

By Robin Robinson

Three successful agency and client teams discuss the importance of a positive working relationship.

There are many factors that go into successful agency/client relationships: communications, transparency, clear expectations, respect, and appreciation. All of these crucial elements and more play a part in these three successful agency-client relationships, and, almost as important is that element that can't be manufactured: chemistry.

### ► The Chemistry Click



**BRIAN PETERS**  
Medexus Pharma

*Having chemistry with people during the agency selection process is most important. If you don't have that personal connection, it just becomes work, and that is never truly successful.*



**FRANK X. POWERS**  
Elevate Healthcare

*Bringing a strong point of view to the table that encourages the client to think differently is a good lesson for all agencies and clients.*

Brian Peters, VP, sales and marketing at Medexus Pharma and Frank Powers, managing partner at Elevate Healthcare had chemistry from the first phone call.

"At the time of the call, we were both traveling and we were both coming home from airports in different cities on a Friday at 9 pm," Frank recalls. "We spent close to an hour on the phone, discussing our backgrounds — personal and professional — what his company was up against and the challenges ahead. We connected on that very first phone call, fast forward 18 months and it's still the same between us."

According to Brian, chemistry between partners is the No. 1 factor in determining a successful working relationship, and it is not something that can be generated.

# Brand Bonds: Agency-Client Relationships



"For me, either the chemistry is there or it isn't," Brian says. "You cannot create it. You cannot force it. You cannot make it happen. And I don't think there's any way that you can fake your way through it."

### The Beginning

Brian was looking for a new agency partner. He had worked with large agencies and mid-size agencies and decided to look for a smaller agency that could be nimble and could grow along with the needs of his organization.

"Our CEO and I knew walking out of the pitch that Elevate was the partner we wanted to have to grow our fledgling U.S. business

into a bigger business over time," he says. "It took less than three hours with Frank, Lorna and their team to be totally comfortable with making the decision to have them as our partners. We were so comfortable that our decision was made during the short elevator ride leaving the meeting. You just know when you click with someone."

"Brian brought his own special wisdom to the meeting, which helped ignite the chemistry," Frank says. "First, for the initial presentation, he didn't ask us to provide any creative pieces but rather to focus on a strategic business question instead."

For that initial pitch meeting, Brian asked Frank and his team just one question: "How

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would you re-launch this product, if you were me?"

"I didn't ask him to do any creative, I didn't ask him to be an advertising agency," Brian says. "I said that we wanted to see examples of their work, but I wanted them to answer the business question," he says.

Frank's team was one of four agencies competing for the Medexus business, and beyond the chemistry, his team also pushed the boundaries of Brian's perception about the brand in a way that inspired him. Having worked on the agency side for a number of years, Brian felt he already knew his brand and the best way to approach it, but the team at Elevate challenged him to think in a new way that was advantageous.

"Working with Elevate has opened up my mind to thinking differently," he says.

Likewise, Frank says Brian's challenge at the ask enabled his team members to stretch their muscles and put together some thought starters and provocative points of view.

"We dug in and did our due diligence, we spoke with physicians, investigated the landscape, and we presented another perspective that Brian was open to considering," Frank says. "He's a professional and knows what he wants. But he is also giving the agency the latitude to do our job and come to him with options and creative thinking. My team appreciates this because we want to deliver a superior product, and Brian holds us accountable to that."

At the meeting, Brian also made sure to connect with each person on Frank's team in a personal way. And the team noticed.

"Once we got through the business part of things, Brian took some personal interest in asking everyone what they did outside of work — what their interests and hobbies are," Frank

says. "He won over our team that day because he took genuine interest in who they were as people. Lorna and I don't always see that in an agency-client relationship. And while chemistry is important, he also put the work in to get to know us and develop a relationship."

### The Challenge

Brian's challenge was that he had a product that had been on the market for about four and a half years, and not only did it need a refresh, but it was about to face a new competitor in the market. And he needed the update done yesterday.

The product was leading the market, and Frank's team's mission was to make sure it remained at the top. With not a lot of time to do it, the team successfully renewed the brand through their creative development process, but it wasn't easy.

"The timeline in which we worked together was tight," Frank says. "To pull off the creative campaign and bring Brian's vision for the brand to life, we consolidated the timeframe to hit our goals."

Frank's team members didn't do all the heavy lifting by themselves. Brian and his team provided necessary access to the full medical-legal and IT staff, including anyone who needed to be onboarded to expedite the creation and make decisions for the new campaign.

"Brian made sure out of the gate to give us access to the players we needed to be successful," Frank says. "And if we weren't getting what we needed, I could have an honest, direct dialogue with him."

Very early on in the process, members of Frank's team attended a national sales meeting to get a feel for the product and the sales reps' needs. Brian says the Elevate folks rolled up their sleeves and got involved in the workshops, developed relationships, and interacted with the sales reps.

"I got positive feedback from the sales reps, including people who had worked with an advertising agency before, who said this was the most fun and interesting interactions that they've had with advertising agency executives."

### Lessons Learned

While the chemistry between them helped them click, they were also able to challenge each other in a way that spurred growth for both of them as well as their teams.

For example, Elevate brought a new perspective to the brand that Brian had never thought of before. "The way that they thought about our business made me realize that I needed to push myself out of my comfort zone to think differently about the business," Brian says. "The Elevate team stretched my thinking and presented something totally new. This was as big a part of the decision to hire them as the chemistry."

Frank says Brian gave a master class on making things personal. "From day one, he made it personal about, not only his brand, but his situation with the company, and where Medexus was heading in the future, and his vision for the growth of that company," he says. "He talked about the acquisition and he painted a picture that he wanted Elevate to be, not only a part of the company's growth, but a big part of its success."

Chemistry, growth stemming from challenges, personal touches are elements that make teams work well together, work hard together, and celebrate together. Brian sums up the success as a good dose of professional respect combined with chemistry at first sight. And he suspected this would be the case before going into that first pitch.

"I did my due diligence on Elevate before I met with them," he says. "When I met Lorna and Frank in person, it just confirmed what I was already hoping would be true. I can honestly say they've not let me down a single time and that everything that I found in my research, has been present in all the work going forward."

### ▶ Two Teams, One Goal



**STEFANIE NACAR**  
GSK

*We have always felt we have a shared responsibility. We work together as a unified team.*



**KIM MIDDLETON**  
Intouch Solutions

*It's about trust and communication. People always work hard when they feel invested in and cared about.*

The programs we've done in the past two and a half years are what I'm most proud of in my career. This is what happens when great teams are put together, who trust each other, and understand why it's important to create great work that benefits the cancer community.

**STEFANIE NACAR**  
GSK

Stefanie Nacar, head, U.S. oncology communications at GSK, and Kim Middleton, senior VP, client services, at Intouch Solutions and their respective teams work together as one. The teams have a relationship based on trust and honesty, and a common passion for patients and for executing on bold ideas.

This recipe for success has culminated in many creative programs over the two-plus years they have worked together, including campaigns in the oncology category.

Teams working as one unit is not a coincidence. Both women strive to be straight shooters, good communicators, and they have mad skills for picking the right members for a team. Neither women fear challenges nor avoid the hard questions. This foundation is the glue that keeps them on track to work efficiently and effectively and virtually solve problems before they occur.

"The Intouch team has always understood what we want: concepts that are big and bold. We are always looking for better ways to reach our audiences," Stefanie says. "Willingness and trust allows us both to challenge each other until the best ideas rise to the top."

On one occasion, the two teams put their heads together to create an internal presentation that would give executive leaders a chance to review creative concepts for the rebranding of Tesaro in an innovative, creative, engaging way.

"For this project, we brought our digital prowess and creativity together to solve a problem," Stefanie says. "We brainstormed

together. This was a joint effort with us riffing off of each other. We have always felt we have a shared responsibility."

"We had this idea to create a virtual art gallery to show off the new creative," Kim says. "The event turned out fantastic, and that's because Stef is willing to take calculated risks."

"We have executive leaders all over the country who are busy, so we took the campaign to them, so to speak," Stefanie says. "We created an art gallery environment where Leaders were able to participate and provide immediate feedback, ultimately getting us to our goal in a more efficient, collaborative manner."

"In one hour, we were able to accomplish more than what we could have ever done the traditional way," Kim says.

"This was a fun way to use technology, and we will do it again in the future," Stefanie says.

### The Power of We

This is just one of the many homeruns the teams have orchestrated together. They created not one, but four successful mini campaigns under the theme #OvaryAct, one for each phase of a woman's life.

"This program was so wonderful and successful because it speaks directly to women and care partners," Stefanie says. "We really care for and invest ourselves in the patient community."

And by "we" she means Kim and her team, who also understand the needs of the community. Kim's team is emotionally invested in the patients and throughout the development process of the campaign, they met and spent time with many patients. They came to understand their point of view through experiences.

"Intouch really understood our connection to the ovarian cancer community," Stefanie says. "I've been in the industry for a long time and I've seen people approach agency partnerships very differently. When we had an opportunity to speak to patients or have a patient summit, Kim's team was always there, just as if they were part of our organization. This gave them opportunities to hear firsthand and really appreciate our requests for the community."

Another reason the campaigns were so successful is that they brought a bit of levity to a very serious topic. Through the team's research, they learned that the community appreciated boldness, positivity and hopefulness. They like to have fun, and want to be a part of the community. The campaigns celebrated these insights and the result was a hopeful campaign, versus one that might lean on more educational or clinical content.

"Oncology is a tough therapeutic category and at the end of the day, we're trying to help people who are impacted cancer," Stefanie says. "Not every day is an easy day. We get very connected to the patients. We have respect for one another to get the work done. It's a very supportive relationship. We all saw the importance of the endgame of what we were delivering."

### Unified Support

Stefanie brings incredible clinical knowledge and experience that is foundational to all of the work. This helps the agency team to create a great brief, and ultimately great work.

"Stef is brilliant from a scientific standpoint," Kim says. "When working on creative briefs, just one sentence from Stef makes them better."

This made it possible for the team to complete goals in a shorter amount of time than normal. For example, the team launched a prolific social media footprint in less than a year, and she says, it was actually fun.

"The relationship between the two teams is like 'lightning in a bottle' and with relationships like this you are able to have fun and laugh and also get a lot of work done."

The chemistry was developed based on an open and direct relationship that might make others uncomfortable but created a great symmetry between Stefanie and Kim.

"We have always been able to sit down and talk through problems; if there were any concerns or challenges, we spoke directly," Kim says. "If Stef had a problem, she would call me and say, this isn't working. And we'd fix it."

One reason these difficult conversations were made easy is because both women are respectful and supportive of one another and their respective teams.

"No matter what happens or what challenges arise, we feel supported by Stef and her team," Kim says. "This is incredibly comforting. It makes the team work harder, and come together with solutions when challenges arise."

Feedback has been a crucial part of their relationship equation.

"Our teams have accomplished some tremendous programs," Stefanie says. "The programs we've done in the past two and a half years are what I'm most proud of in my career. This is what happens when great teams are put together, who trust each other, and understand why it's important to create great work that benefits the cancer community."



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## ► Mutual Respect



**BETH HAMILTON**  
Jazz Pharmaceuticals

*Getting to know the faces and personalities behind the work solidifies that we're all on the same team.*



**TIM ANDERSON**  
Dudnyk

*By being compassionate and respectful, you build a bond early, and this creates supportive teamwork.*

Beth Hamilton, director of marketing, hematology/oncology, at Jazz Pharmaceuticals and Tim Anderson, senior VP, client services, at Dudnyk have been working together for almost five years. Their relationship is built on mutual respect and support.

"I could tell right away that Dudnyk was the team for me," Beth says. "The agency had been working on the product before I came, and their team members helped to onboard me. Within the first few weeks, they did a big scientific download for me, and I have been impressed ever since."

Tim had worked with Jazz previously in his role at Dudnyk, but Beth was the last puzzle piece to complete the team dynamic.

"As we integrated a new brand into the agency and began partnering with the Jazz team, it was clear that there was a critical piece missing, and Beth filled that role and then some," he says.

How Tim and Beth work together as a team has become a model at both companies.

According to Beth, the model boils down to trust and a respectful challenging of ideas. Beth believes being able to respectfully challenge ideas is the most important element in creating success. Both partners believe this type of interaction allows the best ideas to come to the top.

"If you're not being challenged, you're only as good as what's in your own mind," Beth says. "It's important to have another person who is extremely knowledgeable to be able to have an honest and open discussion to work through different approaches," Beth says. "Dudnyk is absolutely the team for me. If I need to think something through I'll talk

to them about it and we'll bat things around and tease it out until we have the best idea for our approach."

## Keeping the Focus

Dudnyk works on many rare disease accounts, and specifically with Jazz, the agency partners on a very ultra-rare disease. Tim points out that it is Beth who keeps them all focused on the endgame and why the work is being done in the first place.

"One thing that Jazz is very good at, and specifically Beth, is emphasizing the importance of the cause and the need to ground everything we do — the plan, the development, the deployment of resources — around the patient," Tim says. "Beth has been the steward of this approach, weaving the patient into everything we do, whether it's from the stage at a POA or national sales meeting, or on a sales call, she makes sure we always have patient lens in mind."

The reasoning is simple, Beth says. "No matter what you're trying to do, if people don't believe in the cause, the execution is never going to be as good," she says. "In our relationship, Tim knows that I like to lead through inspiration. Every time I do anything, it's always grounded in the patient. Dudnyk helps me build programs that have a patient-centric undertone."

Until recently, Beth was the sole person on her marketing team, but now she leads a cross-functional group setting one strategy for the brand and for the company that everyone ladders up to.

"Tim is a strategy partner, and we couldn't do it without him," she says. "I also never say vendor. Dudnyk is our partner. There's a level of respect that we're a team. I don't look at the relationship as they're Dudnyk and I'm Jazz. We're one team and we're in this together. We all have roles and responsibilities and maybe I'm the decision maker, but their input is very important to making those decisions."

Beth and Tim have worked together long enough to recognize the nuances of each other's working styles. For instance, even if she isn't saying so, Tim can tell when Beth isn't quite sold on an idea and she can tell when he is doubtful of a certain approach.

"Whether it's through nonverbal communication when we are together in person or a certain tone over the phone or a certain line of questioning, we understand each other's styles," he says.

If you're not being challenged, you're only as good as what's in your own mind.

**BETH HAMILTON**  
Jazz Pharmaceuticals

"We can then communicate the decision to the team so they understand the approach as well."

## The Challenge

Their relationship has withstood some tough challenges, especially when they were pressured to switch up the approach when the campaign was taking time to take effect. A stressful time for both teams, they continued to stick with their original plan because they believed the strategy was right on point. However, the waiting game was a bit nerve-racking on both sides.

"Ultimately, we are trying to help save lives, so we needed to make sure that we were taking the right approach to education and partnering with the institutions to provide education for their teams," Beth says.

The teams know very well that it takes time to build disease awareness from scratch, and for the efforts to take effect. But the temptation to change the plan when the results were not happening as fast as expected was very strong. "We knew we had the right approach and we stuck with it," Beth says. "And we were right. The campaign worked because it did raise awareness and sensitivity to the disease and clinicians are now recognizing symptoms and making the diagnosis."

Tim says the situation was stressful for both sides.

"It was an anxious time for the agency as we waited to see what bore out," he says. "We stuck to our guns, and we got through it because on day one we started building our relationship, our bond was strong. A strong relationship makes it that much easier during tougher times."

Tim adds: "If there is a bond based on trust, transparency follows. And with a transparent partnership then there is nothing that can get in the way of achieving not only the brand goals, but the agency-client goals." **PV**





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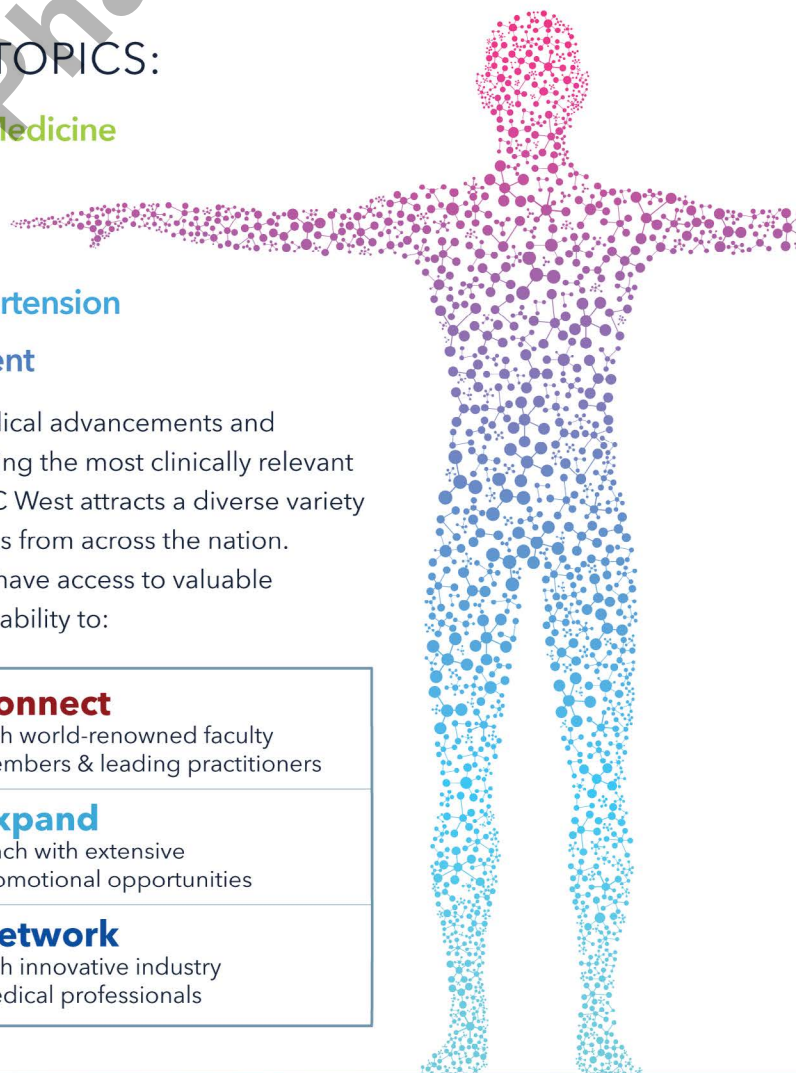
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