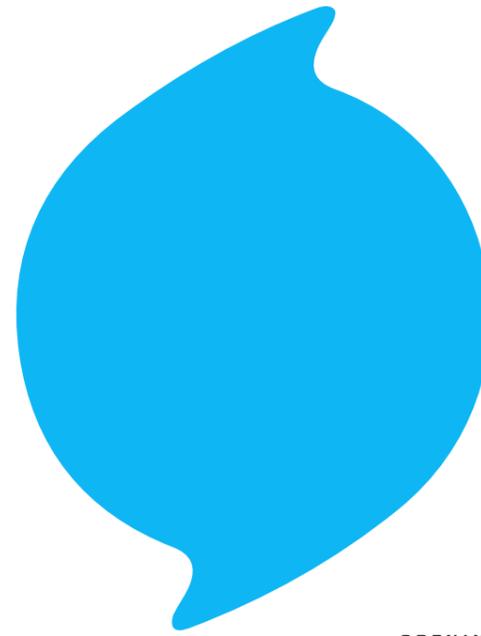


— 2019 —

FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS TO OPEN UP  
CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IN HEALTHCARE  
AND SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATIONS



90'ten



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### PARTNERSHIP

A Healthcare Communications Association (HCA) initiative in partnership with 90TEN

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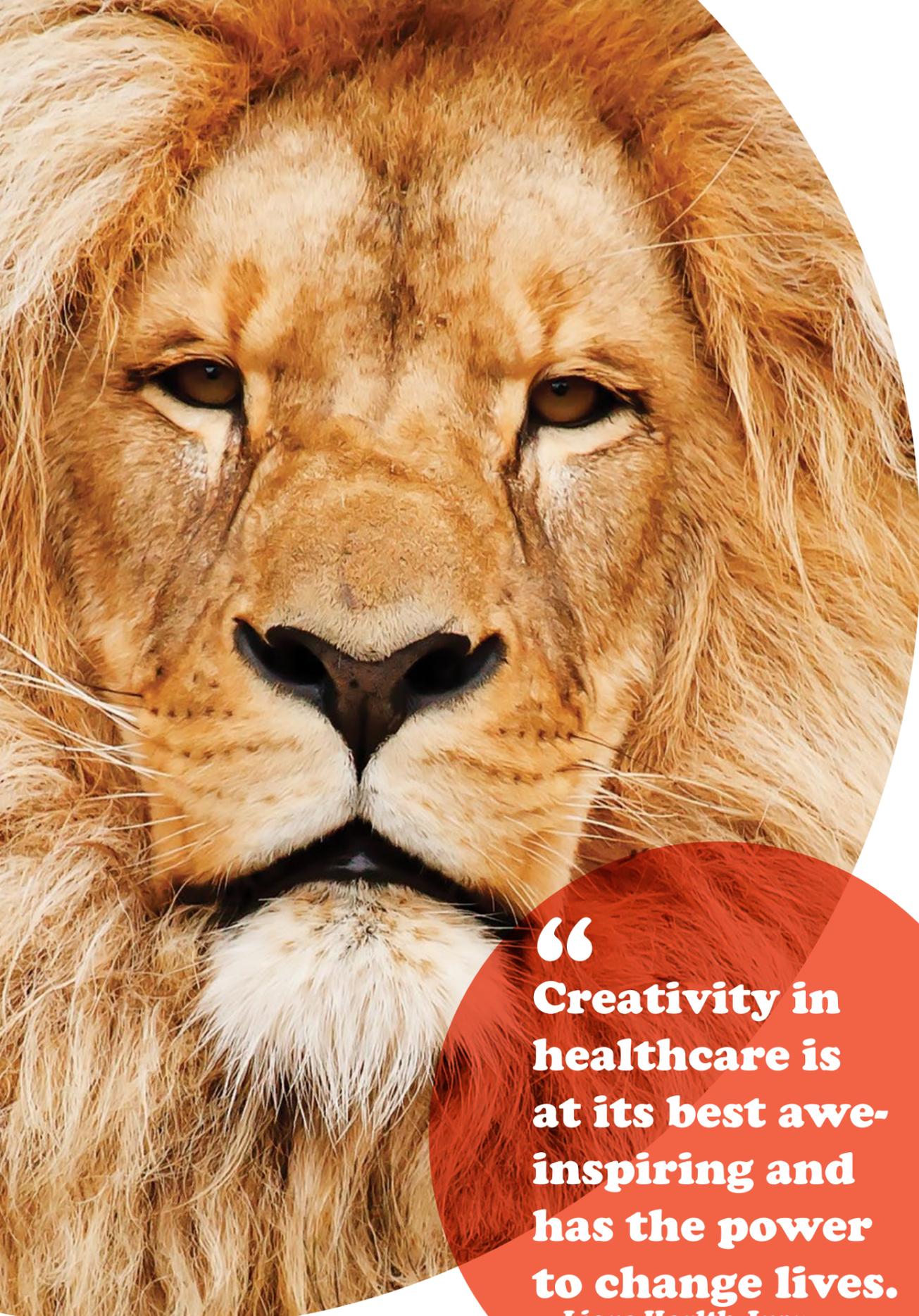
## Opening up creativity and innovation in healthcare communications

**Cannes or Canned?** is a joint initiative between the Healthcare Communications Association (HCA) and 90TEN to increase creativity and innovation in healthcare and scientific communications. It was launched in 2018 with the news that, for the second year in a row, pharma communications had missed out on a Grand Prix at the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity.

“Awards aren’t everything, but Cannes really made us think. Given the life-changing subject matter we deal with every day, healthcare should be leading the communications industry in terms of innovation,” said Edel McCaffrey, HCA Executive Committee member, who, along with Peter Impey, Managing Director of 90TEN Communications, were the driving forces in setting up the initiative.

**“We looked at the talent, passion and creativity in our industry and asked ourselves why this wasn’t always translating into groundbreaking, industry-leading work.”**

After discovering that colleagues in the HCA and wider industry shared their concerns, **Cannes or Canned?** was born. Its first mission was to answer two questions: *what is holding back creativity and innovation in healthcare communications?* and *what can we do to open up its potential?*



**“Creativity in healthcare is at its best awe-inspiring and has the power to change lives.”**  
— Lions Health Jury

## The healthcare communications innovation team

**Cannes or Canned?** brings together UK and internationally based senior communicators from seven pharmaceutical companies:

### **Philip Atkinson**

Global Head, Scientific Communications – Oncology & Haematology, **Roche**

### **Paul Dixey**

Multichannel Lead, **Novartis UK**

### **Lilianna Hussein**

Director Communications, Oncology, **Pfizer Global**

### **Heidi LaPensée**

Brand Lead, CNS, **Sanofi UK**

### **Catherine Priestley**

Head of BioPharmaceuticals R&D Communications, Global Corporate Affairs, **AstraZeneca**

### **Mark Reale**

Director of Corporate Affairs, UK & Ireland, **Celgene**

### **Bhavin Vaid**

Head of Global Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, **Ferring Pharmaceuticals**

## Guest contributors and facilitators

### **Robert Bready**

Former Director, **ASOS**

### **Kay Etherington**

Director, Marketing Academy, **Lego Group**

### **Sander Siezen**

Former Head of Mobile, **RBS**

### **Charlie Cadbury**

Co-founder and CEO, **SayItNow**

### **Edel McCaffrey**

Independent Communications Consultant, **HCA**

### **Mike Dixon**

Chief Executive, **HCA**

### **Paul Tanner**

Chairman, **90TEN**

### **Peter Impey**

Managing Director, Communications, **90TEN**

### **Alison Doughty**

Managing Director, Medical, **90TEN**

Over the course of two workshops, and with input from innovators within and beyond healthcare, this team came together to find ways to unleash healthcare's capacity for innovation.

Job roles correct at time of the second workshop held in March 2019

CREATIVITY

Innovation

CREATIVITY IS THE ABILITY TO  
GENERATE NEW IDEAS, ALTERNATIVES,  
SOLUTIONS, AND POSSIBILITIES IN A  
UNIQUE AND DIFFERENT WAY.

INNOVATION IS THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF NEW IDEAS THAT CREATE VALUE. A  
BETTER AND SMARTER WAY OF DOING  
ANYTHING IS INNOVATION.

# Unless we innovate, we risk losing our voice

The team's first task was to identify what good looks like. A few themes started to emerge:

## Be brave, be human, be ready to respond:

[Sanofi's epic retort](#) to Roseanne Barr's tweet alleging that it was their treatment that made her racist was widely praised by the media and industry. It was the tone and quick response that gave this simple tweet a human face to the company, and it was the right thing to do.

## Keep it simple:

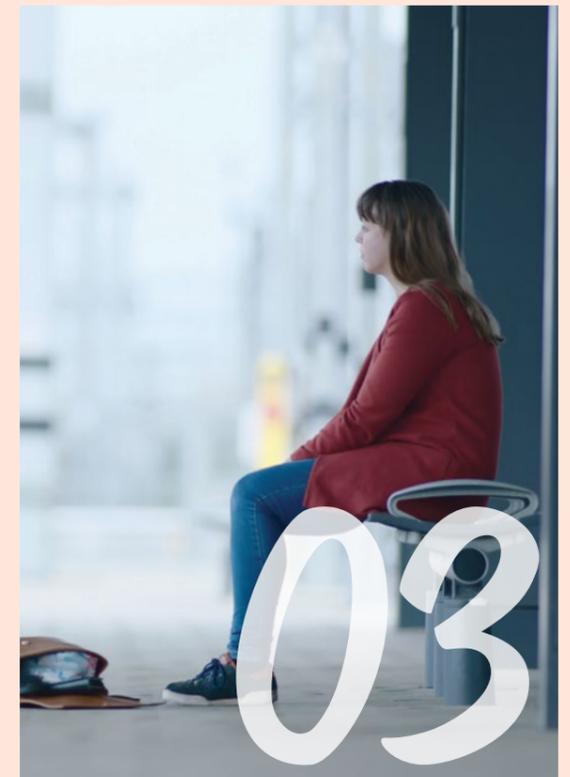
The [Immunity Charm](#) is a bracelet and awareness campaign designed to boost immunisation rates among babies in Afghanistan. By using a traditional bracelet that is commonly given to children as a symbol of protection, and adding colour coded beads representing immunisations, parents were more accepting of the vaccinations. Innovation doesn't need to be technological. It can be born from the simplest of ideas.

## Understand the human truth:

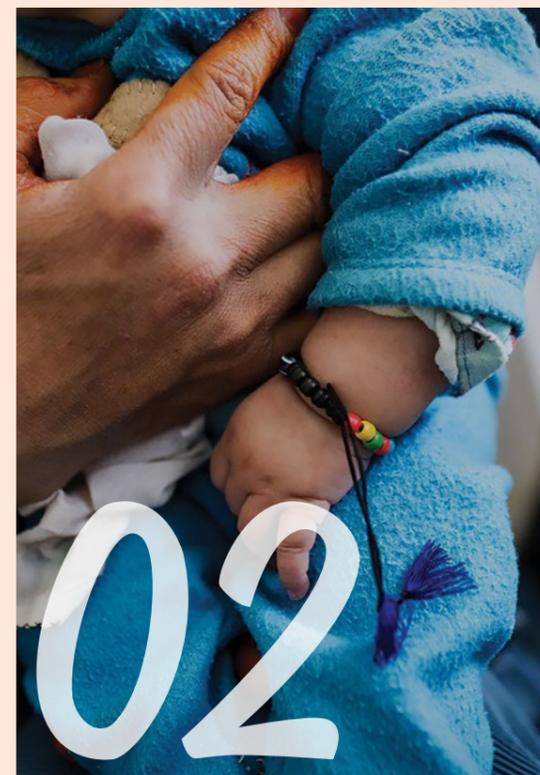
[Small Talk Saves Lives](#) is a simple idea based on the insight that the small talk we use every day can be enough to interrupt someone's suicidal thoughts. It's a great example of how investing in research upfront to uncover a universal human truth went on to build a campaign that saved lives.

## Put yourself in their shoes:

[Flight HIV101](#) used a drag queen and a dating app to help HIV positive gay men make the right life choices about their health. Having a deep understanding of the channels, messages and messengers your audience trust is crucial for success.



Picture credit: Network Rail – Small Talk Saves Lives

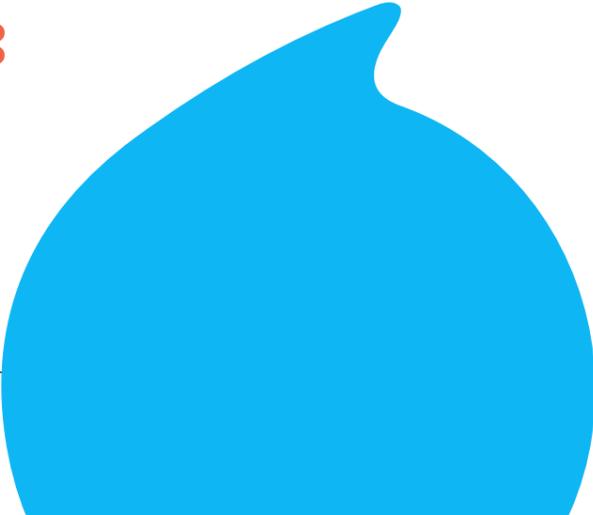


Picture credit: The Ministry of Public Health in Afghanistan – The Immunity Charm



Picture credit: Gilead Sciences – Flight HIV101

“  
**Communications  
can play a vital role  
in ensuring these  
innovations reach  
their potential and  
reach the people who  
need them the most:  
the patients whose  
health is at risk.**



IN SPITE OF THESE EXAMPLES, IT WAS AGREED THAT OTHER INDUSTRIES ARE LEADING THE WAY IN LOOKING BEYOND TRADITIONAL MARKETING APPROACHES. FOR EXAMPLE, PHARMA COMMUNICATIONS HAS BEEN SLOW TO EMBRACE SOCIAL MEDIA AND RESPOND TO CHANGES IN THE WAY PEOPLE CONSUME MEDIA, ESPECIALLY THE SHIFT FROM TRADITIONAL TO CITIZEN JOURNALISM. THIS INCLUDES INFLUENCER ENGAGEMENT – AN AREA WHERE HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATIONS HAS FOLLOWED, RATHER THAN LED.

At the same time, healthcare is changing. Tech companies like Amazon, Google and Apple have transformed the way we live and communicate, and now they are moving into the healthcare space. Pharmaceutical companies, meanwhile, are bringing evermore ambitious and life-changing therapies to patients. They are harnessing new, agile ways of working to transform the way they develop and deliver medicines. They are investing in emerging technologies and artificial intelligence and exploring how they can be applied to the challenge of finding new and better ways to treat – and cure – diseases. Communications can play a vital role in ensuring these innovations reach their potential and reach the people who need them the most: the patients whose health is at risk.

In spite of its mission to prevent, treat and cure diseases, pharma's reputation continues to lag behind that of other industries. In a recent Gallup poll carried out in the US, people were more than twice as likely to view the pharmaceutical industry negatively than positively, and it was the least positively viewed of all 25 industries included in the poll. Bringing our industry's innovations to life through communications that engage, educate and inspire could play a part in re-building a more positive reputation.

The pharmaceutical industry is fuelled by discovery and innovation but, unless we start enabling that innovation to reach our communications, our relevance could ebb away. The alternative to innovation is stagnation and that's not what any of us want. The pharmaceutical industry is a powerhouse of progress, fuelled by a passion for exploring possibilities in the quest to find new solutions. We believe that the spirit of innovation can and must run through our communications too.



**“It is entirely possible to create beautiful, clever and compelling work while colouring inside the lines.”**

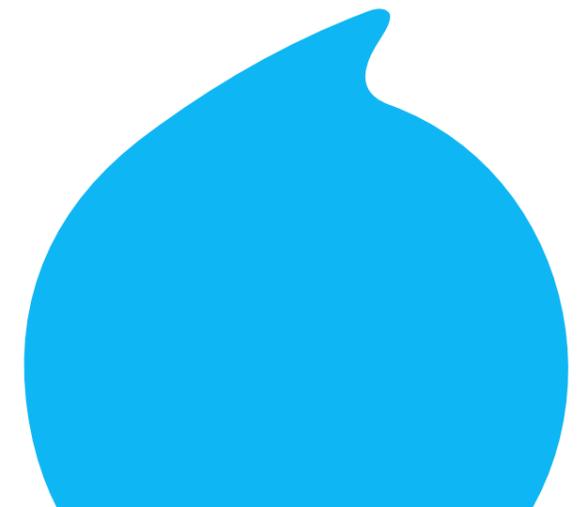
**— Jessica Ronane, Casting Director, The Old Vic Theatre, London, UK**

# IT'S MORE THAN A COMPLIANCE EFFECT

*effect*

IT IS EASY TO VIEW THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT WE WORK WITHIN AS A KEY FORCE HOLDING BACK INNOVATION IN HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATIONS. OTHER INDUSTRIES, INCLUDING FINANCE, INSURANCE AND TELECOMS, ALSO WORK WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF STRICT REGULATIONS AND YET REGULARLY PRODUCE AWARD-WINNING CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS. WITH THIS IN MIND, THE GROUP AGREED THAT HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATORS MUST AVOID THE PITFALL OF USING REGULATIONS AS AN EXCUSE FOR SHYING AWAY FROM INNOVATION.

It is important to see pharmaceutical regulations for what they really are: not a barrier, but a set of guidelines that help us all to do work of the highest possible ethical standards – work that we are proud of.



The regulations are, to a large extent, open to interpretation, and the challenge to creativity comes from a fear of getting this interpretation 'wrong'. This can make us reluctant to be the first to step into uncharted territory, and push us towards staying on the same well-trodden, 'safe' paths. As long as our intention is in accordance with the regulations and that we are setting out to deliver work of the highest standards, we can let go of this fear and free ourselves to focus on the best way to achieve our objectives. Having a thorough knowledge of regulations and taking full responsibility for navigating creative communications through compliance are vital for doing this successfully.

By accepting the regulatory environment as part of operating in healthcare – the field we've chosen to work in, and which we are all so passionate about – we can focus in on the barriers we need to overcome to enable our industry to live up to its creative potential.

**Based on their own experiences and observations of the industry, the group identified four key barriers to innovation in healthcare communications:**

### 01 **We don't understand what our stakeholders and audiences really want:**

Reduced focus on market research, along with increased bureaucracy around talking to patients, have eroded our understanding of our audiences and how they respond to communications. This can lead to campaigns being developed in a vacuum, with educated guesswork in place of the genuine customer insights that should be shaping them.

### 02 **We aren't supporting brave people with the right skills:**

If we shape our teams based on the skills we have needed in the past and don't create an environment which celebrates people with different experiences, we miss out on the opportunity to expand our capacity for innovation.

### 03 **We've become risk averse and fear failure:**

We have a tendency to see innovation as being difficult and risky, encouraging us to stick to 'safer' options. Furthermore, the culture in communications doesn't necessarily support the idea of learning from failure as well as success. This is contrary to the industry we serve, when >90% of discovery molecules fail to even become a medicine. It is also contrary to what innovation stands for. If we aren't pushing boundaries, then we aren't innovating.

### 04 **We're overcomplicating everything:**

Onerous planning processes, a tendency to make things bigger and more complex than they need to be, and slow paths to approval prevent us from being agile and responsive. If we want to embrace digital technologies in the way we communicate, we need processes that allow us to act and react swiftly and 'be present' in the moment.

**“ Replace fear with curiosity.**

**– Steven Spielberg**

**“ Why fit in when you were born to stand out.**

**– Dr Seuss**

# BRINGING ABOUT CHANGE

*change*

## What we can learn from other sectors

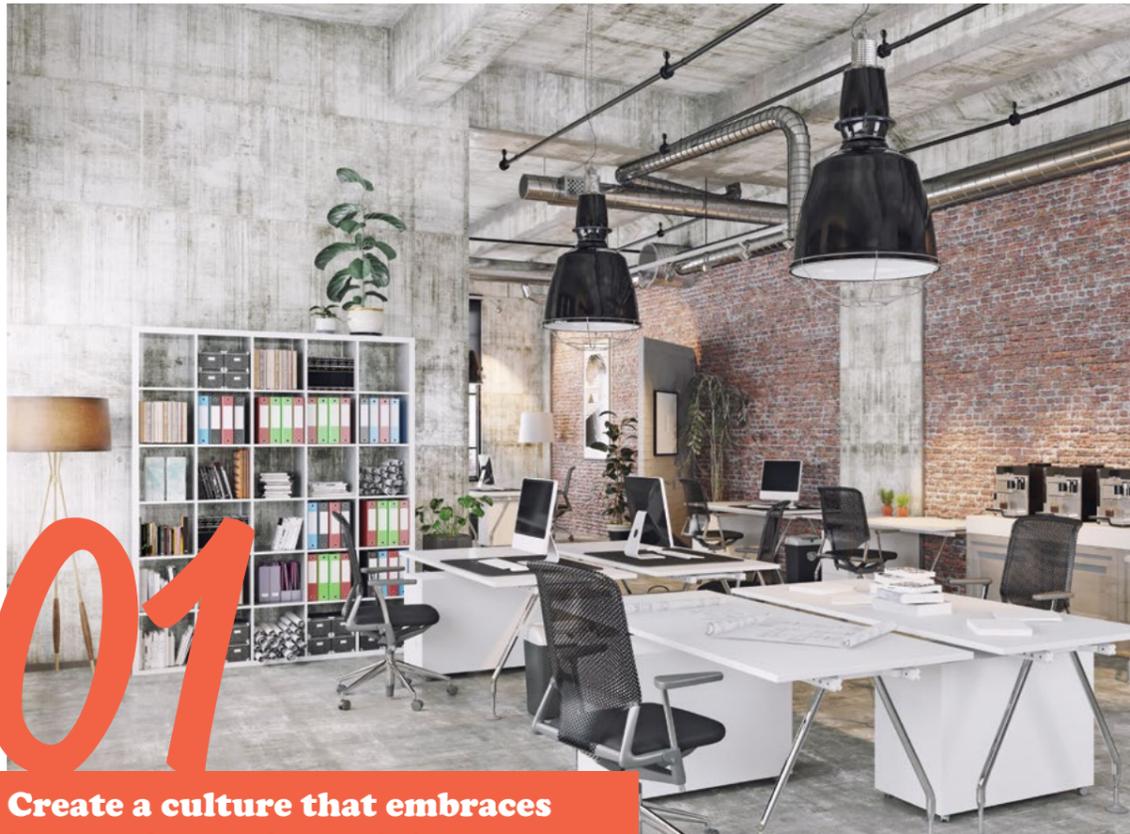
THE TEAM REGROUPED TO IDENTIFY STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING THESE BARRIERS. TO FACILITATE THIS, FOUR INNOVATIVE THINKERS FROM THE WORLDS OF BANKING, FASHION RETAIL, TOY MARKETING AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE JOINED THE CONVERSATION. THESE FOUR INDIVIDUALS SHARED THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON THE BARRIERS TO CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IN HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATIONS, AND HIGHLIGHTED HOW THEY HAVE OVERCOME CHALLENGES IN THEIR OWN INDUSTRIES TO LET CREATIVE THINKING WIN.

Following this discussion, the team worked together to make a series of five recommendations for overcoming the barriers.



FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR OPENING UP THE  
CAN OF CREATIVITY  
AND INNOVATION



**01 Create a culture that embraces innovation and creativity**

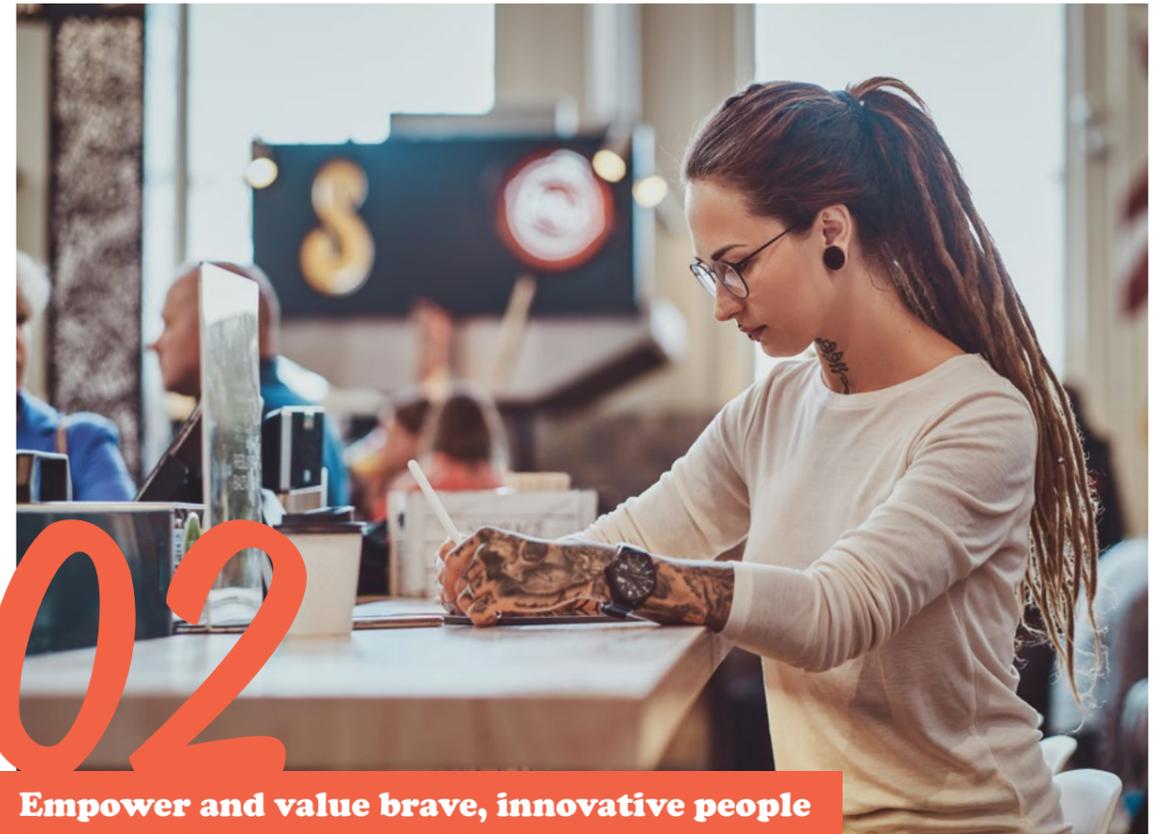
22

**A.** Culture changes from the top down. CEOs need to ensure that pharmaceutical companies get the communications they deserve. By embracing and embodying innovation and showcasing success, CEOs can create cultures where innovation thrives in communications as much as it does in drug discovery.

**B.** The best campaigns are always the result of team work, and communications leaders should work to ensure that every member of their team embraces the vision of innovation. This should include compliance teams, who are vital to a campaign's success. By upskilling and empowering compliance teams to be

part of the process of finding solutions to our communications challenges, we can give new ideas the best chance of success.

**C.** Innovation thrives when courage is valued and people feel trusted and supported to try new things. We can all work towards adopting a mindset that values creativity, welcomes experimentation and views failure as a stepping stone on the way to progress. Updating rewards and incentives to recognise courage and value innovation can support this, as can creating a physical environment where people have space to think and experiment.



**02 Empower and value brave, innovative people from within and beyond healthcare**

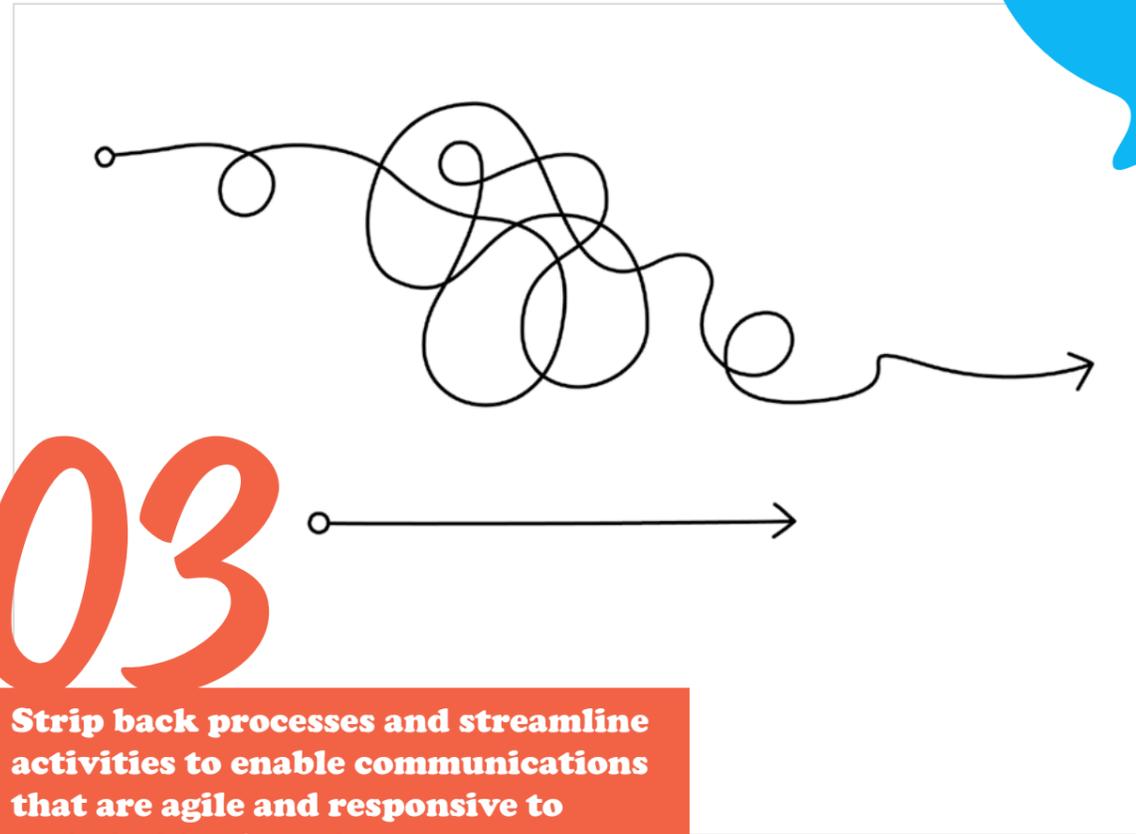
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**A.** Hire people with the passion and skills to lead innovative communications, and support them to do their best work. We should embrace people from different industries and backgrounds, learn from them and enable them to apply the full range of their skills and talents to our communications challenges.

**B.** We can facilitate this by welcoming new hires from outside of the pharmaceutical industry as communications experts, but set the expectation that they won't know everything about the pharmaceutical industry from day one - they will learn from us as we learn from them.

**C.** Bring the outside in by sharing best practice from the healthcare industry and beyond. Working with freelancers and consultants can also be an effective route to broadening perspectives and skillsets.





# 03

**Strip back processes and streamline activities to enable communications that are agile and responsive to stakeholders' needs**

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**A.** Shifting away from unwieldy planning processes can enable us to focus on the activities that matter most to our stakeholders. Adopting the principles of agile working – which emphasise individuals and interactions, customer collaboration, responding to change and prototyping – could provide a blueprint for a new way of working that makes space for creativity and innovation and enables us to respond to our stakeholders' needs.

**B.** Smaller teams – made up of the right people – can drive faster decision making and quicker delivery of projects. Deloitte's Future of Work initiative highlights the increasingly important

role that contractors, freelancers and external experts play in building the flexible and agile teams that companies need.

**C.** By including medical, legal and regulatory representatives in our teams we can take reviewers on the journey with us, rather than simply presenting them with what we hope to be the finished product at the end of the process. This means we can make the case for our campaigns and demonstrate how we have mitigated any risks. It also enables campaigns and materials to be adapted and refined as we work.



# 04

**Get up close and personal with our stakeholders and target audiences**

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**A.** By spending more time with our stakeholders – be they patients, healthcare professionals, scientists or technology experts – we can gain true insights into their lives that can inform our work and ensure that we meet their needs. To create strategies that resonate with our audiences, we must understand their experiences, their 'pain points' and the role that our work can play in improving their lives.

**B.** We should keep our stakeholders front and centre at every stage of planning and delivery. One company does this by including an empty, red chair in every meeting and encouraging meeting participants to sit in it, take on the patient's mindset and put forward the patient voice.

**C.** Stakeholder research should be an ongoing process and compliance procedures may need to evolve to make it possible to connect with stakeholders more frequently. We should aim to carry out regular research and adapt our plans and tactics in response to new insights. Patient and healthcare professional panels are a valuable tool.

**D.** Basing a concept on initial research is not enough – we should set aside budget to test our ideas and ensure they truly reflect our stakeholders' needs before we build our campaigns.



## 05 Put experimentation and learning at the heart of healthcare communications

**A.** Applying a 'test and learn' approach could help communicators experiment with new approaches in an achievable way, and make communications programmes more flexible and responsive. For example, a global influencer engagement programme could be launched in one market with just a handful of influencers, be evolved based on these learnings and expanded to create a national, then international, campaign. Likewise, instead of developing an extensive suite of patient materials at the same time, start by developing and launching a single leaflet.

**B.** We can use our skills as communicators to create opportunities for ourselves, our teams and our companies to learn from each other and from the experiences of those outside our organisations. We can champion cross-fertilisation and the sharing of best practice between teams and departments, and empower our teams and senior leaders to share insights. By doing this we create a continuous cycle of learning, and avoid one team repeating the mistakes another has already learned from.

# LET'S MAKE THIS A REALITY

**F**ROM THIS POINT ONWARDS, THE **CANNES OR CANNED?** INITIATIVE WILL FOCUS ON SUPPORTING THE INDUSTRY TO ADOPT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS AND SHARE BEST PRACTICE. MEMBERS OF THE GROUP ARE ALREADY TAKING STEPS TO INTEGRATE THESE IDEAS INTO THEIR OWN ORGANISATIONS. BUT WE CAN'T DO THIS ALONE. IF YOU FEEL PASSIONATE ABOUT RAISING THE LEVEL OF INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY IN HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATIONS THEN JOIN US AND GET INVOLVED.

“  
**Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.**  
— Steve Jobs

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

**Sign-up up to get updates on  
Cannes or Canned?**

Email [innovation@the-hca.org](mailto:innovation@the-hca.org)

**Share these recommendations  
with colleagues and peers**

**Create a team in your organisation  
to champion change and translate  
the recommendations into practice**

**Help us to build practical  
guidance for the industry**

Email [innovation@the-hca.org](mailto:innovation@the-hca.org)  
with your ideas and examples of  
where you have had successes

“

**Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. They invent. They imagine. They heal. They explore. They create. They inspire. While some see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are ones that do.**

**— Steve Jobs**

**BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT MAKING  
HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATIONS BRAVER  
AND BOLDER**

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