

How to succeed in your challenging IRO career

Danielle Morris, who started in a graduate communications programme and is now a busy IRO, says that really enjoying your work is crucial.

I vividly remember one of my first analyst interactions. An influential sell sider had asked for a teach-in on a specific therapeutic area within GSK which was becoming increasingly important to our growth story. While I had already been working closely with the leadership of that therapeutic area to build the market's understanding, my interaction with individual investors and analysts up until that point had been limited.

I'd been in the IR team at GSK for about 18 months and had been frantically learning everything I could about the overall company, our competitive environment and the capital markets. With my two-year communications graduate programme and an undergraduate degree in politics, it was a fairly steep learning curve!

I knew this meeting was important – for the company, to ensure a full and clear understanding of one of our key growth drivers, and for myself, as an IRO, to provide the right information in a clear and competent way. I was fortunate to have a very experienced colleague working alongside me, who helped me



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prepare for the meeting, and made it clear that they believed in my ability.

The meeting was a great success. A detailed and challenging conversation about the business led to a few drinks in the City and the start of an incredibly enjoyable and rewarding IR career.

Breadth of opportunities

Since that first meeting, I have continued to test, evolve, and develop my skills through the breadth of opportunities afforded to me as an IRO at GSK. It has allowed me to refine my communications skills, especially in challenging situations, instilled confidence in me when providing guidance to executives at critical moments, and helped me analyse internal and external views of the business. At the same time, I have built strong relationships within the business and the investment community.

After a short intermission from IR, during which I explored the commercial world, I returned two years ago to take on a more senior role within the team. Leaving IR, even if only for a short period, gave me an increased appreciation of the unique position it provides. Being part of

HOW TO SUCCEED

- An important analyst meeting early in her working life helped Danielle develop her career in IR.
- She has had a set of experiences which would be difficult to have in such a short time in other roles.
- The IR Society has been a great resource for learning.
- Humour can help to cope with the challenges, particularly at present.

the current GSK team as we work towards the separation of the business into two standalone companies demonstrates the continued evolution of what is required from IR and brings daily variety and new challenges.

I see myself as incredibly fortunate, knowing that few people have the opportunity to start their careers in IR, but instead come to it after spending time in the business or the capital markets. I have found starting out in IR to be a fascinating – if at times terrifying – career journey.

From capital market days with a new CEO, a new R&D strategy, acquisitions, numerous investor presentations, and over 20 quarterly results (need to stop counting those), I have had a set of experiences you would be hard-pressed to get in such a short space of time in many other roles.

The IR Society has always been a great resource and opportunity for continued learning and networking with other IROs. The courses offered provided foundational understanding of essential areas as I started out in IR and continue to support my development in critical areas.

Sharing experiences

I have worked with colleagues with a range of IR expertise who have been generous in sharing their experiences and networks. One particular individual also gave me the best career advice I’ve ever had – make work fun.

This is particularly true at the moment as we adapt to remote working and fewer interactions with colleagues. Spending time laughing with friends, investors and analysts can help bring a sense of normalcy to the current environment. Sometimes the best way to manage a technological challenge is with humour. Not that it happens often... ■