



HEADING A MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR COMPANY AND ENSURING ITS SUCCESS TAKES SEVERAL KEY CHARACTER TRAITS. Clearly there is a need for vision, courage, and the intelligence to identify personal strengths and weaknesses. Add to this mix a passion for the job to inspire managers and staff.

"I don't know whether it's the dynamic nature of this industry that drives my passion or my passion for what I do in this industry that keeps me excited. Probably both. It's both business and pleasure all wrapped up into one. I love what I do in spite of long hours and long weeks." That is Elaine Riddell's view on her role as CEO of NOP World Health, a U.K.-based provider of primary market research for the pharmaceutical industry.

Affable and easy to talk to, with a fount of ideas, it is not hard to understand why Ms. Riddell has been such an effective leader for NOP World Health. Under her direction, business at Market Measures Interactive, one of the three groups that falls under the NOP World Health umbrella, has expanded by 270%. MMI's two sister companies are Strategic Marketing Corp., a provider of nontraditional strategic research, and NOP Healthcare, a supplier of ad hoc, omnibus, and syndicated services.

But when Ms. Riddell came on board eight years ago, MMI was struggling to keep its head above water.

"At the time I came to Market Measures it was a 27-year-old company," Ms. Riddell says. "The company had done virtually the same things from its inception. Market Measures had a very strong reputation for identifying gaps in the market and building services to fill those gaps. The founder had sold the company about five years before — he wasn't working the organization any longer. So effectively the products had gotten somewhat stale. At the same time, clients recognized that if they were going to spend money, they needed to spend it on something that had value and not just something that they had historically purchased."

With the nation having just come out of a recession, the pharmaceutical industry was tightening its purse strings, so the challenge for Ms. Riddell was to turn MMI around in a difficult market. "Effectively, the slope of the curve was going the wrong way," she says. "Being a small company, it wasn't going to take very long before MMI wasn't around anymore. The products had not been nurtured for a number of years."

A more conservative person might have balked at such an assignment. But for Canadian-born Ms. Riddell, taking charge of MMI presented an opportunity to realize her dream — being responsible for a small organization.

"MMI was a small company," she says. "It needed a leader, and it needed to be turned around, which offered an opportunity for innovation. This was both exciting and frightening at the same time because if I wasn't successful, my career would be short-lived. I recognized there were very few of these opportunities. The chance was here, and it was here now. I asked myself what's the worst that can happen?"

Once she had accepted the challenge, Ms. Riddell quickly set about introducing changes, both to the products and to the staff. "From a research point of view, we needed people who brought more of a strategic orientation to research; from a production point of view, we needed people who brought more of a structured discipline, as well as a comfort level with technology."

For an organization that had never before undergone changes, the upheaval was extremely painful, and it took time and patience to convince the staff that change was essential for the company's survival.

"I learned an extremely valuable lesson at that point: find people who are comfortable with change and get them to embrace it first," Ms. Riddell says. "Let those pioneers demonstrate that the organization isn't going to fall off a cliff if it effects change."

Riddell

BY KIM RIBBINK

MEASURING UP

WITH A PASSION
ELAINE RIDDELL
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MEASURES INTO
A THRIVING
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The technique worked. Eight years later MMI is thriving, and its staff stands ready to meet new challenges. “Our team has experienced so much change that as an organization we have a tremendous amount of confidence in our ability to understand what needs to change and accept that change must occur.”

Learning to change

Ms. Riddell learned the importance of embracing change while in college. “I went to McGill University in Montreal and was in a bachelor of science program. About two years into it, I realized I really didn’t like it. So I switched to the bachelor of commerce program, which in Canada is the business program, and it was the business program that really excited me.”

After leaving college, Ms. Riddell joined Abbott Laboratories in Montreal, in what was then a relatively new function — marketing.

“Marketing was fairly new — probably about five years old — at least in Abbott,” she says. “Because marketing was so new, I had the opportunity to see what was missing within the division and to play more of a role in helping product managers.”

Five years later, she took over responsibility for sales administration, where she was in charge of sales quotas and overseeing compensation plans. The position meant constantly extracting and compiling information, a task that came easily to Ms. Riddell.

“Seeing the picture in the numbers, seeing the story in the numbers — information, data, numbers — always came very easily to me,” she says.

Ms. Riddell soon realized that the information business was what drove her passion. “I was just fortunate early in my career to realize that information-driven decision support was

something that I liked, something I wanted to do more of, and was able to pursue,” she explains. “People change careers many times, and I was very fortunate that I hit on what I liked to do early. It was serendipity that I was in a position that allowed me to use information, and the application of this skill has served me well in my career.”

While putting together Abbott’s information systems, Ms. Riddell discovered that IMS Health, a provider of information solutions to the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries, had just the service she was trying to build.

“It was a wonderful find because in the pharmaceutical industry, at least at the time, sales and marketing had virtually no computer support,” Ms. Riddell says. “So being able to bring in wholesaler data from across the country, process the information, organize data by territory, and use it as the basis for compensation was dreaming in colors.”

Impressed with what she had achieved at Abbott, IMS Canada tried to recruit her. She resisted for several years, at that time envisioning her future was in big pharma. But knowing that to advance in Abbott she would have to join the salesforce, a move that did not inspire her, and recognizing that after eight years at the pharmaceutical company she needed a change, Ms. Riddell joined IMS Canada.

“It didn’t take me very long to realize that the information side of the industry was a better fit for me,” she says. “IMS was an opportunity to influence, to create, to innovate. I would never have been able to do that within the pharmaceutical industry, because what pharma creates are products and that’s left to R&D. So the ability to directly affect an organization was much more possible on the supplier side of the industry as opposed to the manufacturing side.”

Again, a new function at IMS gave her an opportunity to innovate and create. In this instance, it was product management, a function that previously hadn’t existed at the company. After two years in the job, Ms. Riddell moved into the position of VP of finance, rounding out her executive experience.

With a plethora of skills now under her belt, it was time to set her sights higher.

“The president of IMS Canada was transferred to the U.S. to head up one of the major components of IMS,” Ms. Riddell says. “She was here about six or seven months when she realized she needed someone who could take on responsibility for new product development here, so she asked me to come down. It was a big decision, but I knew they had brought someone from the U.S. for the product development role at IMS Canada, so it was going to take a long time before I could move into that office. I also knew that I was missing big company experience in a senior role, and the position I was being offered in the U.S. would fill that gap.”

Her IMS experience, she says, was invaluable, but it also convinced her that her best chance of implementing her skills as a builder and innovator was with a smaller, more nimble organization. And that is when the opportunity at MMI presented itself.

The information connection

Early in her career, Ms. Riddell embraced computer technology, perceiving its usefulness and importance in the pharma industry in general, and particularly in the area of information gathering. The Internet has, undoubtedly, been an important tool in both collecting data and in helping MMI and its clients stay ahead of the curve.

“Business information is even more essential today because of the pace at which we’re moving,” Ms. Riddell says. “More timely information is key, and this is where technology and the Internet have just blown the doors open on this opportunity to truly be continuously monitoring your marketplace.

“Because of the nature of the market, the need is there for more rapid feedback on customers. Having information as it’s happening gives you time to respond. Technology and the Internet are truly changing the client’s ability to respond at a time when it’s mission critical to act — and to act fast.”

To be beneficial to the client, MMI has broadened its role to one of information interpreter as well as information gatherer. There, too, the Internet has been a helpful tool.

“The Internet facilitates speed of data collection, and also better education of the staff on key market issues, so they’re smarter about the context in which the information is being collected and applied,” Ms. Riddell says.

There are, of course, drawbacks. “Never before have we had a platform that serves as a promotion platform, an education platform, a data-collection platform,” she says. “This is the only time in history that a single platform has come together to support so much. That’s all the more reason we have to be careful that we don’t over use the Internet or abuse the ease of access that it represents, because we could kill the golden goose.

“It’s also all the more reason that MMI needs to differentiate itself and demonstrate itself to be a respectful organization with high ethics. It all comes down to respect. There has to be a relationship, there has to be trust. We won’t have a long-standing relationship with someone unless they trust us.”

Bringing it all together

Technology alone would not have been enough to propel MMI’s growth. Pharmaceutical companies were demanding not only the what and when, but also the why — this Ms. Riddell describes as bringing value to the study. “The analysis that we are providing needs to show not only what we learned

through research, but what a client can do with that insight,” Ms. Riddell says. “For example, if we’re looking at a study that was conducted with physicians, we need to think about the implications for managed care, the implications for patients, the implications for all healthcare audiences and stakeholders. Truly adding value means thinking about the industry in the round as opposed to in silos.”

For MMI, that has meant more big changes in the way it goes about its business. “Up until this point, the physician was a separate business, managed care was a separate business, the patient was a separate business, direct-to-consumer was a separate business,” Ms. Riddell explains. “They were separate because as the industry evolved we invested in developing these businesses; we became a portfolio of separate businesses.

“We have recognized this is not how we can provide the client with the greatest amount of value,” she says. “So we have restructured, bringing all those people who are clients on a day-to-day basis under one leader. We’ve also brought research and operations together under one leader, recognizing that there’s very little difference, particularly now with the Internet and technology, between research and operations. In addition, we’re creating a new product development role, knowing that our future hinges on our ability to identify those next new services, focus sufficient resources around building new tools, and ensure that we’re out to market on time with the right products, supported in the right way.”

To further these goals, the company has been working to ensure its staff members know the business inside out, which has meant employees specializing in certain fields.

“The only way we’re going to be able to take advantage of the Internet’s speed and depth and breadth of search capabilities, is to ensure we have experts by category,” Ms. Riddell says. “Specialists are much better positioned to quickly translate what they see into implications — and to get those insights to the client rapidly. We are increasingly trying to find ways to enhance our usefulness to our clients.”

MMI recently introduced an onsite virtual office. This a platform that allows the company to deliver its services electronically and store all the supporting materials that go with a particular study. The virtual office allows clients to stay on top of what stage a new project is in, reference a full library of existing studies, and contract for new programs — all on their desktops. The virtual office, which was launched at the end of September, already has been installed at two clients — Aventis Pharmaceuticals and F. Hoffmann-La Roche.

“The platform also provides clients with a news feed, because we believe that when clients make a decision it’s not just based on the information that we provide them,” Ms. Riddell says.

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS TO AFFECT CHANGE

- DTC e-Monitor, for real-time, Web-based tracking of consumer awareness and reactions to DTC advertising
- DTC Monitor, for in-depth, twice-yearly insights, straight from 7,500 consumers, into DTC awareness, perceptions and responses to every print and broadcast ad across 30 categories, plus five years of trendable information
- DTC/Doctor Dialogue, for understanding how DTC-driven discussions during doctor visits shape prescribing decisions — from the physician’s and the patient’s perspective
- FastNet Tracker, provides pharmaceutical companies with real-time, on-line access to physician assessments of sales-call effectiveness — including the messages presented and their impact on prescribing
- Fastape Plus, for assessing promotional messages and how they drive prescribing
- Fastape Plus Rep, for uncovering how reps view their interactions with doctors, including how they evaluate marketing programs and sales support materials
- Hot Spot, for explaining performance variances among reps — and turning sales laggards into sales leaders
- Sales Force Assessor, for maximizing the effectiveness of mirror, co-marketing and contract salesforces
- On-Sight Virtual Office, tailored to the needs of each individual pharmaceutical company — and includes the news, research, links, and alerts relevant to that company’s specific therapeutic markets and business interests



For Ms. Riddell, the latest re-evaluation of the company is as important to its future success as her initial initiatives for MMI.

“Change is a way of life,” she says. “We continuously have to adapt and improve ourselves, because if we don’t the competition is going to do it for us. And for that reason, while the change we’re going through is pretty significant, everybody believes it is right. Largely that change is about moving the company from a product-driven organization to a client-focused organization, which changes the way we approach business.”

Honesty is the best policy

When Ms. Riddell first joined MMI, it was a conservative organization, and its employees were not comfortable with bringing forth new ideas and strategies. To persuade the staff to do

so, Ms. Riddell first had to convince them not to be afraid, that there were no wrong answers. Eight years later, she says, openness is part of the corporate culture.

“MMI people are not shy, nor are they intimidated about speaking their minds,” she says. “I have encouraged their input. I’ve always said, ‘I can’t do anything about it if I don’t know it exists. I may not like what you have to say, I may not agree with what you have to say, but you owe it to me to let me know what you think — and we owe it to the organization to know that there are issues that need to be resolved.’ So openness has been one of the cornerstones in this organization.”

To facilitate that openness, Ms. Riddell encourages communication through a number of different channels, including townhall meetings, one-on-one contact, or group meetings.

“I host round tables and I meet with 10 or 12 people at a time for lunch,” she says. “We just talk about what’s working and what’s not and it’s amazing what I find out, from small things like there aren’t enough printers to more complicated things such as a particular product needs to be improved. People initially said to me that I was going to regret this approach, but I never have. Fundamentally people are professional and constructive. They choose to be part of an organization and advance that organization, or they leave. Talking helps form relationships.”

Those meetings encourage people to discuss their ideas and to put those ideas into practice.

“We can’t develop this organization and develop new services if people don’t step up and say, ‘I have an idea,’” she says. “I let my people know that there isn’t a consequence if things don’t work out quite the way they thought. They know innovation is supported.”

Being open also means admitting mistakes, not only within the company, but also to the client. And that, says Ms. Riddell, is one of the hardest things that people have had to learn.

“When I first joined MMI, people were very frightened of calling the client,” Ms. Riddell says. “In general people were nervous about being open, because people are brought up to believe that if they say the wrong thing there will be a consequence. It’s something that takes people time when they first join the organization, because it’s not typical to have an open environment and an environment of trust. Trust is about forming relationships, and it does take time.”

Knowing what the problem is enables the company to put remedies in place.

“If people were afraid, issues wouldn’t get to the table as quickly as they do,” Ms. Riddell says. “Identifying issues in a timely fashion enables us to respond quickly, because the company can’t take action if it doesn’t know what the issues are.”

Furthermore, Ms. Riddell says if people were are afraid of the repercussions of making a mistake they would be less willing to take risks, and without risk, companies would soon fall behind.

“If you’re going to be an innovator, if you’re going to be a leader, you need to take a certain amount of well-informed risks,” she says. “If you wait for three competitors to do the same, you’ve lost the opportunity.”

Learning from others

Effective leadership also is about admitting you don’t have all the answers, Ms. Riddell says. So MMI has been turning to some outside advisors to help advance the business.

“We’re working with Leadership by Design, and they have done an awful lot of work with the industry – both on the manu-

From big pharma to big research

ELAINE RIDDELL - RESUME

PRESENT TO 1999. CEO – NOP World Health. NOP World Health is one of the largest primary market research providers to the global pharmaceutical industry. NOP World Health unites three of the world’s most renowned healthcare knowledge leaders — Market Measures Interactive, NOP Healthcare, and Strategic Marketing Corp. Together, the NOP World Health companies offer a combination of multiclient studies for cost-effective market and promotional assessment, and nontraditional solutions for high-value strategic research.

1993 TO PRESENT. President – Market Measures Interactive. Before taking the helm at NOP World Health, Ms. Riddell served as president of Market Measures Interactive (MMI) for six years. During her first five years, she grew MMI’s business 270%, earning profit margins higher than any other publicly traded primary research company. Ms. Riddell nearly quadrupled MMI’s size entirely through organic growth, driven by product innovation to meet customers’ needs. Half of the revenue generated during her tenure was from new services.

1993 TO 1987. VP, Marketing, IMS America, Totowa, N.J. Before joining MMI, Ms. Riddell served as VP of marketing for IMS America, where she led the marketing and product development efforts for the world’s largest pharmaceutical sales and marketing databases.

1987 TO 1985. VP, operations and administration (Director, Officer and Board Member of IMS Canada), IMS Canada, Montreal, Canada. Ms. Riddell rose quickly through the ranks at IMS Canada, moving from account executive to director of product management to VP of finance in four years.

1985 TO 1983. Product director, market research division, IMS Canada, Montreal, Canada.

1983 TO 1982. Senior account executive, IMS Canada, Montreal, Canada.

1983 TO 1979. Manager, sales administration, Abbott Laboratories, Montreal, Canada. Ms. Riddell began her career at Abbott Laboratories, where she held key positions in both marketing and sales administration. She developed her deep understanding of the customer’s perspective during her years at Abbott. As an information services client, she gained an insider’s knowledge of customers’ information challenges and requirements — leading to her highly successful development approach of using customer needs as the wellspring for product innovation.

1979 TO 1974. Marketing coordinator, Abbott Laboratories, Montreal, Canada.

EDUCATION. McGill University, Montreal, Canada.



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facture side and the agency side. The founder, Roger Fritz, is an architect by training and the company is all about design — what businesses are being designed and what structure, strategy, hiring programs, etc. are needed to get the company where it is going,” Ms. Riddell says.

Leadership By Design Inc. provides executive coaching and leadership development for individuals, organizations, and communities.

In addition, Ms. Riddell has turned to a number of people she admires and has tried to take their advice. Among those are some she knows — including her father and her former boss at IMS Canada, Jan Craig (Ms. Craig also was at IMS America) — and some mentors she has never met.

“I’m always quoting Peter Drucker,” she says, referring to Professor Peter Drucker who is regarded as an influential writer covering modern organizations and their management strategies. “What I like about him, is that he seems to have gotten business principles down to simple concepts. One of his books that I pull out regularly is ‘The Effective Executive,’ which talks about knowing your strengths as a leader, and surrounding yourself with people who fill your voids.”

“Jack Welch, previously CEO of General Electric, is another leader whom I find inspiring,” Ms. Riddell says. “I read an article 10 or 12 years ago, in which he was one of several executives interviewed on the topic of change. The essential message from all of these executives was that change is difficult. And, as an executive, the one thing that you can’t do enough during change is communicate. All communication is essential and just when you think you’ve communicated enough, think again — and start over.”

According to Ms. Riddell, much of her role at MMI has been about creating an environment where her employees feel comfortable and free to communicate their concerns and ideas.

Ms. Riddell attributes MMI’s success to the quality of her managers, each of whom makes a unique contribution to the company.

“I’ve been a student of Myers Briggs for many years, which provides an understanding of different personality types and how there is a need for a full range of personality types to move an organization forward,” she explains. “The more different types of personalities there are in an organization, the more challenging it is to manage. But, organizational diversity is essential and it’s probably the greatest challenge any leader has in ensuring that he or she has all the bases covered.”

Calculated growth

The success at MMI clearly won over the company’s parent organization, United Business Media, and Ms. Riddell has managed to convince top-level executives at headquarters to open their minds, and wallets, to other acquisitions and ventures.

MMI is now one of three companies that comes under the umbrella NOP World Health. The others are NOP Healthcare, a multicountry research group, and Strategic Marketing Corp., which is focused on supporting the pharmaceutical industry from new product development through launch.

“Strategic Marketing is seen as an innovator around research methodology to help clients make better decisions,” Ms. Riddell says. “The company remains among the few organizations that has credentials with high-profile, high-risk decision makers for supporting decisions and action around product launches.”

While each company performs different functions, Ms. Riddell says all three NOP companies operate from the same set of values. “The central driver for these three companies is innovation,” she says.

NOP World Health is in the process of trying to acquire another company, though Ms. Riddell was not a liberty to go into detail.

The fundamental building blocks for success that Ms. Riddell has cemented at MMI — implementing change, taking risks, and building trust — are beginning to rub off on the other umbrella organizations. These building blocks also are being viewed as the key to success for joint ventures initiatives. MMI has several key alliances, including programs with Medscape and ePocrates Inc. Through its venture with Medscape, a provider of digital health records and online health information, MMI offers access to more than 2.5 million physicians, consumers/patients, and allied health professionals around the world. In its alliance with ePocrates, the largest handheld

physician network, providing quick point-of-care access to important clinical information, the two companies have launched a program to recruit physicians and other healthcare professionals for Web-based market research.

Building for the future

The team Ms. Riddell has put together, and the values she has instilled — those of openness, honesty, and risk taking — will continue to be central to MMI as the company moves forward. “My goals are very simple: to continuously respond to and adapt to our clients’ changing needs and to be brave enough to effect the changes that we have to effect to continue responding,” Ms. Riddell explains.

“The bar has moved up once again, and we’re ready to leap over it again,” she says. “The adrenaline starts to pump when I see that the bar has been raised another foot. We have to be much, much closer to our clients at more and more levels within the client organizations, and we have to learn lessons from other industries. Increasingly, our clients are looking for the merger of good, solid information from their customers with putting that information into context, so they can understand what it means for them and their business.

“Learning these skills means, we have to walk further on the edge,” she says. “It’s important to create a space for people to grow, as well as for the organization to grow. That is the cornerstone for success at Market Measures.”

But before success could be realized, the staff at MMI needed a clear picture of what the company was about.

“I realized that we needed to clearly define the company’s mission: what value are we going to provide to our clients?” Ms. Riddell says. “We determined that we are knowledge leaders. Leadership entails having a thorough knowledge of disease states and drug categories, message recall and sales effectiveness — all the areas that are critical to our customers. The depth and breadth of this knowledge is our differential market advantage. Knowledge leadership has been central to the organization for the last six or seven years. Refining the company’s differential advantage, coupled with the speed of the Internet, allows us to help clients understand the implications of information and take the right actions to improve their business. The term we use is ‘action ready.’ We provide our clients with services that are action ready — so they can act

with the immediacy that today’s accelerating market demands.”

At the end of the day, Ms. Riddell says business is about people — whether they are clients, consumers, or staff.

“Our business is really about the people — find the right people, make them feel good, make them feel productive, make them feel safe, and focus on their strengths,” Ms. Riddell says. “Strength is where the passion is, and nobody can manage you better than you manage yourself.

“It’s not about putting layers of management in the organization. It’s about identifying people’s strengths and allowing them to build on their strengths. The pride, the confidence, the enthusiasm, the passion that come from allowing people to focus on what they do well, is very powerful,” she says.

“Not only do I like to think that I’m making a difference for our clients, but that I’m making a difference to the people who are here everyday by creating opportunities for them that are challenging and exciting,” she says. ♦

PharmaVoice welcomes comments about this article. E-mail us at feedback@pharmalinx.com.

Going one step beyond

IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH PHARMAVOICE, ELAINE RIDDELL PROVIDES INSIGHT

TO THE CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH MANAGING INFORMATION IN THE INFORMATION AGE

HOW HAS MMI EVOLVED TO ADAPT TO CLIENT DEMANDS?

Through knowledge leadership, our early definition of ourselves, we are going a step beyond reporting findings. There’s some risk in that because we are not only putting out a draft of a questionnaire, but we’re hypothesizing what the possible implications are. That’s a layer of risk that market researchers aren’t always comfortable with, but our clients are clear: They don’t want to receive just a list of findings. They expect us to integrate our knowledge to provide action-ready insight.

WHAT HAS BEEN MMI’S GROWTH SINCE YOU JOINED?

MMI was a \$6 million company when I started, and this year Market Measures itself will reach \$36 million. With the acquisitions, NOP World Health, has grown from about \$10 million to \$80 million. Effectively as a group, the company has doubled in size every three years.

WHAT IS MMI’S ROLE IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY?

Our role is to help our clients, the pharmaceutical industry, understand their clients and their clients’ needs. We play an important role as an organization that can objectively gather information from physicians, patients, and managed care and synthesize the data down to the essential learnings and the essential implications for our clients. Our clients then use the information to guide their critical

business functions, including developing new products, fine tuning launch activity, and gauging salesforce effectiveness. Physicians would be less candid if pharmaceutical companies were asking the questions. For example, if a sales representative was the one asking the question, “What do you think of my product, doctor?” More often than not, the physician would probably not give a complete answer. Equally, depending on the answer, the representative may not give a completely accurate response back to his or her management. Objectivity and anonymity are important if a company is truly going to gather information it can use as the foundation for its key business decisions.

WHO ARE MMI’S CLIENTS?

MMI services 500 industry analysts. Recently a client said to us that there are 600 buyers in the healthcare/pharmaceutical industry. So Market Measures has the majority of analysts in the market buying one or more services from us. Probably 50 to 60 pharmaceutical companies — from the largest to the smallest — buy our services and products. The top 15 pharmaceutical companies represent about 76% of the industry’s worldwide revenue, and 76% of NOP World Health’s business comes from these same companies. All the major pharmaceutical companies are spending a significant sum of money with us.