



The Pharmaceutical
Advertising Advisory Board
REVIEW
By Ray Chepesiuk, Commissioner

Looking through the PAAB Crystal Ball

Good organisations look at themselves as others see them and try to find a path to get to where they want to be. In the spring of 2002, the PAAB directors endorsed the idea of a PAAB Strategic Planning Initiative. The PAAB executive committee thought the timing was right to assess the PAAB's current strengths and weaknesses, decide what the PAAB should be, and then do the right things to make it happen.

It was decided that the first step should be to find someone to help us develop an effective process and facilitate the stages of that process. The committee chose Carolyn Everson of EversonCo. She promised a "gentle dictatorship" style that the committee members agreed was appropriate. She also brought more than 15 years experience in management consulting and no preconceived ideas of what the PAAB should be. Her role was to help the PAAB directors find their own way. We would put everything involving structure, function, and organisation on the table for review.

What followed was the most formal and objective planning process that the PAAB has undertaken in its 26-year history. Through the fall of 2002, the PAAB was busy gathering information about how clients, other organisations, and individuals viewed the PAAB. Each director completed a survey on behalf of his or her organisation. PAAB executive committee members performed one-on-one interviews with external stakeholder representatives from medical associations and provincial governments. The Marketed Health Products Directorate of Health Canada provided comment within the context of the same survey. The facilitator conducted focus groups in Montreal and Toronto with representatives from pharmaceutical companies and sup-

pliers. These representatives were chosen to provide input from large and small companies that were involved in a range of business areas and services. The facilitator also conducted a focus group session with the PAAB staff without the commissioner being present.

The board of directors met on Nov. 15, 2002 to undertake the next step in the planning process. Carolyn Everson lead the group through a day of discussion focussed on issues related to the stakeholder objectives for the planning process. She also helped them distinguish between operational and strategic planning.

The directors, who share a vision of future success for the PAAB, agreed on a three- to five-year framework for the planning initiative. Within that time, they agreed they would address organisational issues, evaluate the need to strengthen governance, and work together in a spirit of co-operation. These goals were established by reviewing the perception of the strengths and weaknesses of the PAAB, as identified during the information-gathering phase.

EversonCo then took all of the input from the brainstorming session and created a document for discussion by the directors on Jan. 17, 2003. The directors were asked to form a mission statement for, or outline the purpose of, the PAAB. They were asked to form a vision of success and to determine the fundamental issues that would have to be addressed for the PAAB to achieve that success. They were also asked to identify leadership priorities and to address those issues for the three-year planning period. Finally, they were asked to identify the next step that would be necessary to help



complete the plan. Most notable was the belief by all that the PAAB does, in fact, exist and work for the best interest of all Canadians, and that we should be doing a better job of telling people that.

To begin the implementation process, the board set up four task groups. The first group will examine ways and means to improve communication with Health Canada. The second group will look at ways of addressing code application consistency through organisational excellence. This will include improvements to informational technology, space, and staff morale. The third group will review the PAAB mandate regarding the promotional issues related to the advertising to health-care professionals of biologicals, devices, and natural health products, the direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs, and the means of collaborating with other review agencies. The fourth group will look at ways of engaging stakeholder support.

The PAAB directors want the PAAB logo to be the mark of distinction with respect to the ethical advertising of health-care products. As the PAAB commissioner, I am committed to making that happen. The PAAB staff members act in the best interest of the pharmaceutical industry when they ask you to conform to the requirements of the PAAB Code of Advertising Acceptance. The research for this project revealed that too many marketers look for ways to get around the PAAB. I ask all PAAB clients to do a little soul searching and ask yourselves to strengthen your commitment to create ethical advertising that conforms to both the spirit and the letter of the PAAB Code. By doing that, you too will be acting in the best interest of all Canadians and helping to improve the public image of the pharmaceutical industry. Let us look to a bright future. [CPM](#)

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