

The Essence of a Brand

Beyond good messaging, marketers must establish a brand that is forever etched into physicians' minds

Pharma's selling system is unique in the marketing industry. We have the luxury of delivering multiple messages over the life of the brand through representative detailing. By contrast, consumer marketers typically communicate their messages en masse in bite-size pieces, typified by a 30-second TV advertisement.

Ironically, this advantage can turn into a disadvantage—hindering the discipline with which we approach brand positioning. Pharma marketers typically develop communications plans based on messaging—the multiple ideas they believe will convince the physician about the differentiating value of their drug. Often this focus on messaging comes at the expense of effective positioning. It's true that every pharma brand's strategy includes a positioning statement. But too often that statement is actually a multi-clause summary of its messaging platform.

But selling (and messaging) and marketing (and positioning) are not simply personal and nonpersonal versions of the same endeavor. In a classic sense, positioning is the place you want your brand to live in the customer's brain. Messaging is the supporting evidence that justifies ownership of that space. Today, as categories become more competitive and sales representatives gain less quality access to doctors, pharma marketers are recognizing the value of an approach to positioning that is already familiar in consumer marketing: brand essence—the single-minded, summary idea the brand is to stand for in the customer's mind.



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Beyond Positioning

The idea of brand essence may come from the consumer side, but it's an excellent fit with pharma marketing. After all, consumers devote little brain-space to the meaning of any given brand. Physicians, on the other hand, truly care about differentiating brands: They need to know and understand the prescription brands in their therapeutic categories (as if someone's life depends on it, literally). They must know the old agents, the currently approved treatment guidelines, and the drugs in the clinical trial pipeline. It is their responsibility to use drugs safely and effectively. Therefore, more brain-space for the brand.

Brand essence is the result of a mixture of empirical facts, brand personality, functional benefits, and feelings that leads to the differentiating brand idea

But brand essence is more than a logical, factual differentiation of one product from another. It's best seen as the "elevator-ride summary" of the place we want the brand to reside on the physician's mental and emotional "brand-map." Brand essence is the result of a mixture of empirical facts, feelings, functional benefits, and brand personality that leads to the single-minded, differentiating brand idea. It is about the higher-order or emotional value of the brand to physicians and their patients.

For instance, for Merck/Schering Plough's double-action cholesterol drug, Vytorin (ezetimibe/simvastatin), the brand's professional campaign uses a pair of lightning bolts to dramatize its dual action, suggesting the emotional component of power and speed. The brand essence is

the power of dual inhibition. The print campaign of Alcon's glaucoma franchise consists of two black pages with the headline "Because you can't hear a sunrise." The brand essence is clearly not just preserving sight, but the preciousness of sight.

We often hear that physicians are literal and just want the facts. But what could be more fascinating than changing lives and the wonders of the human body and life itself? Do physicians want science? Yes, it is the cornerstone. But they also want to be engaged with a clear concept for the drug, to help them organize what they know and learn about it over time. They want a concept that reinforces their desire to heal and that satisfies their need for evidence-based information and client health and satisfaction.

Prescribing a drug is a complex decision based on many factors, some rational, some irrational, like any decision. The decision often comes down to the customer-brand relevance—a connection supported by the data and clinical advantages of the drug itself. This decision making over time is a result of

a powerful and differentiating brand position on the physician's brand-map. The brand essence defines and differentiates the brand to help marketers occupy the mind-space available to their drug.

Focus on Essence

The process of understanding and identifying the brand's essence is strengthened by the presence of an account-planning function within the ad agency. A standard function in consumer agencies for the past 15 years, more and more pharma ad agencies are adding the account-planning function to strengthen this strategic discipline. Account planning brings a specialized focus to the communications strategy, working arm-in-arm with the client's market researchers and the agency's creative departments. The account-planning

BECAUSE YOU CAN'T HEAR A SUNRISE.

Alcon
WESTERLY, MASSACHUSETTS

For its glaucoma print campaign, Alcon chose a minimalist yet powerful approach by running a two-page black spread. The brand essence: for the preciousness of sight.

team's mission is to put a spotlight on the relevant customer insight and to help identify and articulate the brand's essence.

Is the shift to the greater focus of brand essence really necessary? Haven't pharma's traditional marketing approaches succeeded quite nicely in the past without them?

The answer is yes, they have. But, historically, pharma has not had the sort of marketplace pressures that taught consumer marketers discipline and focus. Pharma marketing and advertising matured at a time when there were often just a few drugs in a therapeutic category, each with distinctive mechanisms of action. Our need to achieve consensus among marketing, sales, legal, regulatory, and medical affairs encourages a default to clinical messaging; multiple ideas about the brand's efficacy, safety, and tolerability; etc.

Today, however, there are far more market pressures at work, all of which factor into

a much more challenging marketplace: more brands in each therapeutic category, many with minor differences; more sales representatives than ever chasing a shrinking reservoir of physician attention; a physician target less receptive to personal detailing and more educated about clinical claims; and managed care formulary management that is increasingly savvy in its desire to hold down costs.

Today's pharma marketplace demands bolder marketing and more focused positioning rooted in customer insight. Not just because the need to stand out is greater than ever before, but also because as we launch new drugs with smaller clinical differences, communications that articulate a focused brand positioning will fare better over the life of the brand. For branded drugs, as we all know too well, life's too short.

Why the added discipline of brand essence? Because strategic discipline is challenging in

People SK&A tapped **David Escalante Jr.** as president and COO, and **Manus Gallagher** as vice president of sales. // McKesson Specialty hired **Michelle Leibow** as director of marketing for McKesson Specialty Pharmacy Services. // GSW Worldwide, an inVentiv Health company, promoted **Geoff Morrow** to director of the global integration team. // Dowden Health Media Professional and Consumer Divisions named **Jennifer Day** group publisher of *OBG Management*, *Contemporary Surgery*, *The Journal of Family Practice*, and *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*. // MicroMass Communications hired **Jamie Cobb** as executive creative director. Cobb was formerly senior vice president, international creative director for GSW Worldwide.

Launches Wolters Kluwer Health launched **The Patient: Patient-Centered Outcomes Research**, a medical journal that covers patient-centered medicine and is dedicated to using the scientific method for accessing patients' perspectives on therapies and medical technologies. // CommonHealth launched **Earthborn**, a full-service agency that offers communications programs built around the connection between the environment and human health.

any creative enterprise. Advertising agencies must develop ideas that grow brands—ideas that break through and shift the perceptual dynamics in a market. Great ideas that move markets require the support of functional messages and a foundation in the customer insight. But it is also a clear articulation of the brand's essence. This discipline better serves the brand and the customer. And in doing so, it drives the ultimate goal: accelerating brand growth. **PE**