

Introduction

Here you will find the template of an operational launch plan for a pharmaceutical product. It can help you as a marketer to plan the tactics and to initiate the appropriate actions at the right time.

You will find suggestions for the following areas:

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1 How to use this document

Complete the action plan by filling in the dates in the columns "Start by" and "Complete by" and by writing the name of the person accountable for the particular action in the column "Person responsible". You can also use the step-by-step approach of this document to create your own checklists in order to keep the launch on track. Regular review is essential for success.

2 Strategic Decisions by National Senior Management

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Determine priority of product in the product portfolio and decide on overall national strategy. Allocate human and financial resources			
	Use the help of the human resource department to establish a dedicated launch team with the right mix of hard and soft skills by defining cross-functional teams - making it clear that being part of a successful launch team is usually a step up the career ladder			
	Decide on the following essential items for the launch team: - which functions - which marketing and sales experience - which specific expertise in the indication - which reporting lines of team members - which metrics used for controlling the project			
	Decide on evaluation criteria for people - performance parameters - financial incentives - non-financial incentives			
	Make commitment very visible in order to demonstrate that senior managers believe in the value of the product and are willing to invest time and resources (Foster a "launch culture")			
	Identify and officially appoint product manager and clarify role and responsibilities			
	Identify and officially appoint medical marketing manager or medical affairs manager and clarify role and responsibilities, especially regarding the interface with the medical department			
	Identify and officially appoint national sales force manager and give him the mandate to recruit field force adequate in size and structure			
	Allocate appropriate yearly budgets			
	Endorse promotional budget for the individual sales rep to be specified by Marketing & Sales			
	Decide on pricing strategy, including price corridors and discounts for high volume contracts to hospital chains and similar organisations, based on global pricing strategy			
	Identify person responsible for reporting to key stakeholders			

3 Marketing Leadership

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Develop a concept on how to steer all marketing activities while giving guidance to all stakeholders			
	Communicate regularly with counterpart in Global Marketing Department to ensure support from headquarters			
	Continuously align and fine-tune strategic and operational activities for a successful product launch ensuring alignment to the Global Brand Plan			
	Suggest and participate at international product manager workshops to share best practices between teams and encourage continuous improvements or radical change, if necessary			
	Set date and plan agenda for internal kick-off meeting			
	Make the product team a vibrant, dynamic place where interesting people share, learn and grow: "We are writing product history"			
	Make all team members feel "part of the family" by appreciating their efforts - formally and informally			
	Identify interfaces and synergies with related teams			
	In case of unforeseen opportunities: Identify additional budget needs, forecast the estimated return on investment and ask for additional budget			
	Develop first draft of future lifecycle management activities			
	Plan special internal launch event with festivities to celebrate with all stakeholders and to recognize the "heroes"			
	Plan internal marketing, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentations at internal meetings - Articles for internal publication - Communication platform on the intranet - Monthly email newsletter to be sent to internal stakeholders 			

4 Project Management in Marketing

	Hold regular review meetings to monitor ongoing progress, to give support, and to facilitate implementation			
	Identify critical performance issues early, develop contingency plans and initiate corrective actions			
	Keep key stakeholders informed on a regular basis			
	Establish procedure for regular internal review meetings ("product launch committee") in order to report progress to key stakeholders			
	Ensure transparency and individual accountability by writing a list of deliverables and timelines for each team member to prevent anything from "falling through the cracks" and to facilitate the evaluation of performance			
	Plan celebrations once milestones are reached to motivate people			

5 Market Research

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Develop concept for primary and secondary market research in cooperation with internal or external market research agency			
	Have informal meetings with the target group on an individual basis, for example by inviting them to dinner			
	Prepare and conduct structured interviews and focus groups with target groups			
	Test draft for creating a verbal brand identity - Positioning, brand benefit edge, core message - Brand vocabulary with the 10 essential words that are attractive to the target audience			
	At focus groups, check relevancy of above concepts for target audiences: Are they concise, clear and credible?			
	Allocate sufficient budget and time to testing of planned messages and folders before going into the production phase			

6 Technical Aspects and Supply Chain Management

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Update and communicate forecast of units needed including units for phase IV clinical trial programme and samples to doctors			
	Remain in contact with relevant operations departments (production, packaging etc) to ensure smooth technical operations			
	Ensure adequate distribution channels, for example to hospital chains and wholesalers			
	Ensure availability of patient leaflets for the product and information for healthcare professionals			
	Ensure technical aspects of launch, such as - Application for launch - Product number - Supply chain and wholesalers - Special introductory offers to pharmacies			
	Define availability of special conditions during launch period			
	Inform general drug information databases for healthcare professionals			
	Ask relevant software providers for inclusion in the list of commercially available drugs			
	Inform software houses providing medical software for physicians			

7 Customer Relationship Management and Direct Marketing

	Choose a comprehensive CRM software as electronic database - one that is fully integrated across all customer touch points allowing real-time visibility into marketing & sales activities			
	Make friends in the information technology department			
	Adjust software to target group needs			
	Get visible senior management support and "sell" the CRM programme to internal stakeholders by highlighting benefits to everyone involved			
	Ask people in the company (especially sales reps) to continuously enter customer data at each contact to build an up-to-date "house list"			
	Appoint one person responsible for encouraging and coordinating the entry of customer data			
	Consider direct marketing to target groups in the form of printed or electronic mailings			
	Test your mailings by sending out at least two versions with response elements in order to continuously improve your campaigns			
	Consider direct-to-consumer activities, such as - disease awareness site for general information - patient brochures - newsletter campaign to patients that have opted-in			

8 Publications

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Identify the person responsible for the national publication strategy: Encourage, steer, coordinate and harmonize all efforts to ensure a continuous flow of relevant scientific publications			
	Hold close contact to the company person responsible for international publications			
	Develop a plan for a national publications strategy which includes the following deliverables: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - congress abstracts of posters or presentations - clinical trial articles - review articles - journal supplements - continuing medical education programmes 			
	Include selected external opinion leaders early in the development of a publication strategy			
	Ask experts to write a review of available clinical data			
	Consider enlisting the support of a medical writer			
	Maximize impact of publications by using them for all channels including public relations, internal and external presentations, opinion leader development, continuing medical education programmes and digital media			

9 Events

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Plan appropriate pre-marketing activities in order to avoid the "too little, too late" syndrome			
	Develop event concept for scientific congresses, symposia, stand-alone conferences and other events			
	Visit websites of relevant professional medical organizations for detailed information and actual dates of their congresses:			
	Set exact venues, dates and times for all meetings planned around the conference and communicate them well in advance			
	Ensure timely hotel reservations			
	Suggest and support speakers for main session			
	Organize a satellite symposium			
	Consider sponsorship or ad in programme leaflet			
	Organize speakers' dinner			
	Consider pre- or post-conference workshops			
	Coordinate press activities			
	Develop panels for booth at exhibition			
	Provide hand-out material, for example reprints and give-aways			
	Appoint booth team and ensure continuous company presence during congress hours			
	Follow-up on contacts at event			

10 Opinion Leader Support

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Participate in meetings with corresponding global departments			
	Develop opinion leader database with profiles and relevant contact information ("mapping")			
	Identify relevant thought leaders and key opinion leaders in cooperation with appropriate internal functions, especially the medical department. Consider including members from clinical study committee and clinical investigators			
	Prepare concept for national expert workshops			
	Contact opinion leaders, preferably based on a recommendation from the medical department			
	Build a core group ("event coordination committee") to prepare future events			
	Plan and conduct a meeting with core group to prepare the expert workshops			
	Consider selecting a professional technical team for the expert interviews to ensure proper camcorder, microphones, lighting, etc			
	Send out invitations and a release form for participants (they agree to audiovisual recording)			
	Conduct the expert workshop			
	Validate or modify existing concepts based on outcome of workshop			
	Select the appropriate experts for further closer cooperation and appointment to advisory board or expert panel (first level advocates) and the following layer of speakers (second level advocates) in order to have a pool of potential speakers			
	Consider a rhetoric or presentation skill training for selected experts to further improve speaking skills			
	Consider lecture tour by expert with good rhetorical skills to increase awareness in the target group			
	Build rapport to and strengthen opinion leaders contacts all the time			
	Develop conceptual platform and content for CME (continuing medical education)			
	Plan physician education programme, especially regional workshops			
	Conduct regional workshops and follow-up appropriately			

11 Phase IV Clinical Trial Programme

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Establish contact with the persons in headquarters relevant for post-authorization clinical trials			
	Jointly develop list of medical centres to be included as study centres starting with university hospitals and teaching hospitals that have enough patients and expertise			
	Select an internal person or an external clinical research organization responsible for developing concept, design, and recruitment strategy for clinical trial programme			
	Consider a retrospective survey with a questionnaire elucidating the target group's challenges with currently used treatment options to increase the company's understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of competitors			
	Ensure that the investigator brochure of the study programme adequately considers both market needs and drug surveillance aspects			
	Ensure that all legal aspects are covered			
	Consider meeting key investigators together with the medical counterpart in the company			
	Support timely reporting and effective communication of study results			
	Use contact details from investigators for regular follow-up with the aim of converting investigators into advocates. Motto: Include them, involve them, invite them			
	Creatively consider other means to familiarize target groups with the product			

12 The Web

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Develop the overall national web strategy in cooperation with the respective global department			
	Consider the following options for your presence online: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal site on the intranet - Product website for healthcare professionals (the company is legally responsible for the content) - Study group website for the experts (the principal investigator or chairman of the study committee is legally responsible for the content) - Disease awareness site with general information about the diagnosis and treatment of the disease (the company is legally responsible for the content) - Performance parameters ("Webmetrics") 			
	Identify internal marketer responsible for content of web-based activities			
	Identify internal or external information technology person responsible for technical aspects of web-based activities, for example from a web-agency			
	Identify the external expert or institute responsible for the content of the "study website"			
	Develop draft of website for study group including your name as sponsor			
	Ensure words suitable for search engine optimization in visible text and in meta tags			
	Ensure that content from the complete range of communication activities is also put online			
	Develop a list of 10 to 20 frequently asked questions and their answers and put them online ("FAQs")			
	Put essential diagrams on the "study website" as PowerPoint charts in order to facilitate future presentations			
	Help study group update the website			

13 Public Relations

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Develop PR concept			
	Select a professional PR agency			
	Consider setting up a virtual "Product News Bureau"			
	Send journalist to relevant conferences if the product is covered in the programme			
	Identify newsworthy items to develop a story			
	Prepare a press release and develop a press kit			
	Enlist a journalist to facilitate coverage of product in the professional media			
	Consider simultaneous advertisements in the respective journals			
	Monitor the media and check for product presence			
	Put press clippings about the product on the company intranet and the website for healthcare professionals			

14 Sales Force

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Develop draft for sales force deployment, training, performance measures, and incentive compensation jointly with national sales force manager			
	Prepare draft of training material based on material prepared by Global Marketing and the international branding guidelines			
	Ensure presence of "FAQs" (frequently asked questions) to effectively handle anticipated inquiries and objections			
	Discuss draft of training material with key sales reps, the medical department and external experts			
	Update draft to account for feedback			
	Print and distribute internal training material			
	Conduct a series of training meetings with sales reps to discuss draft of planned promotional material			
	Print approved promotional material			
	Discuss give-aways for doctors with sales reps			
	Regularly train and motivate the sales force			

15 Advertising

No	Action	Start by	Complete by	Person responsible
	Screen for agencies by checking the web, asking colleagues and managers, and consulting your external network			
	Ask agencies for references and check the references personally			
	Select 3 to 4 agencies for pitch			
	Invite selected agencies to pitch and send identical briefings			
	Coordinate schedules of various internal decision makers and agencies, then lock-in commitment for the event			
	Consider an external advisor ("a wise counsellor") who can offer independent guidance			
	As a team, decide on the agency you want to work with			
	Update briefing for agency, ask for rebriefing, highlight importance of global brand plan and jointly divide project into subprojects			
	Clarify people's objectives: "You are not in fine art, but here to help me generate sales"			
	Locate the creative people and ask them to attend important team meetings			
	Ask to see drafts before the final version			
	Incorporate some measure of performance to estimate the impact of your investment, such as visitors per webpage, response rates from advertisements with a direct response-element, number of email addresses collected from target groups			
	Get input from the sales force, senior management and the legal department before starting the real campaign and adjust accordingly			
	Initiate roll-out and listen to customer feedback on how to improve your activities			

16 Performance Measures

"What gets measured gets done"

- Management guru Tom Peters -

Here is a draft set of metrics and parameters to measure the performance of key activities in order to track progress on the road the success.

Non-financial parameters

- Number of publications as well as prestige of journal
- Prestige of the journal where the article was published
- Number of scientific presentation at major congresses
- Number of participants at satellite symposia
- Number of visitors at company booth at industry exhibition
- Customer satisfaction levels as determined by customer surveys
- Number of relevant press clippings resulting from public relations activities
- Response rate from advertisements with a direct response-element
- Various website metrics such as unique visitors per page and others
- Number of email addresses collected from target groups
- Total number of regional workshops
- Number of participants at regional workshops

Turn-over and financial parameters

- Number of prescriptions
- Market share
- Revenue
- Increase in revenue
- Annual cash flow
- Product contribution
- Return on investment