



POINT OF VIEW

## Brand shaping is a like marathon: Purpose and stamina are a must



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A lot of time and research go into developing a launch marketing strategy. From scenario planning to market priming, and most importantly, identifying the brand's unique purpose, pharma marketers know the importance of the first year in market. Yet, most pharma brand planning is handled more like a sprint to prepare for day 1 or a speed drill at the end of each subsequent year beyond launch.

Approaching marketing more like a sprint instead of a distance run doesn't align with a product's lifecycle, especially in disease areas with lots of competition. Marketers should approach brand shaping in the same way the greatest athletes of our time train and compete in marathons.

### **Define the brand purpose beyond its core attributes—**

know why you're running the race in the first place

### **Lay the groundwork for constant evaluation, brand nourishment, and optimization—**

maintain the right pace to outrun the competition and finish strong

At Evoke, we recognize that going from theory to practice is the hard part. A solid place for a brand team to start is by allocating the right resources to evaluate business challenges, customer needs, and the competitive landscape long before the first year of seasonal brand planning ever starts. Then, to maintain energy long after initial launch, be prepared to evaluate the brand's purpose and even change it if needed.

Aligning on key performance indicators beyond initial launch planning can show if a brand is actually fulfilling the purpose it set out to achieve and create more effective reports with a more complete story. Looking at a monthly ATU report, talking with customers—both patients and HCPs—and establishing a sales force feedback loop for firsthand feedback, while also continuously evaluating channel behaviors, preferences, and intentions in concert with agency partners, can allow the brand team to more effectively allocate marketing dollars and resources to efforts that shape the approach as it unfolds.

By including a plan for consistent evaluation, optimization, and innovation in the operational readiness planning process prior to launch, the team can determine a more effective way to pivot its purpose and challenge assumptions based on what the data tells the team. Like running a marathon, the experienced athlete knows the course, visualizes the process, and plans for protein boosts at intervals to maintain the energy to finish stronger than the competition.



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**STEPS** to include in launch planning for steady momentum throughout the race:

### **1 Prioritize brand purpose and plan accordingly**

- Take the time to align on the strategic direction and evaluation criteria before launch.
- Plan before the product launch date for deep dive performance reviews and competitive evaluations at key intervals throughout the year.
- Prioritize objectives by what aligns most to the brand's core purpose, so the team and all partners can focus on what really matters.
- Evaluate phased approaches that build practical, smart tactics that are easier to maintain.

### **2 Condition the team to be measured, flexible, and focused**

- It's simply impossible to do everything great all at once—don't exhaust precious resources at launch, when momentum and energy is needed to set a brand up for long-term success.
- Invest in insights mining and analytics that will help prioritize and optimize efforts, and ultimately, more successfully drive customer loyalty.
- Don't be afraid to acknowledge when something is not working—allow room to fail early, adapt frequently, and admit quickly when a new direction must be explored.

### **3 Make culture count (because yes, it does matter)**

- Ensure internal leadership team is aligned with the need to evolve and pivot outside of the traditional brand planning season, and to stay the course at a steady pace.
- Make time to develop internal communications that champion the brand's purpose, efforts, and ultimate impact, so everyone can feel informed, a part of something big, and prepared to represent the brand everywhere they go.
- Leverage and inform reps because they are walking brand billboards—if reps know what's going on, especially on the patient side, they can more effectively direct conversations with HCPs.