

Important steps to start and manage your marketing career

Now you have decided that you want to work in Pharmaceutical Marketing, how do you go about finding that all important first position? Whilst most first steps come through internal opportunities, an increasing number of organisations are looking externally to bring in fresh blood at Product Manager / Brand Manager level to introduce new ways of thinking and challenge any 'this is the way we do it here' mentality.

Step Number 1 – Getting your CV right

You will no doubt have read previous articles on preparing your CV – we cannot stress enough the importance of getting this critically important self-marketing tool correct. It isn't a chance to write down every single thing you have ever done in every position held. It is about setting down a clear set of responsibilities and corresponding achievements in each of your previously held relevant positions. As recruitment consultants, we are in the privileged position of seeing large numbers of CVs and unless we know you, we may make a decision to progress you or not based on what we read. CVs are all about marketing, and if you cannot market yourself on paper, this is not a good omen for marketing the products / services of your future employer!

Now is also the ideal time to plan what you want your CV to show in the next 12 to 24 months. This is an excellent way of laying the foundations of the skills and knowledge you will need to develop to start climbing that ladder to more senior marketing positions.

Step Number 2 - Preparing for Interview

Once you have been selected to meet with the recruiting company, you must invest time in your interview preparation. Your recruitment specialist can help with this but you need to ensure you have left no stone unturned researching your potential future employer prior to your interview.

At interview, make sure you can demonstrate the achievements that you have detailed on your CV – open your "brag" file with your first job and make sure that every success / recognition of achievement is captured in this and can then be used to support your job application. Once this file is started, add to it with each position you hold.

If you get the role – great, it means a number of people have done a great job, primarily you! It is now time for the really hard work to start.

Step Number 3 – Development and Learning, development and learning

An increasing number of marketers come to us to find them new positions in organisations where they can continue to learn and thus be further developed.

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They do this simply because they can see their peers in other organisations moving forward faster.

The learning and development cycle is an important one to force yourself to adhere to. One of the key components of this 'cycle' is having a great mentor. This doesn't have to be your direct boss, though that can help. It is about having someone who you can learn from and who will challenge and develop you with new experiences.

Do not stand back and wait to be developed in your new role, take responsibility for your career and be pro-active. Whilst nothing beats hands on learning, if you do not come from a marketing background or have a marketing qualification, investigate the educational options that are out there and ask if your organisation is willing to support you in this training – this support may take the form of paying for fees, allowing you to attend collage on a day release basis or granting you study leave. Be prepared to dedicate personal time to this studying – it is your future that you are planning after all! Once you have started learning and developing, make sure you keep this cycle going and use the knowledge and skills you have gathered along the way to ensure you are the candidate of choice for that next rung up on the marketing career ladder.

Step Number 4 – Applying what you know

The competition for jobs in marketing is getting tougher at all levels. Whilst it has never been easy, the recent bout of Mergers & Acquisitions may reduce the overall number of opportunities. Furthermore, organisations are re-evaluating the competencies and experience they expect their marketers' to have to support future product success. Recruiting companies want candidates who can demonstrate their ability across the full marketing mix not just in one area – unless you wish to pursue a career focused on a marketing specialism such as PR or Market Research, make sure your role exposes you to all that marketing has to offer. If you want to pursue a European or International role, learn from colleagues in other countries and understand the different promotional, regulatory and pricing issues that affect them. In short, know your market / markets and stay in touch with the external environment and not just through award ceremonies! Continue to develop and grow your own contact networks across the industry and also in the recruitment world. You should aim to work closely with a Pharma recruitment specialist, ideally one who understands where you want to get to and can support you in this. Make sure you are front-of-mind with your recruitment specialist by updating and forwarding your CV to them bi-annually. If they do not have the latest copy, how are they to know that you now have the necessary skills and experience for the assignment they are currently searching!

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As you progress in your career and look down from that ladder and have to decide which way you are going to take your new department it will revolve around one thing. Having the right people in the right positions doing the right things with your precious brands.

If you would like to discuss your marketing career to date or your marketing aspirations, please call RSA Search Selection on (0)1707 259333.

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