

BRAND BUILDING: PHARMA'S BILLION-DOLLAR BLIND SPOT

15 SECONDS

THAT'S ALL YOU HAVE,
EVERY DAY, AS A MARKETER

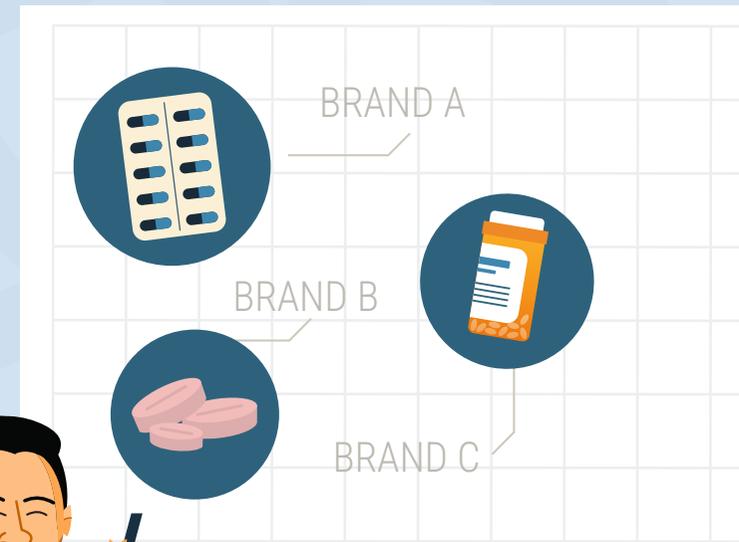


15 seconds is the maximum amount of time a cognitively overloaded HCP will spend considering prescribing your brand in a live situation. That makes those 15 seconds everything to pharma marketing teams – and to you.

Whilst the industry likes to think that prescribing decisions are rational, behavioural science shows that they are in fact driven by emotions and heuristics (mental shortcuts); and brands are at the heart of these.

When delivered well, brands guide the heuristics that drive which patients receive the treatment and why. A consistently delivered brand allows companies to own the narrative around their product and ensure its success.

This truth of those 15 seconds is in danger of being forgotten by pharma marketers. By re-engaging with it, you can build strong brands that help HCPs make the right, complex decisions for the benefit of their patients. It can also help your company make more money, and help you in your career.



COMMERCIAL 'INNOVATIONS' vs BRAND STRATEGY

Over the last ten years, focus has moved to commercial 'innovations' including omnichannel, customer experience and artificial intelligence (AI). We are obsessed by new for new's sake and have constant FOMO about the next shiny thing.

These all have their place and can support commercial success, but only if they build on and complement the brand strategy, which must support the consistent delivery of the brand's look, narrative and 'feel'. If you are a marketer, ask yourself: what is the emotional benefit of using your brand? If you cannot answer without looking it up, you are probably leading a product, not a brand.



INSIGHT: THE FOUNDATION OF GREAT BRANDS

Great brands are built on great insight. Such insight does not come from data, which can only tell what or when something is happening. It comes from deep primary market research which tells you what your target audience needs and why.

Offering a treatment that (at best) solves a recognised need (especially if emotional) is the recipe to the rapid creation of a prescribing heuristic featuring your brand and, hence, commercial success.

An example of a fundamental insight which transformed a brand was with Cialis. The team identified that patients and their partners sought intimacy, rather than just sex, and this enabled them to create a positioning that demonstrated the benefit of the longer mode of action (the consequence, rather than the functional effect) in a manner that the target audience truly valued.



BRAVERY AND CONSISTENCY ARE KEY

You, as a marketer, need to be brave. Brave to ignore internal opinions which say, 'brands aren't for HCPs', 'that's not how HCPs make decisions' or 'that doesn't apply in my market'. Brave to create something bold that cuts through and isn't about creating 'hope' or 'confidence' or 'freedom' because all pharma brands can do this. Brave to be truly differentiated in a competitive market.

Great brands are simple, but simplicity requires focus. Marketers must be willing to cut through the noise and deliver a clear, concise message that can be articulated in a sentence or two – because that is the amount of HCP head space you can hope to occupy. The need your brand addresses should not require any explanation for HCPs to understand, as they are overwhelmed by the volume of 'education' being sent their way by pharma. Remember – it is just 15 seconds.

You also need to be consistent. Consistent in execution so that the message sticks. Consistent when briefing teams on the messages. Consistent when you take over a new brand, as part of a promotion. Resist the 'action imperative' to change a brand – nothing kills a brand quicker than change. Brand building takes time; and with most marketers in role for two years, the temptation to tinker can be strong.



A CALL TO ARMS

So, this is a call to arms. Building brands matters in pharma. By creating an emotional connection with your brand that is based on insight, you are helping a busy HCP make an extremely complex decision in a way that makes intuitive sense to them and benefits their patients. That's a pretty cool job to have.



GET IN TOUCH

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