

# DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

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## MARKETING EXCELLENCE—SOME ESSENTIALS

In the world of Pharmaceutical Marketing, nothing is more topical these days than Marketing Excellence. Virtually every major Rx company either already has or is undertaking to construct a disciplined ME program—and it's amazing, really, how similar the approaches and processes that result are to one another. In fact, you find that the internal methodology different Pharm companies use to get a Marketing Excellence program built employ many of the same organizational structures for gathering and approving ME content (such as panels of subject matter experts, or "SME's," who are line marketers with considerable experience in prescription drug marketing).

If you work in marketing outside of Big Pharma, you may be wondering what this Marketing Excellence thing is all about. Actually, it's a pretty simple concept: to develop a unified, consistent "approach" for the marketing of drug brands—across their varied life cycles—for maximum return on marketing investment. Naturally, once the approach is approved, there is a comprehensive training component to it...to ensure the approach gets implemented within the organization. It all seems straightforward enough, right? After, all, pharmaceutical marketers are merely trying to catch up with their consumer marketer counterparts in terms of marketing expertise. And, given the enormous amounts of money being invested annually (against both the professional and patient), better marketing is an absolute essential.

But there are a few other essentials to be embraced if better marketing is to result from all these Marketing Excellence efforts. These other essentials are not always so easily grasped or appreciated by pharmaceutical companies, however--because of one, major difference in *perspective* regarding marketing between pharma companies and the traditional consumer goods companies: whereas most traditional consumer companies perceive Marketing with a capital "M," (an independent, business-driving Function within the company), many pharmaceutical companies still perceive marketing with a small "m" (a service-to-Sales sub-function within the company). This critical difference in perspectives often leads to some big misconceptions within the Rx marketing teams about some "marketing essentials." Here—as this week's Boats & Helicopters--are some of those critical misconceptions we frequently observe.

### BOATS & HELICOPTERS

**1. A Brand's Positioning must be sufficiently inclusive and broad in scope (inclusive of many professional or patient Targets; broad in terms of benefits and features offered).** This very common misconception results from confusing a Sales Aid with a Brand Positioning Statement, which you can understand happening more readily in an organization where marketing is mainly a service-to-Sales. But by including virtually every possible professional or

patient target-customer and all-known product benefits and features in a brand's positioning, the brand actually ends up devoid of a real positioning (as in relative to the competition) in the market. It stands for everything, or, for whatever the individual Sales Rep wants it to at the moment, but not for something ownably distinctive. But this isn't the worst effect.

A more serious consequence of the all-inclusive or "exhaustive" brand positioning is that the brand lacks the *strategic guidance it needs for marketplace investment*. Given that no brand—consumer or pharmaceutical—has unlimited resources to invest, the idea is to focus marketing dollars behind the biggest opportunity for return...and that is nearly always the brand's franchise, the most likely prospects, the ones who will become and remain loyal users or prescribers. Really, how can marketers do this effectively when they are positioned against virtually everyone and everyone's needs? No, to get to an "investment-worthy" brand positioning with focus and "teeth" versus the competition, Rx brand marketers (particularly those who have entered Marketing from the Sales function) must change their perspective and appreciate the Brand Positioning Statement as a coherent series of *choices to guide everything the Brand does*, only one small element of which is a Sales Aid.

**2. The Marketing Objectives that matter most in building drug brands are Awareness (sometimes including professional education about a new condition) and Trial.** While it is hard to discount the importance of building awareness quickly for any new drug with a patent "shelf-life," particularly one that treats a new or little understood condition, this is not the marketing objective that matters most. In fact, it's technically not even a classic marketing objective. Classic marketing objectives (the ones that matter most because they directly drive volume) include things like: getting new prescribers or patients into a class for the first time; getting current class prescribers/patients to switch from one brand to another; getting patients to comply with their medication regimen better and/or getting them to complete the entire medication as directed (rather than stop when symptoms abate). Generating awareness and inciting physician sampling for trial of new drugs are both essential efforts for any pharmaceutical brand-building team; but if they are not also attached to a specific, measurable, volume-driving *behavior*, what good are they?

Appreciating and pre-determining one of these classic marketing objectives is truly a critical "essential" for achieving Marketing Excellence. Knowing exactly which behaviors the brand requires—**before** the brand begins investing in marketplace spending—gives the best chance for maximum returns on that investment...because everyone on the brand-building team knows definitively *whose* behavior is being sought and exactly *what* behavior is being expected of them. Literally, a brand cannot afford to misunderstand or ignore this fundamental marketing principle.

**3. When it comes to messaging, having a point-of-difference benefit to communicate is a real plus. But with or without that, it is always necessary to communicate the class-effect benefits as well.** The premise behind this misconception is pretty basic: if you do not use every opportunity to spell out a drug's efficacy, safety, and tolerability benefits some potential customer might doubt them—or, worse yet, some competitive brand's Sales Rep might insinuate less-than-optimal efficacy, safety, or tolerability performance by your brand. Again, in marketing organizations comprised largely of former Sales Reps, you can understand how this might be the prevailing thinking about messaging. But it is nonetheless misguided (and costly!) marketing thinking.

It is misguided for the same reason cited above about all-inclusive Brand Positioning Statements:

it is impossible to stand for something compelling and ownable when your brand's messaging is loaded with class-effect factors. And when your brand has a real or perceived point-of-difference benefit to communicate, it is a tremendous waste of an opportunity to embed it among benefits that are cost-of-entry "givens." With a point-of-difference benefit, all marketing resources should be squarely focused in communicating it—to the Target (professional or patient) whose behavior you are aiming to affect. When this doesn't happen, things get costly in two big ways: one is the obvious "lost opportunity" cost associated with not focusing sufficiently against the brand's one advantage, thereby failing to get that advantage across to a prospective customer; the other is the wasted time and effort cost of sending benefit messages that many prospective customers already know inside-out. If you think about it, once a marketing team has chosen the brand's *marketing objective*, which benefits to include in the brand's messaging become obvious... **only** those benefits that will lead to the desired behavior.

Going back to where we started, Marketing Excellence is about maximizing the return on a company's marketplace investment. We hope you can see that in each of the three common misconceptions here, the rationale for overcoming and avoiding them has everything to do with better, more precise marketplace spending—and return on that spending!

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