

Adwise

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Open-source structure bucks the norm

StrikeForce Communications uses a sharpshooter approach to target clients' needs within the existing economic climate. **Mike Rutstein**, the founder and president of StrikeForce Communications, leads a core team of executives bolstered by a pool of industry talent, low agency overhead, and a SWAT-team ideology toward branding.

StrikeForce eliminates structures and costs associated with the traditional agency, deploying an open-source model and has access to a vast network of like-minded industry talent with the aim of trimming healthcare marketing costs and providing true customization. The agency focuses on precision pairing to formulate brand teams based on experience, and uses behavioral science rather than a packaged-goods strategy to reach consumers.

"We believe in the power of precision," Mr. Rutstein says. "It's the advantage of using a scalpel instead of an axe."

The agency specializes in consumer advertising for prescription products, over-the-counter, and medical devices. Alcon Laboratories is one of the agency's first clients. StrikeForce operates from a small established core, which serves as the command center. This core comprises Mr. Rutstein, a director of client services, and an executive creative director. The core then draws from a deep network of talent. The agency does not require clients to establish a fixed-fee, long-term commitment, which Mr. Rutstein believes is a burgeoning unmet need in the healthcare advertising marketplace.

Much of Mr. Rutstein's existing direct-to-consumer approach was honed during his years at **DraftFCB** (draftcb.com), where he was executive VP, director of consumer healthcare and chief growth officer, and at **JWT** (jwt.com), where he was senior partner, business development, and managing director at Health@JWT. Clients included pharmaceutical giants, such as **Merck & Co.**, **Roche Laboratories**, and **Boehringer Ingelheim GmbH**, and more specialized operations, such as **Barr Laboratories**, **Alcon Laboratories**, and **Cord Blood Registry**.

"We work from the core, but we're able to tap this broad network and bring the right person into the equation to bolster the core and augment our services," Mr. Rutstein told *Med Ad News*.

The agency has built its own database, with hundreds of people who are interested in this concept and want to be part of it. The structure provides the flexibility to be able to work with the agency without being confined by limitations of traditional agencies.



A sharpshooter approach is consistent throughout the StrikeForce Communications' Website.

"It's less about the walls and the building, it's more about the services that we can provide," Mr. Rutstein says. "We can provide the exact same services on a more customized basis than a traditional agency."

The agency has been able to get access to experienced industry talent because of the downsizing of many of the traditional shops. This economic trend has bolstered StrikeForce's database, making its offering stronger. The StrikeForce concept is used through the agency's Website. According to Mr. Rutstein, clients in the traditional DTC segment, as well as the professional advertising segment, believe that the cost-effective model is right for the time.

"People need to start thinking a little bit more broadly about where the real value coming from," Mr. Rutstein told *Med Ad News*. "Real value is coming from people who work on the business, opposed to the building. The brand of the agency doesn't mean as much as it used to."