

Full plate for Pfizer oncology chief

Pfizer's Andy Schmeltz has a problem that many of Pfizer's competitors would love to have. Schmeltz's US Oncology Business Unit is in the midst of three launches of innovative new medicines—all approved by FDA within the past 14 months. Not that he's complaining. He may even be crowing a bit.

"It's really a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for colleagues," says Schmeltz. "Particularly on the commercial side of the business, to have three new molecular entities over a one-year time frame is a wonderful opportunity, and each of these new medicines has its own story that's going to enable Pfizer to be set up for success."

The most recent of these, Bosulif, an orphan drug to treat chronic myelogenous leukemia, got the green light from FDA in September. It's the company's first entry into the hematology space. Inlyta, for kidney cancer, won FDA approval for second line use in January, and Xalkori, together with its companion diagnostic from Abbott, won approval for treatment of ALK-positive non-small cell lung cancer in August, 2011, blazing a path for personalized medicine. The approvals made Pfizer a top ten player in oncology. By 2020, the firm aims to crack the ranks of the top three.

"If there's a point in time to step up to the plate and put it into overdrive, this is that time," comments Schmeltz. "These are really distinct medicines in terms of their profiles and tumor types, but the principles remain the same – understanding your customers, understanding the competitive dynamics and focusing on the critical success factors. In the US, it's a common set of customers and customer expectations, in terms of the environment and ensuring that the drugs are easy to access and get reimbursement."

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Andy Schmeltz
President, US Oncology Business Unit, Pfizer

2008–2010
VP commercial development

2007–2008
Chief of staff to President of Worldwide Pharmaceutical Operations Ian Read



Pfizer Oncology fields a sales force of around 200 in the US, and sales reports in to Schmeltz.

"The first two years after launch are the critical point in time to set the trajectory and uptake of these medicines," says Schmeltz. "So we have to kind of pulse focus. It's critical we have the right type of managers to balance that, so a lot of my time is spent reinforcing the accountability and focus and the setting of standards of our sales management team."

His mantra: Plan to execute and execute to plan.

Schmeltz came to pharma fresh from business school, having earned an undergraduate degree in economics, but found work in consulting dissatisfying. He wanted to do something meaningful and so, while at the University of Chicago, he took an internship with Abbott Labs and stayed for eight years, rising to head of US immunology and launching Humira. Then Pfizer came calling. The company had bought Pharmacia and was looking to build up its HIV-fighting franchise. Schmeltz, who had worked on Kaletra and Norvir at Abbott, was a perfect fit, and he and his wife, having just started a family, were ready to move back to New York from Chicago. He joined Pfizer as

director, team leader of worldwide HIV/AIDS marketing and soon moved on to head worldwide commercial development of the company's infectious disease portfolio and then, in 2006, to serve as chief of staff to then-worldwide pharma head Ian Read.

He and his wife have three kids—two boys, eight and ten, and a ten-month-old girl—and live in Montclair, NJ. When he's not ferrying the kids around, the Pittsburgh native likes to unwind with fantasy football, Steelers games and taking the rowing machine for a spin (he was on his college crew team).

Schmeltz's secret to leadership: picking the right managers and empowering them. He looks for self-starters with a mix of "hard skills"—analytics, planning and organization—and "soft skills" such as communication and emotional intelligence.

"When you have a team of leaders that are rock solid with both those hard skills and soft skills, you've got the leaders that are going to enable you to be successful." — *Matthew Arnold*