

# R

## Roberto, Bill Please!

---



Pier Lalonde,  
Senior Creative  
Director,  
LXB  
Communication  
Marketing

Something quite surprising and awe inspiring happened to me a couple of years ago. This occurrence made me think about the way we do things in the pharmaceutical marketing field.

I was in a trendy restaurant with my loved one for a nice, romantic outing *à deux*. Our choices made, Roberto, our waiter, came to take the order, pulling out a strange gadget from his waist belt. It was a small instrument, the size of one of those bank card payment modules. I watch him entering our order on this... with his index finger no less! Needless to say, interest in my *tête-à-tête* took the wayside for the next few minutes whilst I enquired about this marvelous new toy.

In a nutshell, it was a small wireless touch-screen computer that takes orders, sends them automatically to the kitchen to be prepared and to the cash for the eventual bill. Just think: no mistakes possible, no writing and getting the wrong order, gained efficiency and, for the waiter, more time to spend with his other patrons. Wow!

This made me think about the paradox in regards to the pharmaceutical industry's presentation tools. On the one hand, when it comes to developing new products, only the most sophisticated, technologically-advanced, state-of-the-art, no-holds-barred equipment is used. And the sums devoted to this are simply astronomical. But on the flip side, when the time comes to go to market with this "22nd Century Scientific Advance," have you noticed how many pharmaceutical companies are still using the same presentation tools they did in the 1980s and 1990s? You know the ones I mean. Flip-chart style detail aids made of plastified paper in some sort of binder-holder, slim Jims (who was that guy anyways?), 18 x 24-inch posters for patient waiting rooms, counter cards holding informative flyers, *etc.*

*The presentation tools you use are a direct reflection of how important your product seems to be to you. What message are you getting across?*

Not that there is anything inherently wrong with these. On the most part, they still work just fine, while others kind of "do the job." Do the job... don't you just hate the sound of those three words? They are as exciting as lukewarm water or a limp handshake. And what does "do the

job” reflect about the pride you have in your new product, or the importance you seem to give doctors and healthcare professionals?

What if instead, we put technology at our marketing service? What if we invested a little in renewing our presentation toolbox? What if your sales force could dazzle doctors, thereby getting their unconditional attention for the three to four minute span they have with them? We are in the era of iPhones® and not only is technology there for the taking, but it has never been so affordable. Here are a few ideas: touch-screen PC tablets as a medium for detail aids. You can navigate from one point to another in a nanosecond with one finger, add video components, update and change its content time and time again... without having to absorb the heavy printing costs and inherent delays! So yes, it costs at the onset, but it saves you in the long run. Just imagine the pride your reps will have in using state-of-the-art technology to present your state-of-the-art drug or treatment!

And what of these nifty portable USB keys as a leave-behind for doctors to read up on your material at their own time; or e-detailing, topic blogs, *etc.*?

In short, all it takes is a will to change the status quo, the desire to be better than your competitor and the resolve to wow your clients... and gain market share. Roberto’s bosses understood this. So, get your agencies to challenge you and bring new creative ideas to the table for you—that’s what we do best!—and let’s see if we can bring pharmaceutical promotional tools and campaigns in the iPhone® era. **CPM**

The advertisement features a central image of a smiling elderly man in a light blue shirt holding a green pill labeled 'CR'. To his right, the product name 'VESCULIN' is displayed in a large, bold font, with 'Continuous Release Vesculinic Acid' underneath. A red banner with a white exclamation mark icon and the text 'SPECIAL ACCESS PROGRAM' is positioned below the product name. At the bottom of the image area, it lists '5 MG, 10 MG, AND 15 MG' and the 'SmartPayment™' logo. The background of the ad is a light blue gradient. Below the image area, the text '24-HOUR SR<sub>x</sub> DATA\* ON NEW PATIENT STARTS' is written in a large, bold, blue font. Underneath this, the 'SmartPayment™' logo is repeated in a stylized, blue and white font. At the very bottom, a smaller line of text reads 'ANOTHER SMARTTECHNOLOGY™ PRODUCT THAT IS MORE THAN JUST A PHYSICIAN SAMPLE!' followed by a footnote '\* SEE FULL PAGE SR<sub>x</sub> AD FOR MORE DETAILS'.

*Pier Lalonde is the Senior Creative Director at LXB Communication Marketing, a pharmaceutical and direct-to-consumer advertising agency. You may reach him at [plalonde@lxb.ca](mailto:plalonde@lxb.ca).*