



Every job is a journey, and pharma marketing is no exception. Here are eight who are chugging along to fulfilling careers, both professionally and personally

CAREER TRACKS



Steve Calabrese, associate director, digital innovations, Novartis Oncology

Time in the industry: 7 years

Original career plan: Telecom

Previous roles: Member of technical staff and technical manager, adaptive design engineering, AT&T; sales manager and senior manager, optical networking group, Lucent Technologies



Christine Coyne, senior director, adult endocrinology, Endo Pharmaceuticals

Time in the industry: 20 years

Original career plan: Working for the State Department overseas

Previous roles: Bilingual editor/translator, assoc. product manager, commercial director and senior marketing manager, Wyeth; account supervisor, The Hal Lewis Group

Why did you enter the industry?

At the tail end of the dotcom bust in 2002, my company was pulling out overhead light bulbs to save money (a hint that it was a good time to transition away from telecom). Fortunately I landed a job at Novartis, developing next-generation marketing communications systems.

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

My career experience has taught me to imagine the possibilities to overcome business challenges and fulfill opportunities.

Ever think you'd be working in healthcare marketing?

Starting off with a techy degree and working as an engineer are not obvious means to an exciting marketing career in healthcare. Now, I cannot think about doing anything else (though I am still a nerd).

What have you gotten out of the industry?

It's been rewarding to work alongside bright and committed colleagues and agency partners who are helping to make a positive difference in the lives of patients.

What about any personal rewards?

There are many. Top of my list is the recognition and thanks from patients and patient advocates. These individuals, who are often cancer patients themselves, are tireless and have dedicated much of their lives to advancing the care and support of other patients and their families. It's my privilege to help in any small way I can.

What has surprised you most about it?

The value and importance of regulation of the industry. My perspective has changed as a result, and I understand the importance of conveying both the benefits and safety of any treatment.

What would you have done differently?

I would be more spontaneous. The best entrepreneurs I know say they don't ponder making a single big decision. Instead they make a lot of quick decisions with the information in front of them—and then continue to make successive adjustments.

What advice would you give to others looking to get into the industry?

The best advice for anyone entering the pharma industry is a mantra taken from my daughter, Lauren (and Babe Ruth), "to never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game." Keep swinging!

How did you enter the industry?

My traditional education is in foreign languages. That led me into the industry via a marketing-services job translating promotional pieces. While working alongside brand teams, I became interested in marketing, so I pursued an MBA and then made the "leap."

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

Working across various parts of the business gave me a very comprehensive understanding of the business. Perhaps my most pivotal learning experience was my managed-markets position. Working closely with payor customers and government affairs taught me to think not just about physicians from a business perspective but also the need to make products accessible to patients and that, no matter how glossy your professional visual aid, intermediaries can impede business.

Ever think you'd be working in healthcare marketing?

I cannot honestly say that I picked the healthcare industry as much as it picked me!

What have you gotten out of the industry?

A global perspective on how people everywhere handle their healthcare issues and that common, foundational human behavior is at the core of decisions—even business decisions.

What about any personal rewards?

A keener understanding of patients' needs and their frustrations. Being able to help them is extremely fulfilling. This is one big reason why I gravitated toward Endo. I realized early on that Endo was one of the industry leaders in developing a solutions-based model of business rather than just bringing medicines to market.

What has surprised you most about it?

Regardless of GDP or other economic indicators, from advanced countries to emerging nations, healthcare issues are at the core of many discussions, and the similarities across the globe have surprised me over the years.

What advice would you give to others looking to get into the industry?

My recent opportunity to become an adjunct professor at West Chester University enables me to impart to students lessons I learned in a fulfilling career. I tell them that gaining a well-rounded perspective of both the business and your customers will always serve you well.



Sarah Faust, SVP, marketing, King Pharmaceuticals

Time in the industry: 22 years

Original career plan: Forensic scientist

Previous roles: Forensic scientist, UK Home Office; clinical res. assoc./mgr., PR mgr., senior prod./mkt. mgr., senior dir. global market, senior dir. bus. transformation, Sanofi-Aventis; senior dir. hospital mkt., King



Lars Merk, product director, CNS, Ortho-McNeil Janssen Pharmaceuticals

Time in industry: 13 years

Original career plan: Leading the family business

Previous roles: When the family sold the business, leveraged those skills into national sales management, including positions with Macy's and Saks Fifth Avenue

Why did you enter the industry?

As a clinical research associate (CRA), I was exposed increasingly to the commercial part of our organization, and that was so attractive to me because it allowed me to continue to leverage my scientific background while also collaborating and communicating with people across a broad range of backgrounds and tasks.

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

Clinical research gave me a strong foundation in interpreting clinical trial data—critical, considering the escalating demand for evidence-based medicine. As the global marketing director for LovenoX, I developed an understanding of the pharmaceutical-development process and life-cycle management while leading cross-functional and cross-cultural teams.

Ever think you'd be working in healthcare marketing?

When I was young, I never imagined I would be working in a for-profit organization! As soon as I joined the industry, I knew healthcare marketing appealed to my altruistic side as well.

What have you gotten out of the industry?

The opportunity to make an important contribution for patients, families and healthcare professionals—every day. This is especially the case in my current role at King Pharmaceuticals. We are leading the way in developing abuse-deterrent formulations of pain medications and addressing the abuse epidemic, which is very personal to me as a mother of five.

What about any personal rewards?

I feel blessed—how many of us get to work in an industry where, in providing for our families, we can really say that we are helping people and making an important contribution?

What has surprised you most about it?

That it is so highly regulated. Therein lies the challenge: to accomplish what we need to while also keeping patients safe by complying with the regulations.

What would you have done differently?

I would have carried the bag early in my career.

What advice would you give to others looking to get into the industry?

Get an education in life sciences. And talk to people who do the jobs you think you might be interested in. You'll start building a network, which is invaluable throughout every stage of your professional life.

Why did you enter the industry?

I wanted a career where I was able, in the words of one of my early leaders at Johnson & Johnson: "To do good and to do well." Healthcare became an obvious choice after dealing with critical health issues of a family member. I got to know our physician well, and her spouse, who worked for pharmaceuticals, gave me insight into the industry.

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

First and foremost: identify and respond to customer needs—and wants. Second, balance short- and long-term business needs. Finally, lead without positional authority by building a team culture of personal engagement.

Ever think you'd be working in healthcare marketing?

I would not have expected to end up here as I was finishing up my undergraduate degree. But on my first day of orientation at this company, I knew I had found a career in which I could make a real contribution, and enjoy making it.

What have you gotten out of the industry?

Personal satisfaction knowing I can help people make more well-informed decisions. I've also grown personally, by collaborating with so many talented individuals within my company and across our industry.

What about any personal rewards?

Most important to me is that what I do helps people. I've wanted to share that with my children, so we volunteer as a family to give back to those less healthy and less fortunate than we are. This is a personal reward I hope will continue as I watch my children grow.

What has surprised you most about it?

What I see as the inherent dichotomy of healthcare: The importance society places on care we expect, and society's willingness to pay for that care.

What would you have done differently?

I wish I had found this industry sooner in my career.

What advice would you give to others looking to get into the industry?

Join the industry if you are satisfied knowing you've helped improve the human condition. Be prepared to work hard. And bring a tenacious intellectual curiosity, balanced with your unique vision—because we need people like you to tackle the issues we face in healthcare today, and tomorrow.



Kristen Neese, dir., worldwide comms., global corp. media relations, Pfizer

Time in the industry: 17 years

Original career plan: Two careers I aspired to—nun or journalist.

Previous roles: SVP, media relations, MS&L; senior comms. advisor, FDA; external affairs & comms. for medical, regulatory & policy, Pfizer



Cynthia North, customer marketing director, Bayer HealthCare

Time in the industry: 13 years (pharma)

Original career plan: RN, NP, PT or OT

Previous roles: Marketing manager, Prudential Healthcare; group account supervisor (Claritin), CommonHealth; director, global marketing communications, Berlex; consumer marketing director, Bayer

Why did you enter the industry?

I began my career working on technology and consumer products at a PR agency. MS&L hired me to bring my consumer media experience to healthcare clients.

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

PR exposed me to different sides of the healthcare industry. I also learned how to juggle many projects—I vividly remember managing FDA approvals for three different products in one day! The FDA was a real eye opener—total immersion in the regulatory and drug development process.

Ever think you'd be working in healthcare marketing?

Not at all. I thought I would always be on the consumer products side of the business.

What have you gotten out of the industry?

An enormous respect for healthcare professionals, from the researchers whose persistence leads to new medicines and the regulators who make sure they are safe and effective, to the healthcare professionals who bring their skills and humanity to treating patients.

What about any personal rewards?

Now that I am a parent, healthcare and prevention assumes a whole new meaning. The experience and knowledge I've gained working in the healthcare industry have made me a knowledgeable parent and a savvy healthcare consumer.

What has surprised you most about it?

Having worked on many different sides of this business, I now know how much effort goes into a new therapy, both on the company side and the regulatory side.

What would you have done differently?

I would have taken more biology and chemistry courses in school, and I definitely would have paid more attention in statistics class!

What advice would you give to others looking to get into the industry?

Stay current on the issues shaping our dynamic industry today. Don't be afraid to seek out new professional and personal opportunities that diverge from your intended path but that challenge you and expose you different sides of the business.

Why did you enter the industry?

I always had a strong personal desire to positively impact people's lives. Working in the pharmaceutical industry allows me to make a difference. The products I work on and the programs and services Bayer offers enable me to accomplish these personal and professional goals.

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

I started on the client side, worked in an ad agency, then returned to the client side. Understanding the inner workings of an agency has helped me truly collaborate with my agency partners. I know what it takes for them to get things done, so when I ask for key deliverables, I have a good sense of how and when they can be delivered. This makes for stronger partnerships, and ultimately better marketing programs.

Ever think you'd be working in healthcare marketing?

Yes, absolutely.

What have you gotten out of the industry?

The long-term relationships I have forged with patients and HCPs in various communities, some of which span over a decade, have made this so much more than just a job/career to me. Everything I do is about the patient/community. It is so personally fulfilling and gives me a real purpose each and every day.

What about any personal rewards?

The friendships I have made within my company, with the patients and the community. All aspects of my business life are intertwined into the fabric of my personal life. So it doesn't feel like "work." I genuinely love what I do.

What has surprised you most about it?

The positive impact it has had on my family, my daughters in particular. Much of what I do with the community takes place on weekends (e.g., patient programs, focus groups, advocacy walks, etc.). So my family often attends. My daughters have a good understanding and respect for what I do and the positive impact I make. They are proud of me. That is the greatest personal reward you could ask for.

What advice would you give to others looking to get into the industry?

If you really love what you do, it never feels like a job.



Sumana Rajagopal, global media & advertising manager, Merck

Time in the industry: 8 years (pharmaceutical), 16 years (advertising)

Original career plan: Media director

Previous roles: Media strategist: Siquis, Adworks, Long Haymes Carr/Mullen, McKinney & Silver; digital ad sales: washingtonpost.com; media sourcing manager, Merck; consumer promotion manager, Merck

Why did you enter the industry?

The wide variety of products with large marketing budgets, the excitement and fast-paced nature of the advertising business, and the ever-changing landscape—never doing the same thing twice.

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

Client management, presentation skills, adapting to different audiences, listening and questioning skills and the ability to challenge and educate while expressing salient points of information based on customer expectations.

Ever think you'd be working in healthcare marketing?

I never thought I would be working in healthcare marketing.

What have you gotten out of the industry?

A wealth of knowledge about corporate structures, cultures, client-side marketing and the various inputs required to make sound business decisions.

What about any personal rewards?

The ability to work on numerous pieces of business in different areas of the organization, including manufacturing, vaccines and human health; helping create information and make it available to impact patients, physicians, policy makers and health organizations; touching materials that make a difference in an industry that affects everyone.

What has surprised you most about it?

The complexity driven by the myriad internal and external stakeholders, as well as how rewarding a career in the pharmaceutical industry is. I feel a general sense of well-being from empowering our customers to take charge of their healthcare decisions.

What would you have done differently?

There is nothing I would have done differently. Working on all three sides of the business has provided a well-rounded view of media and allowed me to perform my job with each function in mind.

What advice would you give to others looking to get into the industry?

Remain open and inquisitive about opportunities. There are numerous paths to take, and passion points can be identified within the spectrum. Knowledge about what drives and interests you is of vital importance so that you can give back as much as you get.



Paul Rogers, VP/product GM, Vyvanse US, Shire Pharmaceuticals

Time in the industry: 22 years

Original career plan: Manage/own clinical laboratory

Previous roles: Various roles at Astra-Zeneca, including VP of marketing; executive director, commercial operations, for Crestor; director, GI emerging products; development brand leader for Nexium

Why did you enter the industry?

To do research. I worked in several clinical laboratories, and this created my desire to get more engrained in the development and commercialization side of the business.

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

The analytical skills and discipline necessary to work in clinical research helped me become a more effective, thoughtful and strategic marketer.

Ever think you'd be working in healthcare marketing?

As I spent much of my academic and early professional career on the science side, I never imagined myself as a marketer, but two decades later and I have no regrets.

What have you gotten out of the industry?

In addition to a rewarding and challenging career that has provided a means to support my family, I've had the chance to experience many different countries, cultures and people.

What about any personal rewards?

Helping others. At the end of the day, I am most proud of helping to develop and launch medicines that have changed millions of people's lives for the better.

What has surprised you most about it?

How the time flies! I never imagined one industry would hold my passion for 20 or more years, but there is always a challenge that grips me, and that is especially true of my time with Shire where our "can do" spirit is the norm.

What would you have done differently?

Use every situation to learn. While every career decision has not gone as expected, I have learned new aspects about myself and the industry, enhancing my confidence and skill set along the way.

What advice would you give to others looking to get into the industry?

Be passionate about what you do because it will be part of your career and life for the next 30 to 40 years. To be successful when trying to break into the industry, be creative, innovative and willing to take measured risks, demonstrating that you have characteristics that set you apart from others and add unique value to an organization.