

NOT EVERYTHING THAT MAKES YOU BETTER IS A PILL

5 Top Tips to help pharmaceutical companies develop devices that deliver better customer experience and outcomes.

In the 1990s, when I started in healthcare market research, successful pharma launches were built on strong clinical profiles. Blockbusters like Lipitor, Prozac and Losec succeeded on the basis of their superior clinical data. Huge salesforces then took this data to as many doctors as possible to persuade them of the value of their product...and huge sales followed.

Today, though, in increasingly crowded drug markets, a strong clinical profile is no longer enough. To be successful, pharma companies need to develop a package of solutions including not only their molecule but also medical devices and digital solutions that, when combined, improve patient outcomes. After all, **"Not everything that makes you better is a pill."**

The importance of medical devices to pharma brands has always been recognised. As a junior researcher, I worked on inhaler devices such as GSK's Accuhaler and AZ's Turbohaler, on depot delivery formulations such as Losec MUPS and Risperdal Consta and on the NovoPen. Recent technological advances, however, have super-charged the value that medical devices and diagnostics offer pharma brands and have given rise to beyond-the-pill solutions in a number of different areas, for example:

- **Smart Devices** that also collect and report compliance and outcomes information (e.g. smart inhalers in asthma/ COPD, smart injectors in immunology, continuous glucose monitoring and closed loop insulin delivery systems)
- **Ingestible sensors** that indicate whether a pill has been taken (e.g. Proteus Digital Health's technology which has been combined with Otsuka's Abilify in schizophrenia)
- **Bio-markers** that allow anti-cancer treatments to be personalised to the patient
- **Patient and Physician Companion Apps**, which offer education, encourage adherence or prescribing and provide easy access to Q&A resources or helplines
- We even have **Akili's EndeavorRx**, the first prescription medicine delivered through a video game to improve cognitive impairment.

However, not all pharmaceutical companies have found it easy to leverage the value that medical devices offer, for two very good reasons.

Firstly, it has involved putting the customer first. Our R&D processes work in the opposite direction, putting the drug first and it has required a total shift in mindset and ways of working to avoid putting the drug first in our launch strategies as well.

Secondly, the development of medical devices and pharmaceutical products are inherently different. Medical devices are mechanical in nature and only work if used correctly. Usability is a key element. Pharmaceuticals are chemical and interact with the body's metabolism; once the molecule enters the body, they either work or they do not. Furthermore, the development cycle is completely different; a medical device can be developed in less than a year, while a new chemical entity or biologic usually takes 10 years or more from conception to launch.



At Purdie Pascoe, and with our heritage in medical devices, we have been working with pharmaceutical companies to help them develop delivery devices and digital solutions that help customers use their medicines more successfully. Based on our experience, here are our top tips for developing tools that make a difference:

1. **Start early** – Allow enough time to fully understand the needs of your customers and to develop tools that will address their needs. We recommend starting up to 2 years before launch to get this right, earlier of course if your delivery device needs to be incorporated into phase III clinical trials.
2. **Identify the right stakeholders** – Although prescribers may be the most important stakeholder for your pharmaceutical product, specialist nurses often work closely with patients on drug administration and know the pain points better than doctors.
3. **Put the customer first** – Invest in strong customer journey research, with both healthcare professionals and patients, to identify the potential barriers to the successful adoption of your product. Only then can you develop tools that address these.
4. **Understand the trade-offs** – When combining a pharmaceutical product and a delivery device there will inevitably be trade-offs in efficacy, safety, convenience, and cost. Conjoint models combining pharma and device attributes help to understand these trade-offs, justify required investment, and forecast sales which are essential for product planning.
5. **Test prototypes** – Include customers in the development of your delivery device early. Allowing customers to handle prototypes and suggest improvements, throughout the development process, will result in a much stronger end product.

So, as we develop new medicines, let's make sure that we are considering all solutions that will improve the lives of our patients, including devices and other support solutions. Those who get it right will benefit from stronger product uptake and compliance at launch. Those who do not, will be left on the shelf, quite literally.

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