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## Using Media Relations to Launch a Breakthrough Portable Oxygen System for SeQual Technologies

### *Situation*

The Gable PR team was selected by SeQual Technologies in December 2005 to promote the commercial launch of their portable Eclipse Oxygen System™ for the home healthcare market. The Eclipse is the first portable oxygen concentrator that provides users with both pulse and continuous flow of oxygen. Previous portable oxygen units provided only pulse flow, which is not conducive to patients engaged in high activity or unpredictable breathing patterns such as sleep. With a sleek portable design (no larger than a child's backpack), the Eclipse allows oxygen patients to travel around town or around the world without worrying about running out of oxygen – and without having to lug along extra oxygen cylinders or other bulky equipment. After extensive research, Gable PR developed an intelligent and strategic public relations campaign to cut through the clutter and clearly differentiate SeQual, its technology and its new product.

### *Plan*

The goal of the SeQual media relations campaign was to demonstrate to home healthcare providers the clear advantages of the Eclipse versus the competition. The strategy involved developing relationships with medical writers and editors at both traditional wide-circulation outlets and the medical device trade media. Through consistent and disciplined communication, the Gable PR team first educated the media, then provided specific milestones worthy of coverage and finally followed up relentlessly to ensure media placements. SeQual's differentiating message points, aimed primarily at healthcare providers – rather than patients – permeated all interaction between Gable PR and the media.

The team distributed releases on internal new hires, Eclipse pre-launch patient test results and new contracts with partners to each editor and followed up to confirm receipt. The same news was made available with added local flavor to medical and healthcare contacts at traditional print media in San Diego, such as the San Diego Union-Tribune and the San Diego Business Journal.

There were distinct challenges, such as having to explain everything to the media in the most elementary fashion, even those covering health and medical beats. The strategy to overcome this danger of appearing too technical was to reinforce to mainstream editors that over two million Americans are oxygen patients and that this was “basically a

product designed to free aging but active seniors from bulky metal tanks and allow them to continue to live their lives and visit their grandkids while maintaining the high standards required for their oxygen therapy.”

The agency launched a steady stream of communication. The objective was to increase SeQual’s mindshare in the home healthcare industry among the targeted media contacts so that each new announcement was treated with respect, curiosity and, ultimately, coverage. This “image momentum” is part of the time-tested premise that audiences go through four main stages: awareness, understanding, differentiation and action.

The agency team positioned media pitches and news releases as, above-all-else, a component to the important Eclipse product launch. So, after hearing about the product so frequently in advance, the commercial launch of the Eclipse was considered a significant occasion to home healthcare media in both the mainstream and trade press.

### **Summary of Results:**

The Gable PR team’s Eclipse launch campaign produced strategic, measurable and tangible results for SeQual. Big traditional print hits included the local targets San Diego Union-Tribune, San Diego Business Journal and San Diego Metropolitan. Each of the “Big 4” home healthcare trades, HomeCare; Home Health Products; Home HealthCare Dealer/Provider and HME News, printed multiple articles about the company. Additionally, niche online life science Web sites helped increase awareness of SeQual in the San Diego technology industry by featuring its press releases on their home pages.

Since the program began, SeQual has benefited from 1,208,476 audience impressions facilitated by the Gable PR team. Print accounted for 1,127,760 of the impressions, online for 26,551 and broadcast for 54,165. Over 35 percent of these impressions appeared in the target home healthcare trades, fulfilling the client’s and the agency’s goal to penetrate this lucrative readership base. Most importantly, SeQual sales increased, evidenced by the company’s expansion into Canada and Europe and growth of its sales and marketing staff. Overall, the Gable PR team’s public relations campaign for the commercial launch of SeQual’s Eclipse Oxygen system was strategic, effective, successful and of benefit to SeQual’s business and marketing objectives.

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