

# DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

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## Rx MARKETING EXCELLENCE = EXCELLENT MARKETING OUTCOMES

We are often asked which brands we admire most—even more so now that our latest book, Competitive Positioning, is just out and features a number of well-known brand logos on its cover. And, as you might expect, our initial response often includes many of the brands featured in annual articles ranking America's or the world's most influential and valuable brands. It's almost unheard of, though, to find a pharmaceutical brand on one of those lists. Google, Skype, Coca-Cola, Ikea, Starbucks—and most recently, Facebook—are typically on those lists. But Lipitor, Nexium, or Atripla, forget it...despite the fact that a brand like Lipitor sells over \$15MM annually worldwide. But pharma brands like some of these are *definitely* on our list.

Why? Not merely because of colossal sales volume, but because of the unusually effective marketing initiatives that some of these Rx brands have consistently created and delivered. Even more than these effects, however, what impresses us about a select group of pharmaceutical brands is the fact there **is** such a select group. In other words, amid the hundreds of Rx brands in the marketplace, a select few have done such a stand-out job of brand-building via best-practices marketing, one cannot help but appreciate the *degree* to which they have excelled—in their communications, in their promotion activities, sometimes in the cleverness of their branding (distinctively using nomenclature and colors, for example), but always in their ensuing business results.

All of which brings to mind once again that oft-uttered term among pharmaceutical marketers, “marketing excellence.” If you have been reading our weekly *Dispatches* for some time now, you may recall several previous editions dealing with this subject. In those articles we have likely expressed a healthy skepticism (some might even say a bit of cynicism) about marketing organizations that abruptly determine they need a marketing excellence program or academy, typically referred to by one and all simply as “MX.” Just to be clear: we applaud any marketing organization that is diligently striving to upgrade its marketing skills and become more competitive. But, all too often, what ends up being termed “marketing excellence” is really more like “marketing basics.” Think about that noun, “excellence,” which derives from the verb, “to excel.” In any dictionary you check, to excel means going well beyond the norm, well beyond the average, expected, basic performance. It connotes the setting of new standards that others must aspire to.

So, to set the record straight, “Marketing Excellence” or “MX” is NOT:

...a training program or curriculum that instructs on marketing fundamentals;

...a set of corporate competencies listed on an HR deck;

...some normative level of deliverables (such as a brand positioning statement or a behavioral marketing objective) that virtually every marketer should develop as a matter of course.

No, “Real Marketing Excellence” is, to borrow from what all Rx marketers insist is their physician-target-customer’s number one need, “Excellent Outcomes.” Excellent *Marketing Outcomes*, to be more precise. What are some examples of Excellent Marketing Outcomes?

- A competitive, meaningfully differentiated Brand Positioning Statement—even with a “class-effect” performing product;
- A brand positioning that is being implemented in the marketplace in *everything the brand does*, not merely in what the brand says in its communications;
- The attainment of pre-determined target-customer behaviors (as measured in the absolute and relative to the expected business results each behavior links to);
- An unexpected, lengthy duration in execution—Ideas that capture the imagination and attention of the target-customer and therefore “have legs”;
- A breadth of executional application: Ideas that work, with minor adaptations, across both professional and consumer-patient constituencies;
- Dominance in class...as measured by business results (volume, profit, share) that far *excel* others in class.

So, back to the opening, with criteria such as these, what are some of the pharmaceutical brands that we have admired? Here are ones that almost always come to mind, in alphabetical order: **Aricept** (treatment for Alzheimer’s), **Lipitor** (treatment for high cholesterol and heart disease prevention), **Viagra** (no need to explain), **Zithromax** (antibiotic), and **Zoloft** (anti-depressant—especially for post-traumatic stress). Each of these brands has, for a period of time, been a leader in its class, some to a dominant degree. Each has also delivered professional and patient communication *campaigns*—as in having legitimate *campaign ideas* that delivered pre-determined behaviors among their target-customers.

Oh, and one more thing: each was marketed by the same company, Pfizer. With a string of “hits” such as these (some bigger hits than others), it would be no stretch to conclude that, at least for a time, Pfizer truly had Marketing Excellence...because they truly had excellent marketing outcomes.

### **BOATS & HELICOPTERS**—Some Tips for Real Marketing Excellence

1. Start any marketing excellence-building effort by establishing the key distinctions between “fundamentals” and “excellence.” What are the skills all marketers in the organization must have to be competent? And, what are the tangible, measurable

deliverables (“outcomes”) that distinguish marketing excellence from marketing requirements?

2. Identify some model brands or companies that, like Pfizer, have a track-record of some duration, with some obvious consistency to their marketing effort. Take the time to articulate what principles you infer they follow—to ensure better outcome consistency.
3. Don’t merely hold training workshops or classes. Link each formal training session to some scheduled follow-on sessions in which the principles, processes and tools of marketing excellence get quickly applied to “live” brands. (Our Company, BDNI, can help you with this—by following our best-practices workshops with Brand Navigators to apply the principles and skills directly to the company’s brands.)
4. Include some measurable marketing *excellence* outcomes within each marketer’s personal development plan.

A few years back one of our fast-moving consumer goods clients, The Scotts Company, had a TV campaign for one of its better-known, truly differentiated brands, an extension called Miracle-Gro Potting Mix. The key copy words for that campaign went like this: “*Miracle-Gro: The Miracle is in the Mix.*” Picking up from that line, we might summarize this week’s *Dispatches* like this: “*Marketing Excellence: The Excellence is in the Outcomes.*”

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