



global campaigns

Pharmacia Takes It Global

One company's success demonstrates that there's hope for building truly integrated worldwide communications teams.

An Italian cancer patient finds information about new treatments on a website run by a Los Angeles-based advocacy group. But his access to those treatments depends on decisions made by Italy's local health authority in Rome. Although pharma company communicators understand the complex global network of healthcare information available to consumers, they must still

deal with the regionalization of healthcare delivery. They increasingly face the challenge of delivering locally relevant information to diverse audiences through a complex array of global communications vehicles.

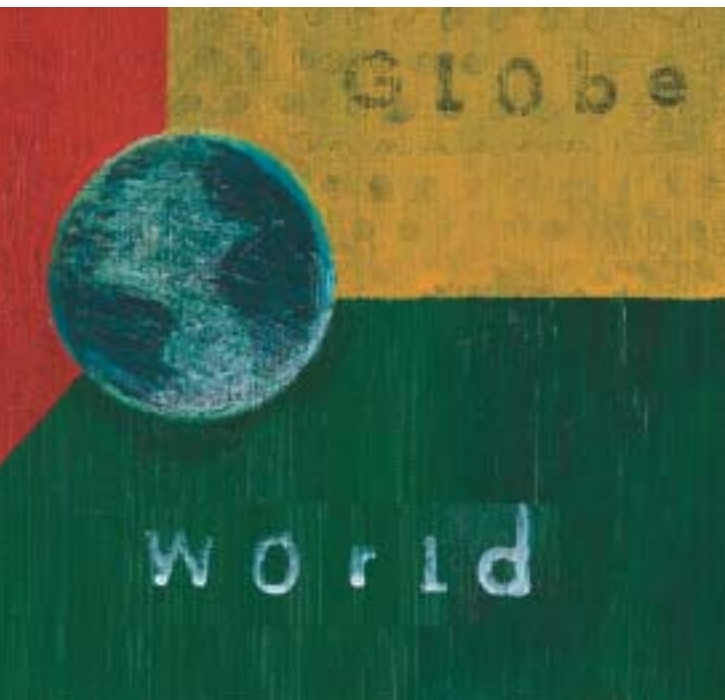
This article describes how Pharmacia, a US-based company with a strong European presence and heritage, developed a novel way of tackling that challenge. Although the change

is relatively recent, the new approach has already reaped rewards. And the guiding principles behind it may apply to other international communications professionals.

GLOBAL PRIORITIES

In the era of international trade, pharma's traditional marketing model relies on a headquarters-based global marketing or public relations function that develops a worldwide communications strategy. Some companies use an overall corporate strategy to govern themselves and carve out separate strategies for individual products. Some group products by therapeutic area. Others develop strategies by region or by audience, such as healthcare professionals, advocacy groups, patients, and providers.

Frequently, however, the people who develop those strategies do so independently of one another, so little cross-fertilization of ideas or knowledge takes place. Whatever the delineation of responsibility, it is common practice for those global marketers to hand carefully conceived strategies—often accompanied by an implementation plan—to whomever is responsible for company and product communications in each



local marketing or operating company. That individual is then responsible for putting the global strategy into practice at the regional or local level.

Priorities at the national level are often very different from those at global headquarters. Although the global marketing team may prioritize brand positioning, the Spanish product manager may be most concerned with getting the product on local regulators' reimbursement lists before it can enter the market there. Not only must local communications managers meet the needs of their own local environments, they must also fulfill headquarters' wishes as well. That's a tall but important order to fill.

THE PHARMACIA MODEL

After the merger with Upjohn and subsequent relocation of its worldwide headquarters to New Jersey, Pharmacia formed its public relations and advocacy department in 1998 under the leadership of Jeff Winton, vice-president of global public relations. Initially mirroring Pharmacia's pharma marketing organization, it expanded during the next two years to incorporate global patient and professional advocacy functions from the former Upjohn and Searle heritage companies, after the merger of Pharmacia & Upjohn with Monsanto and its G.D. Searle unit.

The team's straightforward mission was then, and is still today, to create and implement global PR and advocacy development programs that support product communications goals and help drive topline sales performance. A secondary mission, supporting and enabling the first, is to guide and provide counsel for global strategies and policies that create, sustain, and reinforce corporate reputation, including issues management, media relations, crisis communications, patient education, and advocacy development initia-

tives. On a day-to-day basis, that means the company must

- coordinate global communications among 60 affiliates
- manage product, manufacturing, and corporate issues
- make the most of third-party endorsements—from celebrity spokespeople to high-profile research scientists
- maximize opportunities at events such as national and international medical conferences
- create patient/consumer education programs and materials
- build relationships with patient and

Affiliate communications managers must meet the needs of their local environments and those of headquarters.

SINGLE POINTS OF CONTACT

Pharmacia's public relations and advocacy development department took its current shape in 2001 when the company created a new senior director position with overall responsibility for product public relations, media relations, and advocacy development in the Europe/Canada/Middle East/Africa regions, and another one to oversee the Latin America and Asia Pacific regions. The creation of those roles sets Pharmacia apart from many of its competitors and established a new model for international communications: a single contact point and focus for diverse, yet interrelated, communications activities underway across the company and throughout those regions.

All 78 members of the public relations team across the first region—PR managers in each country—have dotted-line responsibility to that senior director. Therefore, one individual has an overview of every aspect of regional public relations, media relations, and professional and patient advocacy activities. The advantages of that approach include

- ▶ global consistency of messages and approaches, ensuring that whatever the company says about Rogaine in Madrid aligns with what it says about the product in other markets
- ▶ less duplication of effort: a physician education program that Sweden plans shares ideas, materials, and key findings with a program that Pharmacia Germany ran last year
- ▶ improved issues management, through a single contact person who coordinates the response to any problem for all internal and external audiences
- ▶ maintenance of strategies and standards through global communications.

professional advocates

- direct media relations and outreach.

In more general terms, the department's approach benefits the company and sets it apart from many other headquarters-based international functions because it

- maximizes synergies between PR, media, and advocacy
- centralizes training and development
- feeds local insights into global perspectives and vice versa.

DUAL MISSION

Seeking first to bring together PR, media, and advocacy, in December 2001 the department launched a program known to improve Pharmacia's relationships with key journalists. Working with local affiliate communications colleagues to identify key local consumer and business media, the team assigned a local Pharmacia communicator to each journalist. It developed activities to cultivate those relationships at a regional level and implemented them either regionally or locally, using a "Media Day" which brought the company's scientific research to the media, and through educational background

Internal Clients

Just like PR agency account executives, internal public relations professionals must deal with clients. The only difference is that internal PR pros and their clients all work for the same company. Pharmacia's PR and advocacy development department's customers include brand teams and product managers, the presidents of Pharmacia market affiliates, senior regional managers, R&D and medical staffs, and the company's top executives.

sessions that informed journalists about key therapeutic areas, initiatives, and programs such as pain management and glaucoma.

The success that program led to the creation of a complementary campaign—Mission: Advocates—that fosters relationships with patient organizations. Both campaigns underline the value of working regionally, because, although many media and advocacy groups are traditionally characterized as local, their influence increasingly extends beyond their national borders. Publications such as *Le Monde* and the *London Times* are widely read and quoted outside France and the United Kingdom. And, the United Kingdom's National Osteoporosis Foundation has led the charge of patient empowerment all over Europe.

By housing both media and advocacy relations within one department, Pharmacia easily and cost-effectively transfers knowledge gained from its media program to its advocacy group initiatives. Another major benefit is the ability to transfer best practices from one country to another. Pharmacia's communications teams around the globe often adapt local programs developed in one corner of the world for use in other areas, reaping success for the company in multiple markets. That has proven particularly useful in launching new products globally, as was the case for Zyvox (linezolid), the first antibiotic from a new class in more than 30 years.

The company applied what it learned from the first market—the United Kingdom—to launch the product in 54 other countries. UK thought-leaders spoke at launch events in other countries. Teams took media approaches that were successful in Germany and France and used them in Italy and Spain. They adapted materials developed for the media and advocacy

groups in the United Kingdom for other markets. When Zyvox hit markets across the Pacific Rim and in Latin America, Pharmacia had already created an enormous, easily accessible knowledge bank.

All that activity works for headquarters today. Global communication among teams results in the accumulation of information about affiliates' communications activities, their problems and priorities, and the support they need. Those insights find their way to New Jersey and are fed back into the global planning process. That helps ensure that headquarters meets the needs of its local market companies and is fully aware of—and acting on—local differences, thereby keeping programs and materials relevant, appropriate, and valuable to the people using them around the world.

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

Training staff as spokespeople and developing their skills is a costly and time-intensive process—one that often falls between a number of functional responsibilities. While local PR managers are training one or two external spokespeople to discuss Pharmacia's COX-2 inhibitor Celebrex (celecoxib), it's unlikely that they can simultaneously train the local affiliate president to discuss all of Pharmacia's products. It's just as unlikely that they have the funds for training their own team because its small size—often only two or three people—doesn't make it cost-effective. That's how a cross-disciplinary department with multi-regional expertise adds practical value.

During the past 20 months, Pharmacia's PR and advocacy development department organized and ran numerous training and skills development sessions attended by PR colleagues from 19 countries. One successful activity was a global PR workshop with a vari-

ety of breakout sessions allowing participants to select those that best fit their local priorities and skill levels. A vital part of that workshop was a session in which participants discussed their communications program for the following year, encouraging synergy and the development of tactical approaches in line with headquarters strategy at an early stage.

Other activities included

- product summits for all communications professionals working on Celebrex and the injectable COX-2 treatment Dynastat (parecoxib)
- strategic workshops for other major products
- a new-hire PR orientation program for anyone joining the company in a communications role
- media training for the company's general managers in charge of local market affiliates
- weekly update/brainstorm calls.

Involvement with local communications teams as they prepare for the next year is essential, not only to ensure global consistency but also to avoid the dreaded "not invented here" syndrome afflicting many multi-national companies. By working with local PR teams as they begin to develop their plans, headquarters can help with the content of their plans, ensuring that brand strategies are reflected in the process. Rather than imposing a global edict—with the resulting resistance that it is likely to engender—pharma companies can empower local teams to build globally preferred messages and approaches into their own ideas and activities.

REGIONAL FEEDBACK

Pharmacia's integration of PR and advocacy development has smoothed operations and generated regular, positive feedback from colleagues at both local and regional levels worldwide. Most gratifying, however, have been the

tangible improvements demonstrated by the team responsible for activities in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Canada.

In early 2002, the department commissioned a six-month media audit of seven key Pharmacia products—Aromasin (exemestane), Celebrex, Detrol (tolterodine), Genotropin (somatropin, rDNA), Fragmin (dalteparin), Xalatan/Xalacom (latanoprost), and Zy-vox—in seven major markets: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

The main objectives were to evaluate the tone of media coverage, analyze the coverage generated in different markets, compare coverage of Pharmacia's products with its competitors', and identify product news that resulted from sources other than corporate or regulatory announcements. Senior directors in the relevant countries forwarded their media coverage for the six-month period and an external agency provided reports of competitors' coverage.

In five of seven disease areas audited, the Pharmacia product won the largest share of media coverage compared with its top three competitors in each category. During the six-month period, Pharmacia had a 53 percent media share in all seven product areas and countries surveyed. Overall, the tone of the media coverage was consistently positive, with Celebrex garnering the majority of it.

Those encouraging findings demonstrate that Pharmacia's communications efforts are working. That the company was able to take the lion's share of media coverage in the majority of areas in which it competes with many larger and better-resourced competitors demonstrates the effectiveness of its communications programs. The news

Some media influence transcends the boundaries of geography and language, making regional PR campaigns essential.

stories' consistent tone across disparate markets was particularly encouraging, because it may indicate that global messages are, indeed, being carried through at the local level.

The combination of metrics from the media audit and positive feedback from colleagues around the company establishes beyond a doubt what an enormous contribution the internally connected public relations and advocacy development department and a single point person can make to the success of a global communications team. Internal customers at all levels of the company and within both headquarters and local offices recognize the global advantages that accrue from a resource with a truly international perspective, gained from constant interaction with, and input from, local market affiliates.

As pharma PR continues to evolve, it seems likely that similarly centralized functions, combining communications disciplines, audience responsibilities, and geographic territories will become the norm. ■

Gail Thornton

is senior director of public relations and advocacy development, Europe, Middle East, Africa, and Canada, for Pharmacia.