

What's really next for pharma?

McCann Health hosted a lively debate on the future of pharma branding at the Cannes Lions Health international creative festival. *MM&M* sister publication *Campaign* listened in

Global pharmaceutical companies operate in one of the most highly regulated sectors. One of the biggest challenges for their agencies is to work within those regulations to deliver a high level of creativity and effectiveness in advertising and marketing.

The challenges vary by market. However, the key issues for pharma marketers that emerged from this discussion include: (1) The scarcity of effective communications within pharma companies that are siloed in science; (2) Pharma's need for greater patient-centricity; (3) The impact of technology; (4) The need for a clearer idea of the brand's role, not only in the pharma industry but in patients' lives.

"We're no longer the purveyors of fine advertising and haven't been for probably a decade," John Cahill, the global chief executive of McCann Health, said. "We have an integrated customer approach that goes beyond what our clients and pharma companies see communications companies doing for them. Increasingly, we're going to be working further upstream when the brand might not actually be a brand yet ... it will be an asset."

"I couldn't agree more," said Peter Schweikert, Asia director, respiratory, at AstraZeneca. "Effective communication and information exchange is desperately required right up the chain. Our target product profiles have emotion written all over them, but we don't talk about emotion. This is where I think a revolution could occur in the partnership between pharma and its communications partners. If you actually brought your expertise up the line, it would be far more valuable."

"Pharma brands need to be more emotional," added Jeremy Perrott, McCann Health's global chief creative director, "in order to become part of people's lives. A person's decision to choose a brand is driven as much by their emotional attachment to that brand as it is by science and data."

"But what exactly is a brand in the pharma space?" asked Mark Worman, global marketing director at McCann Health. "Is it the product, the company or both? Increasingly, it

seems the company has more ability to generate meaningful brand equity than the product itself."

"In emerging markets, the brand name of the company means a great deal as there are multiple local and global competitors," Geoff Mitchinson, GlaxoSmithKline's vice-president, strategy, market access and pricing in emerging markets, said. "Leveraging the company name to define quality, value and alignment to customer needs is a powerful way to position a company as a brand. As products become more complex, involving diagnostic tests and targeted therapy, there is an interesting question as to how to leverage this corporate brand advantage."

"We have been looking at what constitutes a brand in pharmaceuticals and identified 'user experience' as a fertile ground for novel ways to build pharma brands for patients, as these brands can play meaningful roles in people's lives," Cahill said.

Schweikert added: "One of the performance measures of AstraZeneca globally is numbers of patients. Like in the respiratory field, in 2015 we will touch 20 million patients. So we are rapidly becoming more patient-centric because we have to understand them, how they will respond and what the outcome will be."

"I think the future of the pharma sector is a combination of treatment and technology," Peter Ohnemus, the founder and chief executive of Dacadoo, the health score company, said. "With technology doing the heavy lifting in the measurement and monitoring of health states, people will be able to take their health management to a higher level, creating a new generation of 'health capables.'"

As Suzie Denton, the global head of consulting at Double Helix, said: "The pharma environment is changing significantly. With fewer blockbuster compounds moving through the R&D pipeline, the trend is towards developing brands that target smaller patient populations. Pharma companies and agencies need to work to develop finely tuned communications solutions that will reach a broader range of stakeholders."

More conversation at mmm-online.com

In conversation

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Asia director, respi-
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Mark Worman
Global marketing
director,
McCann Health

Right (top
to bottom)
Mitchinson;
Perrott
and Ohnemus;
Worman and Lee



Left (clockwise from top)
Schweikert and Cahill; Mitchinson; Perrott and Denton; Schweikert

Below
(top to bottom)
Ohnemus; Denton



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