



Point of View

Preparing for Take-off

Best practices for leveraging the prelaunch phase wisely



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As America celebrated the 50th anniversary of Neil Armstrong’s “giant leap for mankind,” I found myself thinking about all the work that went into preparing for that day. While we’ve all heard about the rigorous training the crew had to undergo, I can only imagine the minutiae of every step that had to occur in the weeks, months, and even years leading up to the mission as teams planned and prepared for what may have seemed at times to be light years away.

Having worked on several new product launches in my career, I appreciate the immense amount of work required for success. I also believe it’s equally as important to anticipate any setbacks ahead of time that could potentially impact a product launch.

Every launch is unique. Teams face different challenges that must be overcome—but can gain key opportunities to capitalize upon. However, the prelaunch phase is probably the most critical time in every brand’s lifecycle.

Launch best practices provide a foundation to guide strategic decision-making under tight deadlines and pressure to “get it right.” Following these tried-and-true bits of wisdom allows client and agency teams to prepare early, have the right plan in place at approval, and be ready to quickly address any issues that arise along the way.

The prelaunch phase is the time for scenario planning.

This can be done in conjunction with advisory boards to identify the key value proposition for the brand and where the initial focus should be at launch. McKinsey has developed four steps to scenario planning that serve as a great jumping-off point in identifying any unforeseen challenges.

Four steps to scenario planning

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| 1. Identify key uncertainties—
both internal and external—that may occur at different phases of the process | 2. Prioritize each uncertainty
by estimating the potential level of impact and the probability that each uncertainty will occur | 3. Categorize and combine variables, and map them as an issue tree with the greatest root causes rising to the top | 4. Define mitigation plans—
proactive and reactive—that can be taken to address each risk, starting with those that would have the greatest impact and drive the greatest number of uncertainties |
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Scenario planning is a process that can be repeated right up until launch to make sure everything is on track.

The time before commercial launch is one filled with competing priorities and intense scrutiny of nearly every detail of the go-to market strategy. Studies have shown that the plans designed in this step are what sets the stage for the in-line sales curve. Hence, this is the time when you are analyzing the healthcare ecosystem; validating key stakeholder insights for HCP, patients, and payers; and aligning on key points of engagement for unbranded and branded programs. While each of those activities is absolutely critical, at Evoke, we encourage ourselves and our clients to use the prelaunch time to also ask, “what if” and “what else.”

The following three areas of exploration can help you uncover additional opportunity to set your brand up for success.



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1

DEMONSTRATE VALUE BEYOND THE PRODUCT'S ATTRIBUTES

According to research by Bain & Company, 40% of physicians' brand preference is attributable to customer experience factors beyond the product, such as how well pharma companies support physicians by providing answers to medical questions, identifying patients, and connecting physicians with peers. To meet these HCP needs, go beyond typical KOL advocacy and turn day-to-day prescribers into product evangelists. One way to accomplish this is to develop a robust customer experience map that highlights journey steps of stakeholders. Key questions to ask ourselves at this time include:

- What are the important "moments that matter" in our stakeholder's journey?
- What are the solutions our brand can provide during these key moments?

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2

ENSURE MARKETING EFFORTS DIFFERENTIATE THE BRAND FROM COMPETITION AND DRIVE ACTION

Whether you are entering a crowded space or are the first brand to market, it's important to differentiate and activate customers to drive action. Key questions to ask ourselves at this time include:

- Have we identified all potential differentiation areas of our drug and incorporated them into our messaging?
- Which interactions matter most for our target physicians, and do we provide a superior customer experience?

3

LET RESEARCH VALIDATE, OR RE-INVENT, CUSTOMER PRIORITIES AND MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Key questions to ask ourselves:

- What are the patient expectations?
- Which prescribers see the most value in the treatment, and who will endorse and prescribe early in a drug's lifecycle?

While there is no guaranteed formula for success, following these best practices can help ensure you are ready when the countdown to launch begins. When people look back at what your brand has accomplished, you'll be thankful for having completed this foundational work. To learn more about prelaunch and launch planning, speak with your Evoke Client Services lead or contact business@evokegroup.com.

1. How to Make Your Drug Launch A Success, Bain & Company, <https://www.bain.com/insights/how-to-make-your-drug-launch-a-success-invivo/>

2. Beyond the Storm: Launch Excellence in the New Normal, McKinsey & Company, https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/industries/healthcare%20systems%20and%20services/our%20insights/the%20secret%20of%20successful%20drug%20launches/beyond_the_storm_launch_excellence_in_the_new_normal.ashx

3. Evolving the Product Launch Paradigm: How to Successfully Manage a Product Launch to Maximise Returns, Deloitte, <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ch/Documents/life-sciences-health-care/ch-lshc-Pharma-Launch-paradigm.pdf>

4. The Secrets of a Successful Launch in Pharmaceuticals, C.E.L. for Pharma, <https://www.celforpharma.com/insight/secrets-successful-launch-pharmaceuticals>