

# When Has Advertising Crossed the Line?



The Pharmaceutical Advertising Advisory Board Review

Ray Chepesiuk,  
Commissioner



PAAB ad campaign.

You may have seen an advertisement promoting the PAAB.

Yes, it's true. The PAAB believes in high standards for advertising. People in the pharmaceutical industry have asked us for years to tell doctors who and why there is a PAAB. The will was there, but the nature of PAAB funding was the reason nothing happened.

Over the past few years, we have managed to save some money and scraped together enough to conduct a modest advertising campaign for the last three months of 2004.

In case you have not seen it, the full-colour, one-page ad depicts two football players lining up for contact, with a referee in the centre background. Above one player is "opinion" and above the other is "evidence." Above the referee, you see "PAAB." The headline caption is, "When has advertising crossed the line?" and the copy provides some information about the PAAB and its role in helping the industry maintain high standards for evidence-based advertising. The tagline is, "Evidence speaks for itself," which really sums up my belief that you don't need hype to sell a fundamentally sound product or service.

The intent of the ad is to support a public relations (PR) campaign intent on informing physicians about the value of the PAAB logo on pharma advertising.

Personally, I would like the PAAB logo to have meaning similar to the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) logo. When you buy a toaster and you see the CSA

logo on it, you get a warm and fuzzy feeling. You may have no idea what the CSA did to test that toaster, but you know it was tested and passed.

## So how did the campaign come about?

The process started in 2002, when the PAAB directors decided to conduct strategic planning for the next three years. The plan was finalized and approved in 2003.

Part of the plan was a communication to raise the PAAB profile among the target audience for pharmaceutical company communications. The specific recommendations were:

- approve and communicate an updated description of the scope of PAAB's core business ("preclearance of communications for Rx medications to all audiences and non-prescription drugs to health-care professionals");
- authorize PAAB staff to lead a selection process for additional marketing-oriented suppliers; and
- focus resources mainly on health-care professionals and related industry (the key PAAB stakeholders).

There was a belief that there was little awareness and appreciation for the PAAB preclearance review mechanism. It was decided to start with physicians as a primary audience because most of the proposed advertising that PAAB sees is

directed at physicians and we had a limited budget for the communications program.

We also recognized the need for expert help from a supplier with advertising and PR expertise. The PAAB sent out letters to our client agency list, asking if they were interested in our project. We received formal bids from 14 suppliers. The PAAB Executive Committee performed the final selection after short lists of six, and then two, were made. The two finalists made a live presentation to a group that included members of the PAAB Executive Committee and a non-bidding agency president.

PAAB eventually selected Healthworld as its agency of record for this campaign, with the PR activities handled by Healthworld's corporate-related firm, Hill and Knowlton.

As PAAB Commissioner I was responsible to ensure the project was on schedule, stayed within budget and met our communications objective. It was an interesting experience being the client and getting to approve copy decks and visuals.

In May 2004, I attended a Pharmaceutical Marketing Club of Quebec meeting, where marketing guru Al Ries spoke on the value of initiating PR prior to advertising an unknown product or service. The PR campaign paves the way when you want to get people to accept and believe in a message, and then change their behaviour.

I have always thought that advertising works best when it reflects the underlying belief of the reader. For example, you can't interest a die-hard Chevy owner to buy a Ford unless something happens to the Chevy owner to make him interested in seeking alternatives.

Thus, I believe that the PR campaign is fundamentally important to the success of the advertising campaign. There is no hype, just the facts.

I know PAAB clients are marketing experts, so if you see elements of the campaign that can be improved, please share your comments with me. A decision must be made about continuing the project in 2005. [CPM](#)

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## Pangaea Creates New Division



Tom Knott,  
President of Pangaea  
Trade & Logistics Inc.

Joseph Knott, President of Pangaea Holdings Inc., is pleased to announce the creation of Pangaea Trade & Logistics Inc. and the appointment of Tom Knott as President.

This new division can support your ongoing success by ensuring the appropriate infrastructure and policies to maximize channel distribution and marketing to pharmacies and pharmacists.

Pangaea Trade & Logistics Inc. currently specializes in three distinct areas, offering value-added services in:

- Logistics
- Trade Relations
- Trade Marketing

The services range from consultative to full outsourcing offerings of a strategic or tactical nature.

For more information, contact Tom Knott at (416) 516-3524 or [tnott@pangaea-consultants.com](mailto:tnott@pangaea-consultants.com).