

# Learning from Experience



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*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.*

**Q** *In the pharmaceutical industry, many companies are adopting global branding and global positioning concepts. What impact can this global approach have on the marketing of a product by a local operating company?*

The most obvious benefit of global branding and positioning is that all exposures to our target audience are consistent, regardless of location and venue. International conferences, global speakers and websites are examples of "beyond local" exposures to our target audience, along with direct-to-consumer advertising that crosses borders seamlessly.

For the most part, "globalization" is ideal...having the same name, look and feel and benefits claims will strengthen the brand message and positioning (since positioning is really our customers perception of our brands!).

However, difficulties can arise with differences that exist between countries. These could include:

- Competitors that may not be marketed or have varied success between countries
- Pricing variances between countries
- Differing regulatory constraints and product monograph content

From a positioning standpoint, globalization is very important, especially if there is some room for local implementation and innovation.

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*Q As pharmaceutical marketers, we are used to dealing with facts about our products: efficacy, safety, dosage, price and reimbursement. If positioning is about how our customers “feel” about our products, how can we successfully reconcile these facts with feelings?*

*A* The positioning, which reflects how customers “feel” about our products, is the result of how we represent the facts. We need to be clear and consistent in defining our creative strategy, which consists of the:

- Benefits promised
- Proof sources
- Competition
- Target audience
- Tonality

If these are relevant to our customers, well defined and clearly communicated in all of the marketing executions, we will be able to “own” the positioning in our customers minds. This needs to be consistent across all promotional programs and over time to really become entrenched in our customers’ minds.

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*Q Many companies don’t just market one product in a category, but have a portfolio of products. What additional considerations should product managers take into account when working with an individual product in a portfolio?*

*A* Product managers need to consider interdependencies and synergies that exist between products within a portfolio. Areas of overlap need to be identified and considered as issues or opportunities.

Potential areas of overlap could include:

- Target audience (physician specialties, other healthcare professionals and patients)
- Events such as conferences and CME
- Field force promotion
- Advertising

This overlap may be a significant benefit in terms of shared costs, better corporate image and increased exposure.

This may also create issues such as confusion and could dilute the focus and product identity. These products need to be clearly positioned and differentiated to ensure success.

**CPM**

*This opportunity to “Learn From Experience” is based upon a presentation by Dean Michelin entitled “Product Positioning” to the participants at the Humber ‘Marketing Pharmaceuticals in Canada’ Program run in partnership with Pangaea Development and Training.*