

Pharma's type 'A' exec—and mentor

After a quick look at Brian Goff's personal and professional biographies, you might peg him as one of the most driven individuals on the planet. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Skidmore College with an economics degree, then went to work at Johnson & Johnson, first in sales and then in marketing and product management. In his idle hours, he earned his MBA at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, while also launching what he calls "a pretty important drug" at J&J and preparing to welcome the fourth of his four kids (the other three were all under seven years of age).

That's a career for many healthcare execs. For Goff, it was just a first act. Fourteen years into his J&J tenure, he was lured away by Novartis, to work alongside the company's elite global brand leaders. He packed up the family and moved to Basel, Switzerland, returning stateside a few years later to head up Novartis's primary care business unit. Baxter poached him in June 2012 to serve as the head of the company's global hemophilia business.

Judging from that resume, Goff's move to Baxter could appear to have been motivated by the opportunity to conquer yet another therapeutic area. But when asked about the appeal of his current role, his explanation is thoughtful.

"I've been on a more than 20-year journey in this business," he says. "I feel like I've discovered what I was looking for but that I couldn't articulate before."

This isn't to say that Goff didn't find meaning or motivation in his previous gigs so much as to affirm how much professional and emotional gratification he receives from his current one. Baxter's hemophilia group has set "achieving a bleed-free world, one patient at a time"

Brian Goff

Global franchise head for hemophilia, Baxter

2005–2012

VP/head of primary care business unit, Novartis

1991–2005

Various positions, J&J pharma

as its goal, and individuals up and down the organizational ladder devotedly pursue this mission.

"Many times we purposefully don't focus on the numbers," Goff says. "I remember sitting in my first [Baxter] town hall meeting and hearing about a family with four children, all of whom were affected by a rare congenital disorder that's treated effectively by one of our products. It's hard not to be affected by something like that." When asked if the enormity of the organization's mission weighs on him, Goff practically scoffs. "A mission should be aspirational. A great vision is not easy to achieve. And to be candid, it's been a magnet for talent."

When it comes to that talent, Goff goes out of his way to make himself available as a resource and sounding board. It's no surprise, then, that Goff was recognized in February by the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association as its 2014 Honorable Mentor.

"He's very open, always asking questions, always listening carefully," says Nawal Ouzren, Baxter's VP, biosimilars, one of the executives Goff has informally mentored over the years. "It's like, if somebody like Brian wants to help me, I must be pretty good."

Goff says that mentoring should be rewarding and fun. Nonetheless, he characterizes his efforts to mentor younger staffers as more than a mere organizational courtesy.

"It's so important to invest in the next generation of leaders—how we hope they'll operate, the kind of diversity framework we'd like to encourage," Goff says passionately. "Think about it. These are the people who will eventually determine what diseases we'll address and cure, who will determine what societies will have access to our medicines. The more mentoring we do, the more we can influence how this industry will be regarded for generations to come." —Larry Dobrow

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