with an immovable initial deadline. The company wanted the first video ready for the launch of a new employee intranet, with the five other videos following monthly. It made sense (not least for budgetary reasons) to minimise the number of travel and filming days and get all of the filming done up front.

But there were 21 researchers to film, in America and Europe. They were senior people, always on the move and a real challenge to organise. The schedule also had to allow for an approvals process involving the interviewees, the R&D communications team, and two different legal teams.

ABOUT

Swallows
Flight Associates

Swallows Flight Associates helps organisations deliver change programmes, from strategy to employee engagement. Based in the UK, the agency works with local and global companies, helping them to achieve their objectives for cultural and organisational change.





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OK, no problem

“The HN team wasn’t at all fazed by the scale and scope of the project,” says Lucy. “They were organised — and flexible when needed. I saw that I could leave them to get on with it, so I could focus on other things. I could trust HN to deal directly with my client in a professional way.”

HN kicked off three processes in parallel, each designed to achieve the company’s objectives on time and within budget.

1. Content

One of HN’s writers had a phone interview with every researcher due to be filmed, then developed an outline of each video (and a version for each interviewee covering just their part). The outline wasn’t a script, but guidance on the key points to be captured. It served two purposes:

- It was shared with everyone in the approvals process to get their buy-in; and to uncover any content issues *before* filming. This ensured that the footage captured on the day was fit for purpose, and that approvals flowed smoothly.
- It helped the interviewees prepare for their filming session, so that on the day, everyone could focus on getting the best performance rather than working out what to say.

“HN was comfortable talking with senior people about complex scientific subjects, and came away able to extract and convey the essential elements,” says Lucy. “The process also worked really well to keep everyone informed about what was happening and what was expected of them. In the end the videos sailed through approvals with generally only minor tweaks.”

2. Logistics

Four trips were arranged (two to America, two to Europe) to capture footage of all 21 participants. The editorial plan was always to create in-depth articles to sit alongside each video, so HN proposed that the filming days be used to kill two birds with one stone.

“HN pointed out that we could film both the key takeaways for each video and a longer interview with each expert to use as source material for the articles,” says Lucy. “This worked perfectly. We got everything we needed without having to go back to the experts and ask for more of their time.”

All of the filming was completed as planned, with great results. This, despite heavy snow during one of the American trips and the early birth of a baby (accommodated by fitting in a side-trip to the new father’s home to capture his interview).

3. Visuals

The visual concept had a whiteboard as the central idea, which worked on several levels:

- It was immediately recognisable as a metaphor for ‘experts at work, coming up with the next big idea’, reinforcing the theme of innovation.
- It was dynamic yet functional, combining the filmed interviews with animation to engage the viewer and help convey the cutting-edge nature of the subject matter.

This visual style called for the team to use a mobile green screen for all the filming, with animations devised and created afterwards.

Loads of views and ‘likes’

“The results have been really positive,” says Lucy. “The first video was ranked as one of the highest in views and likes, and all of the videos were promoted to the company’s global portal. Everyone was really happy with the outcome.”

The company is also looking to derive more value from the filming by using some of the footage for other purposes, such as creating new videos for internal and external events.

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info@hn-marketing.co.uk +44 1628 622187 www.hn-marketing.co.uk