

Swindell, the accidental salesman

Mark Swindell, president of Pfizer vaccines, began his career in 1983 in the finance department of Cyanamid, a mid-sized pharma company in the UK. Six years later the company gave him an opportunity to learn the sales side of the business. He went on to become a distinguished leader in a variety of commercial-side roles at Wyeth in the UK and the US, and he enjoys helping his employees navigate and expand their own careers. He's thrilled to receive this year's Honorable Mentor award from The Healthcare Businesswomen's Association (HBA).

"Mentoring is about listening and trying to ask good questions that help people uncover options and ideally work through to a solution," he says. "It's listening rather than driving an individual to your solution. It's best that they uncover their own solution, and mentoring is sometimes about helping people get to their solution faster."

Pfizer's executive director, commercial development lead for vaccines, Lee Ann Kimak, worked with Swindell in several capacities at Wyeth. She values him as an approachable and candid mentor who has been a great sounding board in helping her explore her options and deepen her experience.

"Mark has a very easygoing style," notes Kimak. "He's interested in understanding your long term goals and strengths and how you can capitalize on those strengths. He's very open about giving feedback, and that's something I really appreciate about him. It's hard to find someone who wants to help you develop in areas where you may need more development. He's been very frank and very helpful in talking to me about potential career options and helping me understand what I can get out of each role and what

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Mark Swindell

President, vaccines specialty care unit, Pfizer

1995-2009

Zoton product manager to SVP/general manager, pharma, Wyeth

1983-1995

Finance to UK regional business manager for primary care, Cyanamid

each could mean to my overall development."

An accountant by training, Swindell says "a little bit of serendipity" led him into pharma when he answered an ad for a finance position at Cyanamid, in Hampshire, UK. "I was 24 or 25 years old and loved finance," he recalls. "Though I wasn't sure I wanted to do it until I was 60. I saw a lot of excitement on the commercial side of the business in the connectivity to physicians and patients. The company was creative and proactive in terms of organizational development ideas, and looking to move people into different functions to see how that cross-pollination worked. I took a sales training course, did an MBA and then all sales and marketing roles in pharma. I couldn't have asked for a more interesting or rewarding career. I'm very proud of what we do in pharma."

Immediately prior to his role at Pfizer, Swindell led global commercial strategy and execution in the US for in-line and development brands as SVP and GM of Wyeth's pharmaceutical business unit. He's proud to have built a team to drive Wyeth's TNF inhibitor Enbrel to become the best-selling product in Europe. Earlier in his career, he stewarded Zoton to outperform Prilosec and become the second highest-selling drug in the UK behind Lipitor. As managing director of Wyeth Portugal, Swindell helped ensure the vaccine Prevenar (Prevenar in Portugal; Pevnar in the US) became a top-five selling drug in the country.

Diversity in the workplace—in terms of gender, race and age—is a priority for Swindell. "We believe at Pfizer, as we did at Wyeth, that encouraging a much more diverse range of contributions to the business is helpful," he says. "As a consequence of bringing together people with different backgrounds and different perspectives, you end up with a better thinking pool. It's not just women, but women are a very important part of the diversity angle."

While Swindell notes that women are well represented at Pfizer (of the executive leadership team of 12, four are women), he thinks the industry overall can improve regarding advancing women and increasing diversity. "We're on the right path," he says, "but we still have a ways to go."

—Tanya Lewis



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