From Academia to Consulting

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Agenda

CAREER TRAJECTORY   CAREER PREPARATION   CAREER LEARNINGS

Career post college

Academia
- 2007-2013   Ph.D. in Neurobiology at Georgia State University
- 2013-2019   Post doc in Neuroscience at Stanford University

Consulting
- 2019-2021   Consultant in Clinical Development at ZS Associates
- 2021-present   Senior Director in R&D Analytics at Real Chemistry

Academia life

- Graduate school
  - Department of Biology, Georgia State University
  - Study roles of neurotransmitters in the regulation of neuronal electrical properties and growth cone motility

- Post-doc
  - Department of Neurosurgery, Stanford University School of Medicine
  - Study homeostatic synaptic plasticity mechanism and identify novel drug target for the treatment of autism spectrum disorders

My decision to pursue consulting career

- *Consulting is one of many career options. Other jobs, such as faculty, research scientist, clinical portfolio manager, venture capitalist, and etc, are all exciting career paths.*

PRO	CON
- Great learning opportunity - Outstanding training system - Extensive opportunity to build professional network - Good compensation	- High level of pressure - Long working hours - High turnover rate

My 1ˢᵗ consulting job

Job Title	Project Examples

Associate Consultant -> Consultant
ZS Associates
	• Understand client's business needs to help build customized clinical platforms for big pharma
	
	    • Clinical trial monitoring and reporting platform for global clinical development team
	
	    • Clinical feasibility intelligence platform for global clinical feasibility team
	
	• Conduct planning and rescue projects for individual trial(s)
	
	• Standardize analytics process for global feasibility team

Team	
Clinical Development team	
Main Work	
Optimize clinical trial design and operations based on data-driven insights	

My current consulting job

Job Title	Project Examples
Sr. Director of Data Analytics R&D Real Chemistry	• Leverage data assets to provide insights on HCP/patient segments to drive brand marketing strategy and creative content development
Team	
Product offering team primarily serve clients in commercial	• Explore social analytics in clinical development
Main Work	• Conduct a digital clinical trial recruitment project to analyze patient profile, design creatives and activate media for a basket of 3 late phase clinical trials
Lead data insight product of audience segmentation for patient and HCP • Identify and sell new business opportunities • Lead multi-functional team to deliver segmentation projects • Standardize and optimize product offering	

USE CASE:
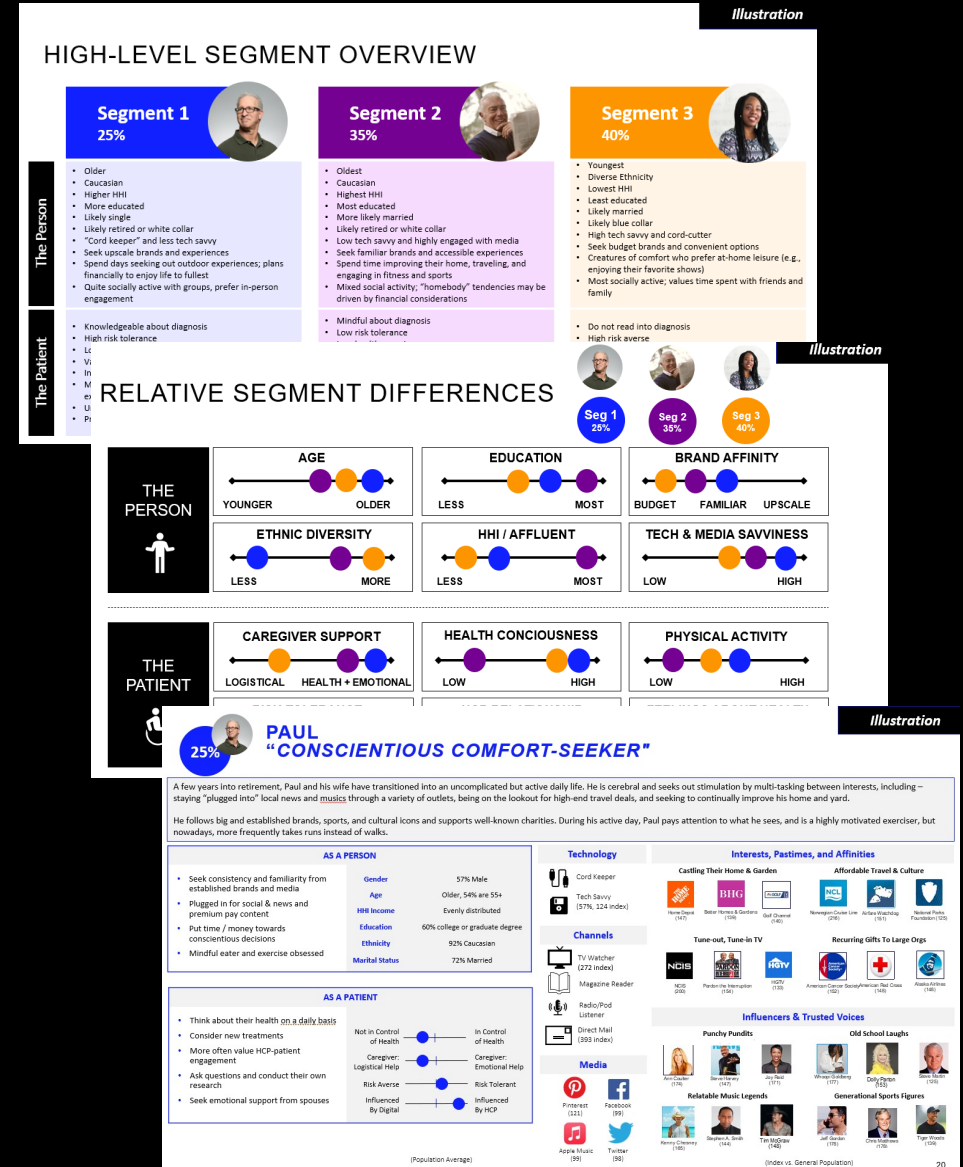# Optimize Omnichannel Patient Engagement Strategy

Situation

- Two years ago, a big pharma company launched its novel treatment for a rare cardiovascular disease.

- The brand was interested in enhancing patients' digital experiences at different points along the patient journey, from pre-diagnosis through long term treatment management and adherence.

- The brand needed to optimize its omnichannel patient marketing strategy to inform both current year tactical development and future brand planning and tactical initiatives.

- The brand wanted to deeply understand patient engagement with HCPs for both digital and non-digital channels.

Approach

- The project **seamlessly integrated robust real-world claims and consumer data, and qualitative primary market research with patients to provide** a holistic understanding of the cohort both as patients and as people

  - Detailed analysis of 5 high-level categories of interest: demographics, lifestyle, media consumption, disease & treatment, and health attitudes & behaviors
  - Analysis of 85,000+ demographic and lifestyle profiling attributes
  - Interviews with 34 patients with this rare cardiovascular disease to understand disease burden and HCP relationship
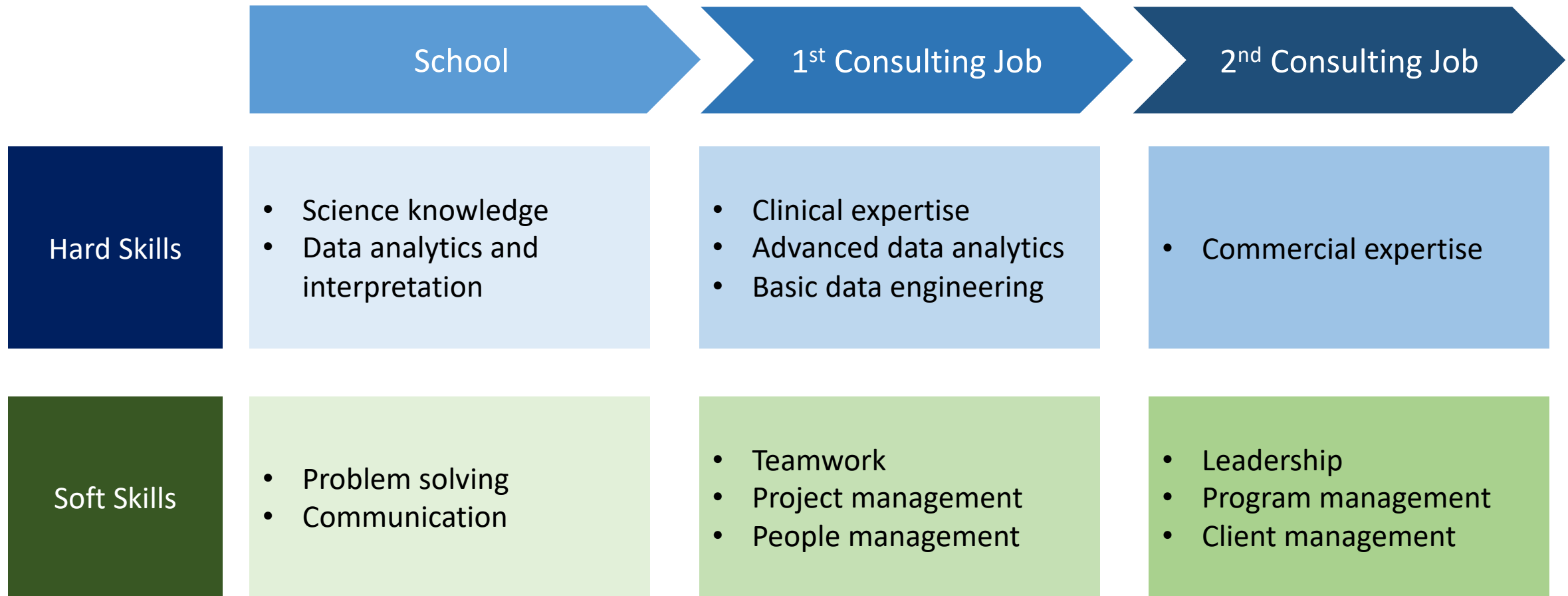
Results/Impact

- The project **identified one previously undiscovered segment (segment 2)**, with unique characteristics compared to those identified in the original patient audience work. This discovery prompted a comprehensive review of the brand's overall omnichannel strategy to identify opportunities for new channels and tactics that would engage this previously overlooked patient segment

- This segmentation work discovered multiple key segment-level opportunities to **improve creative & messaging, channel selection & reach, and competitive considerations** (meaningful **engagement at the right time, in the right channel, with the** right messages)

Experiences and Skills collected over time

	School	1st Consulting Job	2nd Consulting Job
Hard Skills	• Science knowledge • Data analytics and interpretation	• Clinical expertise • Advanced data analytics • Basic data engineering	• Commercial expertise
Soft Skills	• Problem solving • Communication	• Teamwork • Project management • People management	• Leadership • Program management • Client management

REVISIT my decision to pursue consulting career

PRO	CON
• Great learning opportunity ✅	• High level of pressure ✅
• Outstanding training system ✅	• Long working hours ✅
• Extensive opportunity to build professional network ✅	• High turnover rate ✅
• Good compensation ✅	

BUT
- *For all the pros highlighted, I need to take initiatives and earn it*
- *For the cons listed, I need to adapt it and set boundaries to maintain reasonable work-life balance*

Prep for Consulting Career

- *This did not happen over night.*
- *It does require some level of prep. You need to DO it right now if you are interested in this career option!*

Something I have done	
Leverage school and local resources	**Grow network**
- Career Center services - Business and consulting classes - Consulting club and projects - Venture Intern	- Classmates and lab mates - Graduates - Linkedin

Prep for Consulting Job Interview

- Practice makes perfect
- Find case partner(s)
- Tab to your professional network
- Answer questions with your stories / experiences
- Engage interviewer and solve problem together
- Learn from the real interviews

First 6 Months of My consulting job

- The first 6 months of my consulting career was challenging
    - Unclear of ways of working
    - Lack of domain knowledge
- Build network inside the firm and with clients
    - Importance of communication
- Adapt to consulting environment
    - Domain expertise
    - Project management
    - Team work
    - Client facing role

1 Year and Beyond of My Consulting Job

- Continue build your network inside and outside your firm
- Connect the dots
- Build and establish area of expertise
- Build team
- More management
- Business development

What Differentiates Great from Good on a Job

- Growth mindset
- Attention to details
- Constant forward-thinking
- Develop trustable relationship

My Contact Info and Real Chemistry Job Posts

• My LinkedIn

https://www.linkedin.com/in/lei-ray-zhong/

• Real Chemistry Job Opportunities:

https://www.realchemistry.com/job-category