

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 *What do you believe are the key concepts that the pharmaceutical industry could utilize from the world of packaged-goods marketing?*

- A**
- **Passionate commitment to brand building and understanding consumer needs**
In a complex world of confusing information, branding can identify, create and exploit sustainable competitive advantage, an increasingly important need in the new pharmaceutical environment
 - **Targeting a wide range of influencers**
Understanding the roles, interactions and degree of influence that different stakeholders have on brand choice is critical to success. In the pharmaceutical world, the primary target has historically been the physician. However, it is increasingly important to look beyond this audience to pharmacists, payers and disease groups, for example
 - **Building innovation into annual marketing plans**
In the pharmaceutical industry, the majority of promotional spending is focused on the sales force. The aim should be to support a broader and more creative range of integrated marketing activities

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Q Which factors that are currently impacting the Canadian pharmaceutical marketplace do you believe are driving this need for a shift in perspective?

A Several factors in today's pharmaceutical market are characteristic of a consumer-driven marketplace:

- There is an increasing level of **more aggressive and fragmented competition** as fewer and fewer blockbusters are brought to market. The market is moving faster than ever before and significant innovation is hard to achieve. Yet, there is an increasing need for both marketing and sales investment to support these changing factors
- Most importantly, an **empowered and informed consumer** is emerging. These consumers are looking for easy access to uncomplicated, credible health knowledge. The doctor is no longer the definitive source of information and consumers are looking for trusted partners who understand their ever evolving health-care needs

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Q What advice would you give pharmaceutical product managers regarding the integration of the patient into their brand plans?

A Current marketplace factors demand that pharmaceutical marketers evolve from the “traditional” pharmaceutical marketing model which has historically had a high dependency on doctors and sales teams. This can be achieved by:

- Investing in consumer understanding and through insight building research, developing patient-focused strategies to support the building of a great brand
- Understanding and partnering with other stakeholders who directly influence patient care

Pharmacists, for example, are front-line, highly accessible health-care providers who provide direct, face-to-face patient care and their role is ever expanding. They are influential on treatment and therapy options, experts in driving adherence and compliance to therapy and because of the personal relationship they have with many of their patients, can encourage them to talk to their doctors and seek treatment that might otherwise go untreated.

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