

A winning launch-readiness strategy

So much more than templates and tick boxes is required

Considering today's complex healthcare environment, it's paradoxical that just about every molecule's launch success pivots largely on two high-level strategic requirements: identifying and creating differentiated value in the context of an unmet need, and optimising market access and reimbursement.

In a recent client survey conducted across predominantly commercial and medical functions in 26 pharma companies, strategic thinking and partnership were in the top five capabilities they value most in their agencies. There's little surprise in this, since beneath the surface there are rarely relevant or meaningful 'cut and pastes' from one launch readiness strategy to the next.

In our experience, detail holds the key when it comes to critically prioritising what is and isn't important for each individual launch readiness

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE STRATEGIC LAUNCH READINESS PLANNING

Focus

Focus on the inflection points of your business so that pivotal decisions are related to building commercial success

Confidence

Ensure that market and customer analysis lends confidence to decision-making, but don't forget to use it to test new modes of thinking

Differentiation

Identify and validate the key areas of emotional, functional and Cx differentiation as part of value proposition development, remembering that differentiation is always competitive

Efficiency

Direct time and resources to the high-impact business areas and use streamlined business processes and KPIs that can tell you more

strategy, so that the compound, the brand and perhaps the entire global organisation and market are optimally primed for competitive advantage.

To guide strategic launch readiness planning and execution, many companies have established the use of centrally-developed roadmaps with specific milestones for global, regional and local input and senior management approval. There are centrally-recommended tools for strategic decision-making, and a requirement to provide launch readiness deliverables on standardised templates. This all provides best-practice guidance in incorporating local market insight and relevance with the necessary checks and balances, as well as valuable independent critique from senior management.

BALANCING PROCESSES WITH ORIGINALITY

More often than not, however, we observe that the launch team can focus too much on the end deliverable too early in the planning process. With the launch clock ticking loudly in the background, it can be challenging to balance fulfilling internal process and approval requirements while founding an original and winning launch readiness strategy.

A focus on the end deliverable carries risk too. Most significantly, the team may not undertake the necessary detailed exploration of the opportunity, nor look beyond the obvious to find hidden or new value that brings differentiation or alternative strategic options. Or it may fail to integrate the vision behind the product into a winning differentiated communications strategy.

Successful launches must be rooted in deep, laser-focused and increasingly forward-looking strategic thinking, where the value proposition is tightly bound to a validated market opportunity and uniquely solves key customers' problems. Yes, building in exploration of alternative ideas and innovation takes time and requires

the right frameworks and tools, but it pays off. Pulling all this through to the required strategic plan template is the relatively easy, but infinitely less business-critical, part.

APPRECIATING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE (CX)

Pinpointing meaningful brand differentiation for launch requires a thorough understanding and interpretation of key customer insights.

Total customer experience, or Cx, can be an under-appreciated driver of brand differentiation within current strategic launch readiness frameworks. Cx analysis illustrates how customers will likely behave in response to the brand's overall value proposition as they experience it day-to-day within the parameters of their work. We believe that an increased understanding of how customers behave functionally and emotionally in response to their experiences deserves greater emphasis within strategic planning for launch.

Likewise, the use of looser, open-ended customer research in addition to the usual pre-launch structured customer insights methods present a more natural approach, especially with mixed customer segments. This may spontaneously unlock new and different customer insights to help build unique and meaningful brand value.

ENSURING INNOVATION AND QUALITY

Agreeing the key performance indicators to incorporate within strategic launch plans can be another potential check-list danger area. Defaulting to select only the well-trodden path of traditional and predictable metrics is prevalent. Strategic launch readiness presents an opportunity to review and identify those metrics that will provide the most specific, meaningful and accurate indicators of performance. For example, measuring total Cx quality across all engagement touch points for

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each customer segment may not be a current KPI, but can reveal where your strategy and implementation plans are best performing.

The overall quality of strategic launch readiness planning is enhanced through collaboration with external business partners and with pharma personnel unrelated to the launch brand who have expertise in a different area or are highly creative and unconventional in their problem solving. Such partnership capabilities foster innovation and new thinking. Experience indicates that strategic launch readiness success is related to helping the launch team achieve clarity and make decisions focused on the few pivotal strategic inflection points in their business that build in commercial success for launch and beyond.

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