Analysis of Efficiencies and Best Practices of Launches across the Pharmaceutical Industry

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Background

➢ Product launches serve as defining moments for pharmaceutical companies to create continued value. Well-managed launches provide strong predictability of a product's success.[1]
➢ Launch teams have been identified as a key component leading to a successful launch. These teams provide the linkage between R&D, medical, and commercial and they give companies a practical framework to address requirements for each individual launch.[1]
➢ Currently, across the industry there is no standardized process for pharmaceutical launch activities.

Objective

The purpose of this research was to identify best practices of effective launches throughout the pharmaceutical industry. The areas evaluated in this research, included: advisory boards; congress planning; customer plan; and internal and external education.

Methods

➢ This research was reviewed and approved by the Rutgers Institutional Review Board.
➢ This was a cross-sectional, qualitative, survey-based study of pharmaceutical industry employees who were involved in a product launch in the past 5 years.
➢ This survey was distributed to the network of Rutgers Post-Doctoral Fellowship Alumni (approximately 800 individuals) through an online survey tool.
➢ Respondents were asked to complete at least two of the launch activity sections.
➢ Data was categorized for final assessment.
➢ The following questions were asked across the four areas evaluated in this research (advisory boards, conference planning, thought leader strategy, and medical training and external unbranded education):
　➢ Please describe 3 best practices that added value pre or post launch.
　➢ What would you advise to not do (e.g. an inefficient process) while preparing for launch?
　➢ Give 1-2 examples of innovations you achieved with your cross functional colleagues pre or post launch.
　➢ What metrics did you track to measure launch success?
　➢ How did you communicate your launch plans across the teams?

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Results

Table 1. Respondents Involved in Each Launch Activity (%)

Launch Activity	Percent
Congress Planning	33.3%
Planning and Executing Advisory Boards	20.0%
Customer Plan	33.3%
Internal and External Education	6.7%

Table 2. Respondents who Listed as Best Practice (%)

Launch Best Practice	Percent
Alignment	46.7%
Competitive Intelligence	13.3%
Proactive Planning	53.3%
Innovative Technology	13.3%

Table 3. Examples of Launch Best Practices

Launch Activity	Alignment	Competitive Intelligence	Proactive Planning	Innovative Technology
Congress Planning	• Early internal alignment of congress publication plans • Weekly and monthly meetings • Early start to planning/coordinating; keeping open lines of communication with the cross-functional leads; having a core team for planning • Do not assume everyone knows the process or available information • Cross-functional team meetings, request that cross-functional leads convey the information to their teams and via email • Work across the matrix • Conduct weekly status update calls	• Must react to competition • Collect survey from congress attendees	• Innovate creative storyline and transparency • Have an idea of who to meet and what insights to cover prior to the congress • Percentage of engagement with targeted opinion leaders • Proactively identify key congresses and activities; robust plan for thought leader meetings; appropriate debriefing • Proactive plan across functional teams • Track number of thought leader meetings • Do not rush the process - plan and strategize well in advance • Track the number of patient groups reached and the reach of those patient groups (i.e. number of members, newsletter recipients)	• Do not create an app specifically for internal members. The conference app is typically enough. • Piloted an internal app that provided all of the brand's key information (data releases, booth information, competitor information)
Planning and Executing Advisory Boards	• Setting objectives that aligned with the medical and brand strategy; selecting advisors who would bring positive and negative perspectives towards the data; consistency in the messaging • Cross-functional meetings and regular follow-up updates	• Ability to execute the meeting within 6 weeks after changing strategies	• Do not be rigid or inflexible • Collect advisor feedback	N/A
Customer Plan	• Integrated approach across matrix, leveraged medical science liaisons and internal information • Hold cross-functional meetings	• Medical science liaison outreach at launch	• Profile opinion leaders ahead of time • Do not rely on old lists of opinion leaders. This is not always the best idea because some opinion leaders relocate, shift research interests, or shift clinical interests • Consider compliance issues, reach out to compliance/legal well in advance to avoid delays	N/A

➢ Survey participants identified that the most common time to become involved in launch activities was 12 months prior to launch (40%).
➢ When considering duration of involvement post-launch, results of this research identified that respondents were still involved in the launch (44%), followed by 3 months (29%).
➢ The most common therapeutic areas were cardiovascular/metabolics (53%) and oncology (47%).

Results (continued)

➢ According to survey results, a total of 22 individuals were involved in a product launch in the past 5 years. Of these respondents, 79% were in medical and 0% in commercial (R&D and Regulatory were screened out). Therefore, there were only medical individuals captured in the results of the survey.
➢ The launch activity breakdown was as follows: Congress planning (33.3%), planning and executing advisory boards (20%), customer plan (33.3%), and internal and external education (6.7%), **Table 1**.
➢ Launch best practices were organized into 4 main categories: alignment, competitive intelligence, proactive planning, and innovative technology. The most common launch best practice was proactive planning (53.3%), followed by alignment (46.7%), then competitive intelligence (13.3%) and innovative technology (13.3%), **Table 2**. Best practices were not identified for internal and external education.

Limitations

➢ A limitation of this study included the number of pharmaceutical companies sampled. A greater sample of pharmaceutical companies could have been surveyed to achieve a more diverse sample. Furthermore, the survey had a low response rate of individuals with launch experience.
➢ An additional limitation of this study included the subjectivity of the questions included in the survey.

Conclusions

➢ Among various areas of focus during launch planning, this research identified best practices across the following capabilities: planning and executing advisory boards; congress/conference planning; thought leader identification and engagement strategy; and medical training and external unbranded education initiatives.
➢ Commonalities that were identified across the pharmaceutical industry in executing a successful launch included proactive planning, alignment across various teams, understanding in competitive intelligence activities, and innovative technologies. Respondents identified that planning key activities such as publication plans, congress activities, and thought leader engagements in collaboration with colleagues contributed to successful launches across a variety of therapeutic areas.

References

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