

OPINIONS

Proactive communications — improving the industry's image

In the January issue of PharmaVOICE, we asked your opinion on PhRMA's new Strategic Communications and Public Affairs division, which was conceived to increase communication to all stakeholders as well as implement effective, innovative ways to get the message out.

According to Alan Holmer, president of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), with the rapid proliferation of television programming and communications technologies, the industry must continue to find new, innovative ways to make policy leaders, opinion leaders and, most importantly, the American people aware of the tremendous life-saving contributions pharmaceutical companies make every day.

"It is imperative that we help people understand the serious risks posed by heavy-handed legislative initiatives that would jeopardize our continued ability to discover breakthrough medicines to save lives and improve the health of all Americans," Mr. Holmer says.

PharmaVOICE wanted to know what other ways could the industry positively increase its visibility to consumers and other stakeholders?

A bold, broad, unapologetic proclamation of benefits

The most significant thing PhRMA and its constituent members can do is adopt a stronger, more assertive, and more proactive voice in the public debate over health and healthcare choices and expenditures. Past efforts to justify industry pricing and profits by repeatedly referencing the high cost of R&D proved to be a soft, self-serving whisper in the middle of a global shouting match.

Although it's not perfect in many regards, it can be argued that over the years the pharma industry has done more to eradicate disease, minimize suffering, and extend and improve life for humankind than perhaps any institution on the planet. And there's more to follow.

Diplomacy is important. And the subject of healthcare deserves an unqualified measure of respect. But there is a time to whisper and a time to scream. And what the industry needs now is a bold, broad, unapologetic proclamation of the very personal benefits of a healthy industry. It has relevance and meaning to every being on this planet ... and those to come.

Matt Giegerich
PRESIDENT AND CEO
COMMONHEALTH

The value of medicine

This is a hot topic with me as I have always felt very strongly that the industry has not

done enough to educate people about the "value" of the medicines we develop. There has been a tendency to back away from criticism or defend criticism with numbers — such as the high cost of research and development. This simply focuses the argument on money rather than focusing it on "value."

It is difficult for today's society to remember the high rates of infant mortality due to childhood illnesses that are very rarely seen today — measles, mumps, chicken pox, infections, etc. It also is difficult to remember the large number of tuberculosis clinics that treated many hundreds of thousands of people with tuberculosis. All these diseases are gone because of medical advances. However, it isn't so difficult for people to relate to a mother or spouse with breast cancer, or a grandparent with heart disease, or a child that requires medication for attention deficit disorder. The reason people don't relate to these things is that they take them for granted. For some reason good health is a "right" rather than something that carries a value. And therefore medicines carry no "value."

I am very concerned about society's real values. Society criticizes a pharmaceutical company for providing valuable information via television while it condones beer companies running ads that promote antisocial behavior and degrade women. There is a need for education programs that generate awareness of the "value" that is inherent in all medicines.

These programs need to reach an emotional level that will tie people emotionally to that value. For example, a child enjoys time with a grandparent who wins the battle with cancer because of the drug therapy he/she



receives — there is emotional "value" rather than a "dollar value" to this situation. Values in today's society are defined in part by our politicians, civic leaders, legislators, and other public figures. When the government initiates criticism of the pharmaceutical industry, society follows that lead. I am very pleased to see that PhRMA will be addressing these important audiences as part of their new educational initiatives.

Finally, I believe the industry has to spend time and money educating the public about the role the industry plays in educating healthcare professionals. Without healthcare industry support there would be no medical congresses, symposia, educational meetings, training programs, etc. The public needs to clearly understand that the industry is responsible (either directly or indirectly) for the education of their family physician and that the industry takes that role very seriously and is committed to high-quality medical education programs that improve patient care.

Neil Matheson
PRESIDENT AND CEO
APOTHECOM ASSOCIATES LLC

Take the emphasis off price, put it on value

Most of the negative press or negative issues surrounding the pharmaceutical industry today revolve around drug price sensitivity. This sensitivity has been caused by governmental focus and the industry's own increased direct-to-consumer advertising. The industry tends to "hang its hat" on

explaining the need for R&D when explaining drug costs, but that is not the only driving force behind drug pricing today. The industry should let consumers know about their discount programs, patient information, value-added programs, indigent patient programs, orphan drugs, etc. The industry should take the emphasis off price and put it on the value offered to the public by the industry.

Pharma has a responsibility to educate the public. Consumer awareness and education are important. Physician education is critical. The pharmaceutical industry should educate its own people about drug pricing so that these people (reps, managers, etc.) may have a positive impact in the field, with patients, doctors, and institutions. Pharma should talk to patients and doctors about the best way to educate, query to find the missing links in their information flows, and target their consumer campaign(s) appropriately.

Jim Dutton

PRESIDENT

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR CMRI

Michelle Reece

DIRECTOR

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR CMRI

Giving back to the community

First and foremost, there is a perception among the lay press, politicians, public advocates, and consumers that “big pharma” is overcharging for their products and that spending heavily on self-promotion may be construed as further rationale for the perceived high cost of medicines. Therefore, when we brainstormed, we took this into consideration, creating alternatives that are more altruistic and community based, in an attempt to lessen the perception and increase goodwill.

Our ideas are:

- Children’s Scholarship Art/Essay Contest on “How medicine positively affected my family’s lives.” The program, which could be promoted in a Sunday supplement such as *USA Weekend* or *Parade* magazine, would enroll children of four age groups — preschool, elementary, junior high school, and high school. The assignment would be to draw a picture (for the smaller children) or write a 200-word essay on how medicine positively affected their family or themselves. Winners will be drawn from each group and will receive a scholarship of \$1,000 each.

- Great Starts RX Mentorship Program. This scholarship program would target high school students who have an interest in science/medicine. The program would grant a four-year scholarship to selected universities

with the agreement being that the graduate would then work for a pharma company of their choice for four years in return — hence, the “great start.” This type of plan has worked successfully for companies such as Raytheon and it would work well for pharma.

- National Pharmaceutical Awareness Day. One day a year would be selected and a road-tour would be initiated in key cities, promoting wellness and screenings for diseases such as high cholesterol, breast cancer, prostate cancer, diabetes, and hypertension, etc. This would be a major PR initiative with B-roll footage distributed to local newscasts on the advances brought to the public via the pharmaceutical industry. In addition, each major pharmaceutical company would participate in a Smithsonian Institution display of advances each company brought to the world of medicine. This exhibit would stay at the Smithsonian for a month and then a smaller version of it would tour major cities and schools.

- Breakthroughs in Medicine Sunday Supplement. This supplement would be very similar to the recent one run by Philip Morris, which was on second-hand smoke. This would be a free-standing, glossy piece that is linked to a separate Website where the public can read more about it.

- Web banner ads. Placed on any medical information site, these banner ads would drive readers to the pharma company home page.

- Baby Boomer Initiatives. Baby boomers — people between the ages 39 and 57 — represent one of the largest groups of consumers of healthcare products and services. We could specifically target them in a number of ways, such as: “Health in Practice” book. This book would be sponsored by the pharma industry. It would guide boomers step-by-step through various health-related subjects that boomers should be aware of as they age, plus chapters on Medicare, Medicaid, knowing how to care for an elderly relative, choosing a nursing home, issues of home care, and the like.

- Concert/sporting events. Premiums would be given out at the gate at events that draw an “older” crowd, for example Neil Diamond, Neil Young, revival tours, etc. Ads in programs (and in *Playbill* on Broadway) also would be part of the program.

Camille DeSantis, BS, MT (ASCP)

VP, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, COPY

ACCEL HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATIONS

Maria Casini

VP, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, ART

ACCEL HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATIONS

Extending life expectancy, not salesforces

I just saw a statistic today that 100 years

ago average life expectancy was in the 40s, meaning I would not be writing this absent the contributions of the pharmaceutical industry. Back then, simple diseases such as pneumonia and TB were at the top of the killer list.

I recently saw an ad featuring Valentino, pointing out that his untimely demise could easily have been prevented had antibiotics been available. The American public will tolerate a reasonable pharma profit if it is made clear to them that taking it away will kill the goose that laid the golden cures.

The industry should consider taking some of the nearly \$3 billion it is spending on DTC to convey this message to the public.

In addition, it should get its house in order by biting the bullet and trimming the grossly overstaffed salesforces, which will make it easier to cut back on profit-sapping samples and other salesforce driven squandering of marketing dollars. These reforms would make it possible to hold the line or actually roll back prices, while maintaining or increasing margins.

Then all that needs to be done is to improve R&D ROI — I’ll leave the solution to that problem to wiser minds than mine!

Terry Nugent

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING

MEDICAL MARKETING SERVICE INC. (MMS)

Deliver impact

Most of us tend to generalize about issues and industries until they effect us personally. I think if all the politicians and people in general who complain about the “greedy, gougers” of the pharmaceutical industry would think about a member of their own family or a close friend who is taking a chronic medication to prevent a serious health condition or whose life has been saved by drugs when they were in an acute health crisis, there would be less pressure on the industry.

So, my suggestion is not to worry about finding a new medium to deliver the industry’s message, but a more impactful way of getting the message across. Make it personal in TV or print ads, i.e., “My husband would have died had it not been for Natrecor. Do you have someone in your family whose life was saved? How would your life be different if the medicine wasn’t there to save him?”

There are as many ways to tell this story with impact as there are life situations. The key is that nearly everybody has had a family member or friend who has been saved. They just have to think about the personal impact and consequences on themselves had the drugs not been there.

Larry Wolheim

PRINCIPAL

GIANT CREATIVE/STRATEGY LLC

Changing behaviors — rational and emotional

This question focuses on what I think is one of the greatest ironies in marketing. When we, as marketers, begin brand development, we start the quest for the single customer insight that is most motivating to our prescribers/consumers so that it is compelling enough to change a behavior, or start a new one. A marketer's dream is that the "insight," once uncovered, will not only be rational, but emotional, as well. Because it has been proven time and again that customer insights that are both rational and emotional, are the most compelling and sure to succeed. So, with that logic as a backdrop, if you think of our industry (the pharmaceutical industry) as a "brand," the customer insight that our product delivers upon is "the improvement and saving of life," arguably the most inherently emotional and rational insight for which a marketer could ever dare hope. Why then, is the industry so often maligned and the target of criticism and negative publicity around excessive pricing and commodity marketing? It is a great contradiction, and to me, a basic failure of marketing. For those of us who work in healthcare marketing, it is akin to the "shoemakers children having no shoes" phenomenon. The new PhRMA division will help ... hopefully to start from scratch on a new PR campaign that will leverage the good in our industry. But we who are proud of the work we do should consider our own individual power at the grassroots level as footsoldiers who can defend our cause day in and day out with the critics we come into contact with on a regular basis. I know that I personally, rarely find that a week goes by that I don't get

a chance to speak positively about the good that the pharmaceutical industry does in any number of social venues in which I find myself. I like to think that the journey begins with a single footstep, and every time I raise my voice in support of this business, I cover a little bit more ground. Our collective voices could help us travel a lot further. A simple thought, but a basic one.

I am not blind to the legitimate criticisms of our business, and I do believe it's essential that our industry proactively police itself with agreed upon guidelines like those issued by PhRMA, which helps everyone keep their collective eyes on appropriate marketing and gives our critics some comfort that they are being heard and addressed.

Risa Bernstein
PRESIDENT

ACCEL HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATIONS

A more aggressive and pointed message

I agree completely with PhRMA's position and objectives. With the new Strategic Communication and Public Affairs division, we could test much stronger and direct messages to get our point across, possibly like the following:

- "If not for the newly discovered prescription drugs I would be dead."
- "Mother would have passed on years ago without (name of specific product)."
- "Without (drug), Dad would be in a wheelchair."
- "I am healthy and feel great because I

it only costs x \$ a month, which is less than I spend on car repairs."

- "I am spending less for my body and mind's health with (drugs) than I do for my car repairs, so it is a bargain and I am feeling great."

I feel that we have been addressing the issues softly and need to send a more aggressive and pointed message to be heard.

Albert G. Nickel

PRESIDENT, CHAIRMAN, CEO
LYONS LAVEY NICKEL SWIFT INC.

First good step, but empowerment is needed

There is little argument that the pharmaceutical industry has been ineffective at communicating its positive and life-saving benefit to society throughout the ages. And the current legislation has been very successful at capitalizing on the longstanding tide of ill-will toward the industry. When you consider that the pharmaceutical industry is often mentioned with the tobacco industry in terms of suspect profit motives, the amount of work to be done may seem insurmountable.

The formation by PhRMA of a new Strategic Communications and Public Affairs division is a good first step, but also runs the risk of becoming ineffective from a bureaucracy standpoint. We've all seen how even a two-company co-marketing agreement can get stifled by politics, competing agendas, differing contribution levels, and personality conflicts.

If this division is to be successful, it must be empowered by the members to make decisions on all fronts, be it communication

supplier selections such market research and tising agencies, and lget allocations. It must so be very careful to thoroughly test all public messages before roll-out, because the group has one shot at communicating the message successfully. If it misses, the public and political backlash would be fast and furious.

Bravo on taking this first step. All of us in the industry are surely going to be rooting for their success.

Ed Mitzen

PRESIDENT
PALIO
COMMUNICATIONS

What's Your Opinion?

INDUSTRY CONFERENCES — TO ATTEND OR NOT TO ATTEND IS THE CONTENT QUESTION

Busy executives are pulled in a multitude of directions every day. In addition to holding and attending internal meetings, you are faced with an exhaustive list of conferences, symposia, seminars, meetings, etc. that can fill up your calendar in no time. Clearly, you can't attend every event.

PharmaVOICE wants to know what makes a conference, symposia, seminar worthwhile to you? And having attended an event did it fulfill your expectations?

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Please e-mail your comments to
feedback@pharmavoices.com.

