



Marketing a pharmaceutical product or medical device to a healthcare professional audience has changed radically, even for market leaders and establishment brands. But for challenger brands—the brands with something to prove, obstacles to overcome, perceptions to change—the dilemma is even bigger. They need to find new ways to compete in this landscape.

Market leaders frequently have a unique mechanism of action or a breakthrough clinical profile that allows the product to succeed on clinical merit alone. Challenger brands often do not have that clinical advantage, or first-in-class leverage, or the ability to outspend. Yet many still cling to replicating analogs that simply don't apply to them.

"There is a set of advantages that have to do with material resources, and there is a set that have to do with the absence of material resources—and the reason underdogs win as often as they do is that the latter is sometimes every bit the equal of the former."
 — Malcolm Gladwell, *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*

The process of doing something that hasn't been done before, going on a journey that doesn't have a map, can be unnerving. But for a challenger brand to survive, to find a place to live, to make it in the jungle, marketers must adopt a new set of rules. It starts with examining where market leaders are vulnerable and accepting the role as challengers, beginning to see your brand's constraints as potential advantages, and turning away from the marketing approaches that worked for market leaders.

This idea underscores why challenger brands cannot rely on trite, predictable marketing approaches. The last thing the industry needs is another campaign

featuring smiling patients walking on a beach, or confident physicians, or even worse, a well-lit "beauty shot" of a device. Such imagery does not capture the essence of your brand with creative symbols, and it does not demonstrate a higher level of understanding of how the target audience feels or what they need. It fails to effectively differentiate your brand and should be avoided at all costs.

"In the event you aren't able to monopolize via a disruptive business model, disruption in the branding sense becomes essential. If your business model isn't capital D disruptive, your marketing had better be. This is especially true for those whose ambitions exceed their available resources, i.e., the challenger brand."
 — Mark Barden, *challenger brand expert*

DO YOU HAVE A CHALLENGER BRAND THAT NEEDS DISRUPTIVE MARKETING?

Here are some situations that indicate challenger-brand status:

- entering a market with inferior data
- commodity market with little differentiation
- smaller brand facing larger established competition
- early phase of development of a promising molecule with unclear positioning
- bigger share of voice is needed, but sales force is limited
- new entrant in a crowded established category
- existing, underperforming brand in need of a boost
- launching a new indication, formulation, or dosage
- a new or misunderstood technology
- any combination of the above

So, what is it exactly that challenger brands must confront and overcome?

ASSUMPTIONS. PERCEPTIONS. COMPLACENCY. CIRCUMSTANCE. STATUS QUO. IGNORANCE. BULLIES. SOMETIMES, THEMSELVES.

What do we do to help? Elevate helps challenger brands adapt to the new world of marketing in pharmaceuticals and devices. We help companies analyze their brands and competitive landscapes, identify the dominant challenges, break down obstacles and perceptions, create symbols of change and a narrative of disruption, and begin to assume thought leadership in the category. We help them reach laser-focused positioning, targeting, messaging, reach, frequency, distribution, and approach.

We prepare them to survive in the jungle. To steal a lion's share without getting mauled. To move a big, slow, stagnant market. To outwit an 800-pound market leader. To realize that going face-to-face with the market leader is no time to be tame. We help them elevate their marketing to take advantage of their challenger status.

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