

CAMPAIGNS: Conceptions looks to prompt dialogue regarding infertility

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Infertility is a topic many people avoid discussing, but it is a very real problem affecting couples nationwide.

Littleton, CO-based Conceptions Women's Health and Fertility Specialists, in business since 1986 and considered one of the US' top infertility clinics, realized this, too, but wanted to find a way to educate the public about the causes of infertility and the treatments available because fertility issues were growing in the public eye.

Conceptions sought the help of GroundFloor Media for a media relations effort designed not only to address these issues, but also to distinguish it from a rival local infertility clinic and to help it emerge as the pre-eminent clinic of its kind in Colorado and the western US.

"We wanted a team that brought the female perspective to the table and got inside women's heads," says Margie Mercer, Conceptions' director of marketing, adding that while many of Conceptions' clients came from referrals, the clinic wanted more recognition from the general public.

Strategy

Jennefer Traeger, a GroundFloor senior PR manager on the account, explains that the strategy involved identifying hot topics regarding infertility and misperceptions people had about it.

"We're educating the [public] about issues, causes, and treatment of infertility to let people know that Conceptions is available to them," adds Anjie Meyer, also a senior PR manager.

In addition, GroundFloor wanted to take a regional approach to the campaign because many neighboring states, such as Wyoming, have little or no infertility resources.

But ultimately, the strategy was about getting the media's attention, which was accomplished by telling personal stories. "We wanted to put a face on infertility and take away the shame of [it]," Mercer says.

Tactics

Building relationships with key reporters and inviting them to tour Conceptions' Littleton office was integral to the campaign's success, says Meyers. In addition, GroundFloor pitched stories dealing with such topics as in-vitro fertilization, gender selection, and egg donations.

"We sought out patients who had great stories to share," Meyers adds.

In the middle of last year, Dr. Mark Bush, a top reproductive endocrinologist, joined Conceptions, and GroundFloor quickly pitched Bush as an expert on infertility issues, even before his Colorado arrival, Traeger adds.

Conceptions also sponsored educational seminars to draw attention to infertility issues and highlight Conceptions' expertise.

Results

Conceptions' business jumped thanks to this campaign. Mercer says that in 2004, Conceptions saw a 143% increase in new consultations. Also, the clinic experienced a 53% increase in patients who received in-vitro fertilization treatment, while the national average was only 15%.

Traeger says the campaign generated 15 million impressions, with media hits not only in newspapers and on TV stations throughout Colorado, but in newspapers as far away as Baltimore and Chicago, and in many parenting, pregnancy, and health periodicals, as well.

About 80% of Conceptions' marketing budget went to PR, but Mercer adds, "It was a big risk, but it paid off in the end."

Future

The initial one-year relation-ship between Conceptions and GroundFloor has been continuing since January and shows no sign of letting up. Meyer and Traeger say they will continue to identify issues and extend the educational effort to reach an even wider regional audience.

PR team: Conceptions Women's Health and Fertility Specialists (Littleton, CO) and GroundFloor Media (Boulder, CO)

Campaign: Making Babies and Headlines

Time frame: January 2004 to January 2005

Budget: \$59,000