

# Learning from Experience

---

*The Canadian Pharmaceutical Marketing Program provides participants with a perspective on the current challenges and best practices for designing and implementing successful brand strategies in today's marketplace. Core to the design of courses in the Program is the involvement of senior industry faculty speakers sharing their experiences and knowledge. It is through their insights that the participants gain "real world learning." This column will feature the faculty speakers' experiences through their topic discussions and the questions posed by participants.*

---



John Haslam  
Director,  
Dermatology  
Business Unit,  
Biogen Idec Canada

**Q** Given your experience working in "traditional" pharma, as well as biotech, what do you see as key differences in the business models utilized by each?

**A** While both business models are successful in their own right, there are several key differences between biotech and "traditional" pharma that are worth highlighting.

Biotech companies usually have a **small number of products in specialty markets**. This translates into a higher level of risk and potential reward vs. "traditional" pharma portfolios which are normally larger and more balanced.

Biotech therapies are usually for less prevalent diseases that are managed exclusively at the specialty level. Where we might target 500 specialists for a biologic therapy for psoriasis, a large pharmaceutical company may have a target audience of 25,000 general practitioners for a cholesterol-lowering medication—this is a very different dynamic.

Biotech products are often impacted by the **complexity of product manufacture and commercialization**. The administration route of biotech products tends to be intravenous, intramuscular or subcutaneous vs. a predominantly oral administration for "traditional" pharma products. This administration complexity can demand significant post-script customer service support and programs.

There are often higher barriers to entry for generics involving full clinical development demands, whereas less complex chemical entities can have a generic entry based on bioequivalence.

In a biotech company, this complex product scenario is often supported by **minimal infrastructure**, internally and in the field.

With today's environment of acquisitions, mergers and joint ventures, we see the lines between biotech and "traditional" pharma becoming quite blurred, with many pharmaceutical companies integrating the biotech philosophy, seeing it as an attractive future growth strategy.

**Q** *What do you see as the key success factors in the launch of a biopharmaceutical product in the Canadian market? Given your experience launching Amevive™, what advice can you give?*

**A** Many key success factors for a biotech launch are similar to those for a “traditional” pharma launch, but for a small biotech operation, the risk of failure can be that much greater. Here are my *Top Ten Tips* for a successful biopharmaceutical launch:

1. Get the right people on the business. A great team is still the core of every successful launch.
2. Upfront planning pays off.
3. Talk to your customers throughout the launch. Listen and act upon their feedback.
4. Build physician/patient awareness early on to drive adoption.
5. Develop key opinion leaders pre-launch to support influence cascade.
6. Use market research/advisory boards to guide strategy.
7. Develop patient advocacy groups.
8. Monitor all activities post-launch and adapt as necessary.
9. Augment the biopharma offering with value-added services.
10. If possible, learn from other markets where the product has been launched. **CPM**

*This opportunity to Learn From Experience is based on a presentation by John Haslam entitled **Launching a Specialty Niche Biopharmaceutical in Canada** to the participants in the Humber Marketing Pharmaceuticals in Canada Program, run in partnership with Pangaea Development and Training. For information on these programs, call (416) 675-6622 ext. 4541.*



**Looking for a Supplier? Need a Specialized Service?  
Interested in Industry News & Information?**

Find it all online at:

**Pharma411.ca**

The Premiere Online Directory & Resource Site  
for the Canadian Pharmaceutical Industry

Medzyme