

Tina Hahn - Vice President, AXON Denmark



Our clients are always looking for new ways to tell the story about their company, their products and how to support patients

04.11.2021

Tags: [Denmark](#), [AXON](#), [Communications](#), [Consultancy](#)

Dr Tina Hahn explains how AXON positions itself as a strategic partner for its Danish clients in their scientific communication work, highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic has foregrounded the importance of omnichannel communication, and gives her thoughts on Denmark's value proposition as a global life sciences hub.

Can you begin by introducing yourself?

I trained as a pharmacist before immediately moving into a PhD programme to research pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics in different hospital wards, working with post-surgical patients and pain management.

I spent the next 10 years in the medical device industry in Denmark. I spent several years at Coloplast in wound, ostomy, and continence care and oversaw three different medical affairs departments in my last few years at the company.

During those years, I realised the benefit of working with medical communications agencies and was subsequently approached by AXON to open a branch of the firm in Denmark.

As a result, my career path has taken me from academia to pharmaceuticals, medtech and now communications. Being part of the agency side motivates me, as the work is varied, with no two days the same. I get to work with many different clients, types of organisations, and therapy areas,

all of which pose different challenges and opportunities.

What have been the key milestones for you over 10 years of running AXON Communications in Denmark?

One of the reasons I was chosen for this position is that I am Danish and therefore understand the market and culture of the country. Denmark is a region with a high concentration of both biotechs and medtech start-ups.

In terms of milestones, the focus when setting up the AXON Denmark office was to identify which companies, clients, and areas to work in, and how to attract the best talent. AXON filled a gap in the market for a Denmark-based medical communications agency with deep scientific knowledge and expertise that was needed by several clients.

During my time at AXON, we have built up the Danish office and ensured it is fully integrated within the company's other offices overseas, working as part of a larger, cross-office team of experts.

What are AXON's core service offerings and what are its most in-demand services?

AXON is a global healthcare communication firm that ignites change in healthcare through meaningful communications. This demands new ways of thinking and doing, every day. Our core service areas span integrated communications, advocacy, marketing, medical communications, clinical trial services and real-world evidence.

Integrated Communications – we craft stories that catalyse change in healthcare. We lead with insights to build strategies that connect our clients with the people who matter.

Advocacy – we help industry, advocacy groups and other stakeholders drive meaningful change through collaboration and co-creation. This is at the heart of how we bring communities together.

Marketing – we accelerate commercial success by building your brand story and amplifying it through creative omnichannel campaigns.

Medical Communications – we distil complex science into evidence-based strategies and compelling communications, delivered with originality and precision. Our work provokes inspiring scientific exchange that transforms the medical landscape and improves lives.

Clinical Trial Services – we educate and communicate with healthcare professionals and patients at each available opportunity of a clinical trial to enable its successful completion. Our programmes assist with patient recruitment and retention in clinical research, and we use insights and expertise to facilitate study development.

Real-World – insights-driven communications that help you harness real-world evidence, demonstrate value and secure access. We inform, engage, and mobilise the right stakeholders to shape the healthcare environment and improve patient outcomes.

Across all our activities, we aim to be a strategic partner to our clients, there for them as they approach complex scientific communications challenges. One of the more recent challenges has been identifying and executing new approaches to reaching audiences, especially given the shift to the virtual era over the past 18 months and now as we reconsider face-to-face gatherings and hybrid approaches to meetings and events. But beyond that, our clients are always looking for new ways to tell the story about their company, their products and how to support patients. And we can provide creative and agile thinking where our clients see us as an extension of their own teams.

Who are AXON's main clients and how do you meet the varying needs of different clients?

We work with a range of organisations in the Medicon Valley that vary in size. We support smaller organisations with foundational activities, such as messaging, literature, references, and data preparation for external communication, right through to more strategic planning.

AXON also works with some of the largest companies in Denmark, supporting with solving critical communications challenges and developing intricate, far-reaching communications activities. The agency can adapt its work to advise companies of all sizes and from all different sectors. For example, AXON takes a healthcare perspective when working within the food ingredient industry in Denmark. Typically, AXON works with the medical affairs, clinical trial, real-world or access teams, or public relations and marketing departments of the respective companies.

Do any of AXON's past campaigns stand out in your memory that you would like to share?

Spearheaded by an annual awareness week that was initiated by the European Head & Neck Society, the [Make Sense campaign](#) is one we are particularly proud of. This long-standing campaign aims to raise awareness of head and neck cancer and ultimately improve outcomes for patients with the disease. As campaign secretariat, AXON drives activities that promote education on risk factors, disease prevention and disease signs and symptoms for both patients and healthcare professionals. The campaign has also evolved to support patients' needs and highlight their lived experiences as well as urge policymakers to support access to treatments.

One stand out element of the Make Sense campaign was the set-up of screening sessions at workplaces in specific markets to broaden the awareness of those symptoms. Fortunately, many individuals were able to be diagnosed earlier for head or neck cancer because of these pop-up centers.

What is the level of connectivity between patients, industry, and government in Denmark, particularly regarding clinical trials?

Both within Denmark and internationally, patients are improperly prioritised and there is a lack of equality in terms of access to healthcare.

However, recent government initiatives are giving patients a stronger voice, with a focus on listening to patients and educating the public or specific patient groups about the potential to participate in clinical trials. This positive movement provides patients with digital portals for easier access to overviews of the clinical trials available and the how to participate in them.

What are your thoughts on the new Danish National Life Science Strategy?

The new initiatives concerning clinical trials and attracting and developing talent for the Danish healthcare system will benefit the country's healthcare treatments and drug development. These strategies will provide synergies for those companies that wish to perform clinical trials in Denmark and further the country's image as a clinical trial destination.

As a communications expert, how do you value Denmark's brand as a biotech hub internationally?

While Denmark's brand as a biotech hub is not recognised to the same extent as other countries, the strong collaboration between industry and academia is significantly helping and benefitting the global image of both Denmark's education and healthcare sectors.

What has been the impact of the pandemic on AXON and its clients' needs?

Prior to COVID-19, AXON assisted its clients through training sessions and educational medical communication meetings with doctors and other clinicians around the world that were largely done in face-to-face settings. Therefore, the company needed to find a digital solution to transform these practices into virtual meetings and trainings.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, AXON has converted more than 120 events from face-to-face to virtual, constantly finding new ways to digitally connect with the clinicians and to discuss the new data while maintaining levels of engagement. This has now evolved into more of a 'hybrid' approach, where audiences can be both in-person and online. Designing creative solutions to effectively reaching our audiences is a key strength for AXON, and we are co-hosting a webinar on the topic.

Looking into the future, what are your priorities and ambitions?

One of my key priorities for AXON is to become a strong partner in omnichannel communications. Currently, this has become important for clients following the pandemic to ensure we are reaching audiences with effective and consistent messages across multiple communication options.

Furthermore, one of AXON's ambitions is to have a shared purpose with its clients. This ensures that AXON attracts talent that feels united behind a common goal with the company's clients. This positioning is being developed to further establish AXON as a company that can help its clients change the lives of patients across a number of disease areas. This purpose personally resonates with me and has been a goal of mine for the duration of my career.

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