

2023 CIPR PRide Midlands award submission: Category 24 Best Publication
Word count: 999

Sparking the Clinical Mind: Linnaeus's clinical research report

Brief, objectives, budget:

Veterinary group Linnaeus primarily issued press releases for B2B PR, but it was narrowing the route to our niche audience of 45,000 UK veterinary professionals:

- We were approaching saturation with the trade press
- Linnaeus had little clinical, evergreen original content

Using PESO, we identified thought leadership to support Linnaeus's business objective to generate growth through staff (Associate) recruitment/retention. We also wanted to showcase the work of Linnaeus to our owner, Mars Veterinary Health (MVH). Our purpose, 'a better world for pets', would underpin all activity.

SMART objectives:

- Specific and timely: Launch a thought leadership report in 2022
- Measurable: 700+ veterinary professionals access the report, with minimum 90% positive feedback
- Achievable: Develop engaging, ethical content that improves the lives of pets
- Relevant: Support recruitment at Linnaeus

As well as a £1000 budget, internal resource comprised:

- Communications manager: 25 days
- Graphic designer: eight days
- Editorial input from our Chief Medical Officer and clinical research team

The idea, research, planning:

Comprehensive research identified:

- Veterinary professionals prioritise recognition, authenticity and progression ([Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons](#))
- Talent is attracted to strong leadership; values and culture; progression; and recognition ([McKinsey](#))
- Thought leadership should offer insight useful for readers' daily roles. It should challenge assumptions; use trusted third-party expertise; analyse trends; and feature identifiable authors ([LinkedIn/Edelman](#))
- Linnaeus had competitive strengths in sustainability and clinical research; our competitors' reports focused primarily on their own achievements (SWOT)

We aimed to launch our first report about clinical research in autumn 2022. It would feature our Associates as authors, feature content from other organisations and target ambitious vets and nurses.

If it was a success, we would launch two further reports – one about clinical research and another on sustainability – in 2023. This would further position Linnaeus as an industry leader in these areas while supporting recruitment and retention.

Strategy, creativity, innovation:

To stand out, we needed to avoid sales content and create useful insights for our audience. As an industry leader, Linnaeus would bring the profession together – not focus on itself.

Our concept focused on collaboration, bringing together high-profile experts (internal and external) to share the latest knowledge in clinical research. From the role of industry to the importance of One Health in combining environmental and health priorities, the opinion pieces focused on best practice, innovation and trends.

The report also featured summaries of new, pioneering research published by Linnaeus Associates, celebrating their achievements. Directly applicable to clinical practice, the studies could help clinicians treat pets, supporting our purpose and furthering knowledge within the profession.

Delivery/implementation of tactics:

We worked with authors from the private sector, academia and within Linnaeus. Articles were drafted with our communications manager and checked by the clinical research team.

The report's design and authors represented a range of roles and backgrounds across the sector. It was free and easy to download (without requiring personal data) to ensure the research could be shared widely to support the treatment of pets.

Key messages:

- Position: Linnaeus is a leader in veterinary clinical research
- Inform: Our insight helps to make a better world for pets
- Attract: Our Associates are experts in their field

Launch (September 2022):

- Owned: The report was [free to download online](#), with an accompanying podcast between two of our authors launched on our intranet
- Earned: A [press release](#) was issued to our target trades, with coverage shared via internal and external channels
- Shared: Posts tagging our authors and spokespeople focused on LinkedIn due to the presence of our target audience
- Internal: Briefings with Linnaeus recruitment and education teams, with alerts issued to Linnaeus and Mars globally and updates presented to communities including the MVH science group
- Stakeholders: Communications toolkit developed to circulate within their organisations
- Events: 500 printed copies posted to senior decision makers, handed out at two national events and shared at two MP visits

Measurement, evaluation, impact (September 2022 – January 2023):

	Targets	Outputs	Out-takes
Earned	6+ hits in the trade media (there are 10 key titles) with an average 20,000 circulation per article At least 90% positive sentiment / minimum two key messages per piece	10 trade hits, 19,400 average circulation	All coverage was positive and featured 2+ key messages
Shared	4+ LinkedIn posts: 100+ likes, reposts, retweets	Five posts with 197 likes, reposts, retweets	180 report downloads from LinkedIn / 100% positive feedback
Owned	Clinical research page: visits from 35/month to 75/month (225) in three months 150+ report downloads online	267 visits to the clinical research page in four weeks	364 report downloads
Internal	150+ internal downloads of report, minimum 90% positive sentiment	177 report downloads	100% positive feedback from recipients 9/10 score for report quality (qualitative survey of 12 senior decision-makers)
Print	400+ copies distributed, minimum 90% positive sentiment	450 copies distributed	
Stakeholders	Contact 10+ decision-makers / minimum 90% positive sentiment	40+ stakeholders received report / toolkit	

Outcomes

- Anonymous survey of senior decision-makers:
 - Promotion of the Linnaeus brand / Associate recognition were the most highly valued benefits of the report (64%), supporting recruitment
- 434 visits to the clinical research webpage in two months after launch – normally it attracts 400-450 per year
- 1,000+ copies accessed against a target of 700+, with reach estimated to be much higher as people shared the printed and PDF copies
- We cannot exclusively claim these results but sessions on the Linnaeus careers webpage rose by 19% four weeks after launch to 7,757 in October, then a further 13% to 8,873 in November
- Linnaeus Associates shared the report at clinical briefing sessions and in breakout areas

Impact

- Positive feedback from press, social media, Linnaeus Associates and MVH global including its President and Chief Medical Officer
- Purpose / ethics: Research widely shared within the sector to help make a better world for pets
 - Associate enquiries and funding applications to our clinical research team increased – from 45 requests in Q1 2022 to 60 in Q1 2023 – helping to deliver more clinical studies into pet health
- This success has enabled us to progress two further reports for 2023.