

The special ones

Combining specialist products with specialist expertise, Basilea Pharmaceutica and VMC are hoping to build something extra special in the UK. Together they provide the latest example of how Account Management is emerging as the best approach to selling in the UK market.

As a turbulent 2007 draws to a close, one item has consistently dominated the agenda for pharmaceutical companies looking to access the UK market: NHS Reform. The government's radical overhaul of the health service has gathered pace in the last 12 months, and the challenge for pharma has been how it should adapt to the changing environment. Nowhere has this challenge been greater than in the sales arena.

The salesforce undoubtedly spends more time interacting with customers than any other aspect of a pharmaceutical organisation. In a changing NHS, however, the exact identity of those customers has shifted dramatically. Detailing to GPs is no longer the only game in town. Commissioners,

Prescribing Nurses, independent Pharmacists, Practice Managers, Public Health Directors and Prescribing Advisors are just some of the newer influences on prescribing. They each require different messages and a different approach.

Likewise, the advent of Foundation Trusts, Independent Sector Treatment Centres (ISTCs) and new healthcare service providers has meant that new customers now reside in a variety of locations away from the traditional GP surgery. The days of pharma's all-out attack on Primary Care are over. The NHS reform agenda is creating competition in the market, choice for the patient, and a challenge to the traditional UK sales model.

Account Management approach

In response, a number of companies have reviewed their sales strategies and begun to adopt an Account Management-led approach. This denotes a departure from old methodology where 'noise' and call frequency dominated and, in terms of field forces, bigger was better. Account Management is a recognition that new influences on prescribing exist and that a tailored approach to reaching all the key stakeholders within a local healthcare economy, beyond solely clinicians, is more beneficial.

An Account Management approach is slowly pervading the UK market and companies are gradually beginning to get to grips with it. Some companies, however,

are at a far more advanced stage. One such organisation is the Vacancy Management Company (VMC), who, as an established CSO and niche provider of interim resourcing solutions, was an early-adopter of the Account Management approach.

VMC has been building Account Management teams for mainstream UK pharma companies for well over a year. In the process, it has carved out a reputation as a leader in the field, particularly among new start-up companies with specialist products into the UK market. For example, its strategic partnership with the American based company Enturia to assist the UK launch of a unique skin preparation in the prevention of MRSA called ChloroPrep, has paid real dividends. When a company enters the UK market and has limited infrastructure it needs to have confidence it is in safe hands in relation to all aspects of its start up. VMC provides all of this from assisting in securing new offices, territory definitions, customer data and providing the team that will succeed and develop the platform for the company's growth in the UK. Now firmly established in the UK, Enturia's relationship with VMC has entered its second phase.

Basilea – a new commercial operation

More recently, VMC has been appointed as a strategic partner for Basilea Pharmaceutica, a Swiss

Basilea has previously focused on the discovery, research and development of new technologies. It is now a commercial organisation.



Fast facts

Basilea Pharmaceutica

- Swiss drug company, HQ in Basel
- Launched in 2002
- Employs around 190 people worldwide
- Fully integrated R&D organisation
- Late-stage portfolio contains treatments for bacterial and fungal infections, and skin disease.
- UK operations in Guildford

Claire Frost, Recruitment Manager & Sue Birch, General Manager, VMC



company that is now establishing commercial operations in the UK. With a late-stage product portfolio that includes novel treatments in Anti-Infective, Dermatology and Anti-Fungal therapy areas, Basilea is unique in that, as a start-up, it is poised to bring two new products to market. The products, an oral dermatology drug for patients with severe chronic hand dermatitis, and an I/V broad spectrum antibiotic for hospital-acquired infections, are due for launch in 2008.

"These are exciting times for Basilea," says Suzanne Wood, HR Director at the new, Guildford-based UK operations. "We are a start-up organisation, but with substantial financial backing from our parent company and an impressive product pipeline. For a start-up pharmaceutical company to have two products going for European licensing approval is significant."

Basilea was established in Switzerland over five years ago and has, until now, focused on the discovery, research and development of new technologies. "With two products so close to coming to market, Basilea is now ready to develop a commercial side to its organisation," says Suzanne. "Commercial affiliates are currently being established in Europe and the US."

The appointment of VMC to help nurture Basilea through the early process of becoming a

commercial operation is a significant one. "VMC is our strategic partner," says Suzanne. "We are in this together. They are helping us with the resourcing of our sales organisation. The Sales Director, Sales Managers, Key Account Managers and Product Managers will all emerge through this ongoing partnership. What's more, since our products are for secondary care – they are very specialist – they require a small team of Account Managers. The expertise of VMC in this process is crucial."

The fit between Basilea and VMC appears perfect. In the past 18 months, VMC has established and developed a strong expertise in building Account Management teams for start-up companies with products in specialist therapy areas. So what is it about VMC that has enabled it to build such a reputation? And how does this work for clients and candidates alike?

Three-way partnership

"We provide a very customised, consultative service for clients and candidates," says Sue Birch, General Manager at VMC. "It's a two-way process and, if we get it right, it builds a three-way partnership. For candidates, we speak in great depth to them about the types of roles we are recruiting. We compile a company brief giving them as much information as possible about the company and its vision, and set about matching candidates' aspirations with clients' needs, this

can mean extremely lengthy discussions / interviews." The Account Manager's role is a specialist one, and requires different skillsets to those of the traditional medical representative. "Account Managers need to be able to negotiate across all levels of the local healthcare community," says Sue. "What's more, they will be absolutely accountable for what is happening in their region and will need entrepreneurial skills and personality to be able to drive the business forward and take responsibility for it."

If candidates get a personal approach, so too do clients. "We don't provide 'off-the-peg' solutions or offer a one-size-fits-all approach, we start each project from a clean sheet of paper," says Sue. "It's not about providing a menu of services and asking clients to pick the one that suits best, we work with our clients to put a menu together, bespoke to them. This is exactly what we have done for Basilea."

In addition, as one customer commented "You are working on a day-to-day basis with the owners of the business and in that respect there is a high commitment from them to make things happen and the relationship is one of partnership not provider."

Strategic partners

VMC continues to offer the vacancy management solutions

Today's specials

Account Manager's skillsets:

- Ability to adapt skills to communicate at all levels
- In-depth knowledge of therapy area
- Good relationships with stakeholders on territory
- Entrepreneurial, accountable & self-motivated

that established it as a leading player in the CSO market. It still provides resourcing solutions for the essential maternity, long-term sick, secondment and try-before-you-buy contract positions. But its expansion into specialist areas has cemented its reputation as a forward-thinking, strategic partner for pharma.

Clearly, VMC's portfolio has been adapted to meet the demands of the new NHS and companies such as Basilea Pharmaceutica are poised to benefit from its expertise in the new art of Account Management.

Armed with the combination of Basilea's specialist products and VMC's specialist expertise, don't bet against them building something very special indeed.



If you wish to be considered for one of these fantastic opportunities with Basilea, please call VMC's office on 01420 82202 and speak to one of the recruitment department or visit www.vacancymgt.com to submit your C.V.