



Launch excellence

Let's start at the very beginning



With a rapidly changing clinical, economic and regulatory environment, the launch of new products has catapulted the pharmaceutical industry into greater complexity and pressure than ever before. Historically, new asset launches have been a tale of two halves: a hit or miss. Between 2009 and 2017, 40% of worldwide drug launches failed to meet their 2-year sales forecasts, according to McKinsey & Company¹. Taking into consideration the evolving environment, there has never been a greater need for new models to navigate the path of an asset to market.

Over the past 15 years, our clients have regularly come to us to help them execute their launch plans. Often the ask is around launch readiness and activation, with a focus on tactical execution. In this article, we discuss the need to get ahead of tactical planning and demonstrate the role of 'pre-launch asset preparedness', to ensure we maximise the potential of specialised medicines in this highly complex environment.

Pre-launch asset preparedness - what is it?

Quite simply, it is creating a successful outcomes-led communication launch strategy from Phase 1. It is derived from having a robust pre-clinical asset preparedness plan for the asset's target markets and audiences from the start. This often-overlooked step should act as the North Star guiding and aligning the scientific platform and commercial strategy to follow, creating the opportunity for real impact on the communities we serve.

What are the behaviours and foundations needed from the start?

By subtly reframing how we think and work, and applying four foundational steps, it is possible to optimise the development and commercialisation of medicines from the early phases of the lifecycle:

1. Embed an outcomes-first mindset from the start. We need to consider how we drive impact beyond the pre-clinical stages, to ensure patients are given the best opportunities to access medicines with the potential to fulfil their unmet needs. For example, establishing clinical outcomes for trial design are critical endpoint measures, but they only matter in so far as how they make a difference to real-world patients. Without an insight- and outcomes-led mindset at this stage, we miss the opportunity for compounding the potential of an asset. But how do we do this? It means rethinking the tried-and-tested approaches to bringing products to market from Phase 1. We need to continuously assess needs with a real-world lens by asking patients, their families and carers, "What matters to you?" and to the healthcare professional community, "What will make the biggest difference to patients' lives?". By doing so, we can apply a best-fit clinical and launch platform integrating the use of novel outcomes measures early in the asset development lifecycle, ensuring the best chance to achieve real-world outcomes at launch.

2. Ensuring a cross-functional team from proof of concept to launch. Careful coordination and alignment across functions will support a disciplined, integrated and accountable approach to launch from Phase 1. By seamlessly aligning global-to-local cross-functional teams at every stage of the strategic planning cycle, will ensure continuous integration of multi-stakeholder insights, along with clarity of the position and strategic alignment across all scientific and commercial communications.

3. Connecting external functional expertise. Bringing the right partners and experts to the table at the right time optimises the pull through, application, execution and impact of a medicine. From strategy to creative,

from pre-launch asset preparedness to execution, connecting the right external expertise across the journey will ensure thoughtful, reliable and strategically aligned solutions that engage the communities with impact.

4. Measure impact where it matters. Many health outcomes are measured on a retrospective basis, post launch, and often once it's been 'in market' for some time. While the commercial launch success does vary, and can often be indexed to investment, one thing remains clear – success should also be measured by the incremental improvements in health outcomes that the drug is achieving for patients, and this is not indexed to investment alone. Returning to our question, "What will make the biggest difference to patients' lives?", and our ability to measure how we fulfil this real-world outcome, need to be the ultimate aims as we look forward beyond market share, revenue and profits.

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If you're planning a launch and looking for some advice, get in touch! We're hosting free launch-strategy clinics throughout May and June. Contact Cheryl Harrison Doyle or Clare Reynolds for more details.

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1. Mlika A, et al. McKinsey & Company, 15 Dec 2020. Ready for launch: Reshaping pharma's strategy in the next normal. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/life-sciences/our-insights/ready-for-launch-reshaping-pharmas-strategy-in-the-next-normal> (Last accessed: 18 March 2022).