

# Global Marketing: Consistent Across All Borders

Of the many challenges in global marketing, creating consistency in brand messaging is key.



**C**onsistency in brand message is more critical than ever in the global environment and can only be achieved as a result of global, regional, and local

brand teams working in partnership. Local and regional affiliates know the demands of their audiences, and these brand teams must ensure that the messages don't waver far from the brand's key values. Conversely, when designing the global campaign message, global team members need to take into account the voices of their local and regional teams. Campaigns need to resonate across countries and cultures, and local and global teams need to be on the same page. Easy? Not a chance.

## Market Dynamics Create More Pressure

Like everyone else in the industry, global teams are facing pressures of a changing marketing environment, larger regional and local demands, and new consumer trends that are shaping the way they plan their global strategies. Global brand teams are being forced to address the evolving pharmaceutical landscape by aligning their brand communications with how decision-makers and stakeholders define brand value.

"Global teams are faced with a greater de-

gree of localized approval, pull-through, and adoption uncertainty than ever before," says William Reese, chief innovation officer, Cadient Group. "The diversity of channels across markets has put greater pressure on global teams to create a message and brand that work across many channels."

In many cases, he says, global brands are entering the marketplace in one of two extremes: either as a unique, highly specialized offering, or within a broader, competitively saturated category. Both possibilities demand clear differentiation and commercial innovation that must start with the global team.

There has been a necessary paradigm shift of focus on creating value for brand customers rather than pushing a particular brand message out to the audience. Global brand managers will be expected to create relevant brand messages that work at all levels through listening and understanding the needs of local affiliates.

"We can expect that the pressure to answer local customers' needs is going to be greater and greater," says Joe Daley, president, GSW Worldwide. "Also, the stakeholders involved will proliferate."

According to Sunil Ramkali, account director, strategic pharma business unit at W Communication Agency, the pharmaceutical industry needs to better understand how key stakeholders define brand value and how this might change or develop over time, especially in a marketplace that is becoming increasingly cost-constrained and risk-averse.

"In other words, global marketers need to work closely with their regional marketing counterparts to better understand what does their brand need to demonstrate or communicate to a potential prescriber or reimbursement decision-maker in order for these stake-

holders to prescribe and fund their brand respectively," Mr. Ramkali says.

In today's marketplace, that value needs to be clearly articulated to payers, physicians, healthcare professionals, advocacy groups, and governments if the brand is to be successfully adopted within an increasingly competitive marketplace.

"Differentiating a brand based on messaging alone will not be enough; brands and companies will need to focus on differentiating themselves based on the value and positive outcomes they create for their customers," Mr. Daley says. "This will require healthcare marketing expertise that is in short supply on a global basis."

## Creating Consistency

There are several crucial factors involved in creating appropriate local and regional messages that are also consistent with the global brand. One is that the global brand must be flexible and allow for minor adaptations in regional and local markets.

"Global brands need to be able to breathe," Mr. Daley says. "In today's environment the opportunities for gaining insight into customers' relationships with a brand are measured in minutes or days, not years."

Most global organizations establish the global strategy for a brand, but don't have the means to gain real-time feedback on the brand's performance in the marketplace beyond market share. Another challenge is to not lose sight of the needs of the local customer for the sake of the global brand. In other words, sometimes manufacturers are more concerned that the local affiliates execute the global campaign to the letter, rather than making sure the global



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**WILLIAM REESE** / Cadient Group

campaign responds to local customer needs through micromessaging and campaign tweaking, Mr. Daley says.

The most crucial factor for creating a cohesive regional message in Mr. Reese's opinion is defining a global customer experience that coincides with the global brand guidance.

“A global customer experience and its value proposition can transcend region and locality,” he says. “Marketers should

tailor and acculturate the messages and creative while still providing a consistent sentiment and experience.”

Whether the message is successful often depends on the global marketer's ability to share a concrete framework for the customer experience. This framework should help local marketers evaluate whether their messages and channel selections deliver the global message and brand experience at the local level, Mr. Reese says.

“In my experience, global brand teams must view their regional and local brand counterparts as equal partners,” Mr. Ramkali says. “We need to avoid the situation where global and local marketers are jockeying for status or positioning, and where one voice is louder than the other.”

He has observed in some companies that the internal organizational structure can create an us vs. them factor. According to Mr. Ramkali, it is the responsibility of the global brand team to break down such barriers and work alongside its local and regional marketing partners.

“Ultimately, global and affiliate marketing are jointly accountable to whether a brand fails or succeeds,” he says. “A key objective of a global marketing team is to get to the point

where local and regional partners value their input, trust their suggestions, and act upon them, not because they are ‘global,’ but because they trust and respect their input and recommendations.”

Mr. Ramkali discovered that being a previous national marketer as well as spending time in global marketing helped him reach a better understanding of local and regional needs.

“I found leaving my global role and spending time working in a local affiliate was extremely helpful in developing my relationship with local and regional marketing partners,” he says. “Such an experience not only creates the opportunity to increase understanding of the local marketplace, but more importantly puts one in a position to build relationships with local internal and external stakeholders.”

Any lack of local buy-in will result in



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“Brands will need to focus on differentiating themselves based on the value they create for their customers.”

JOE DALEY / GSW

local brand messages that waver from the global brand communication strategy, resulting in inconsistent messages across regions and customer confusion. Such strategic leakage will result in a fragmented brand and confuse

customers, leading to a brand that can no longer claim to be global.

“However, if the global brand team has done its homework, the definition of pharmaceutical brand value will have been captured and addressed in the global brand communication strategy and sales campaign,” Mr. Ramkali says. “If not, the global brand team risks delivering brand messages that will not resonate with local and regional stakeholders.” **PV**

## EXPERTS



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“Global brand teams must view their regional and local brand marketing counterparts as equal partners.”

SUNIL RAMKALI / W Communication Agency

## Seven Rules to Improve Globally Driven Brand Messages

### » RULE 1. Buy-In to the Brand Strategy Is Vital

Consider a brand strategy review process with your affiliates before developing the brand campaign. If local and regional partners do not understand or question the overall brand strategy, then the development and implementation of global brand messages will always be questioned.

### » RULE 2. Choose the Right Terminology

Avoid terms like “international” or “global” to prevent the perception that the brand campaign or messages are owned by the global team. They are owned by the organization.

### » RULE 3. Set Up a Core Team of Brand Advocates

Create a forum where the global brand team can listen to the needs of the local and regional partners. Involve partners who will drive the majority of brand sales and/or will have a significant influence on other markets or partners. Don’t underestimate the amount of customer insight and knowledge within the local sales and marketing teams. Use these local partners as spokespeople when implementing the brand messages to other local and regional partners.

### » RULE 4. Agree on the Brand Campaign Objective(s)

Get agreement within the core team about brand messaging objectives, i.e., what is it that the team wants to achieve with the brand messages and

how will they measure success? Again, this will help to achieve buy-in to the final brand messages by local and regional partners.

### » RULE 5. Mandatory or Optional — Finding the Right Balance

To avoid any possible confusion, agree during the brand development process what messages are mandatory and which ones are optional. This approach allows for local flexibility if customer needs or the definition of brand value is not completely addressed by the global brand messages.

### » RULE 6. Involve Affiliates During the Testing Process

Testing is a key part of the brand campaign development process and will help the global and affiliate brand teams identify if the brand sales story flow and key selling messages will resonate with local prescribers. Even if the testing process has been thorough, the results may be challenged by affiliates if they have not been involved in the testing process. Therefore, it is important to involve affiliates at this stage of the development process.

### » RULE 7. Provide Support Materials for the Brand Campaign

To minimize strategic leakage, the global brand team should develop a package of implementation materials to be used by affiliate marketing when briefing the sales teams. Such an approach will help to maximize resources, as it avoids the duplication of locally developed sales training/support materials. As a bare minimum, to support the core brand campaign the global brand team should develop a sales aid implementation guide, e.g., page-by-page guide to the sales aid, sales script, and objection handler.

Source: W Communication Agency. For more information, visit [justw.com](http://justw.com) or email [sunil.ramkali@justw.com](mailto:sunil.ramkali@justw.com).

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