

Contributed by Shellie Caplan

# THE PERFECT JOB IS THERE FOR THE ASKING

This is such an exciting time in the industry, especially for people in marketing. With some personal insight, and recognition of the opportunities that exist within the healthcare field, the perfect job can be obtained. Traditional career paths have gone through a metamorphosis, and this has paved the way for marketers to have more control over their careers.

## MARKETING: THE TAIL WAGGING THE DOG

Today more than ever, marketing plays a critical role in making a drug a blockbuster. The emergence of innovative marketing techniques has created new positions and opportunities for those who know how to bundle their skills and apply them to this ever-changing industry.

Just a few decades ago, marketing managers were homegrown. There was a distinct marketing career path. It usually required starting off as a sales rep; then, after a couple of years of field experience, most companies would bring the rep into headquarters for a position as a marketing research analyst or an associate product manager. After a year or two, many companies sent these individuals back out into the field as district sales managers to acquire management experience.

From there, the final path was determined: individuals either went back inside to climb the marketing ladder or committed to the sales track and continued in sales management.

With 95% of big pharma companies adopting this developmental ladder, everyone in middle management knew where he or she stood, what was expected, and what the criteria were to move into leadership roles. This career progression was an outstanding way to develop industry-proficient professionals. The pharmaceutical companies literally schooled their employees and determined each individual's path for success within the company.

Today, career development is like fashion — anything goes, and for several reasons. The industry is very different now compared with just a few years ago.

Along with major pharma, biotech, and early stage development companies, there are collaborations, alliances, and amalgamations that play out every scenario that can be imagined to develop and market healthcare products globally.

## REDEFINING TITLES AND ROLES

The industry is more competitive than ever. Titles have different meanings in different companies, while, in the past, they were pretty synonymous. Today, requirements for the same title differ from company to company, along with the compensation package.

This is true both on the vendor and client side. The supplier/vendor side has exploded with a vast diversity of services and programs developed to support the different facets of marketing and use every type of media channel available. More and more professionals have left corporate America to flex their entrepreneurial muscles and have found success in supplying the industry, and their old colleagues, with new, innovative programs.

Corporate cultures are more diversified than ever. Between the mergers, acquisitions, and alliances, most major companies have gone through cultural evolutions, which sometimes can be difficult to adjust to.

Smaller companies can have a more entrepreneurial culture than their larger counterparts.

Each type of environment requires a different range of skills, and it can be difficult for an individual to adjust when moving among them. It's important for individuals to identify which environment best meets their preferences.

## MORE CHOICES THAN EVER

It is important for marketers to recognize that there are many more career choices than ever. Novel technologies have provided many new positions that didn't exist before, many of which have unspecified career paths. This creates the prospect of defining your career.

To find the perfect career path, individuals have to determine what they really want to do and what their career goals are. New opportunities can be identified by going online and checking out job boards or company job sites and then determining how the requirements match their skills. Then individuals need to identify what needs to be considered for the positions that are appealing, such as getting additional education, refining particular business skills, getting more experience in a particular area, and so on.

The next step is to choose appropriate mentors. Just as a company has a board of directors, individuals have to create their own individual board of mentors, a personal advisory board that they can consult with for career advice. Mentors do not have to be in the same industry; in fact it is beneficial if they have different expertise.

Unlike years ago when a company determined an individual's career path, today the most successful people have taken responsibility for the direction of their own careers. Marketers have to learn to successfully market themselves. And no one can do it alone.



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