



Roy Carlisle of PharmaSolutions says mentoring may provide a means for you to maximise your marketing talent.

# Guiding the way

Let's face it. In today's Industry everybody is moving fast. The global pharmaceutical organisations and their shareholders want growth, delivery of objectives, return on investment and, to paraphrase (a cleaned up) Billy Connolly, they 'want it all, and they want it now.' This means that everyone needs to be focused on making sure that it happens as efficiently, profitably and quickly as possible. Which is fair enough. However, if the financial press is to be believed, it is also fair to say that not every company is meeting these investor expectations.

These commercial pressures mean that some far-sighted companies have begun to look critically at the training and development of their business teams, even down to country or affiliate product manager level. One of the most satisfying aspects of working in the Industry is seeing people for whom we have had line or training responsibility, become worthy holders of senior management roles.

Of course, many companies have long since recognised such critical success factors and major competency, leadership and marketing excellence development programmes abound. These are vital to the strategic development of shared marketing standards and metrics across the global organisation. As marketing expert Philip Kotler<sup>1</sup> has said, one of the ten deadly marketing sins for companies is 'not properly managing relationships,' including those with employees.

However, outside such programmes, willing line marketing and sales managers may not, in fact, have the time to invest in developing their direct reports to apply these and other processes in the day to day job. After all, the old adage of 'delivering through your people,' doesn't quite extend to training and development if the manager is sweating buckets in the cauldron of corporate and investor expectations of double-digit growth!

This is where a mentor may have a part to play. Often these mentors can be other managers within the organisation who can provide the wise counsel needed, but again time pressure can tend to make this rather an ad

hoc arrangement. The advantage of an external mentor is that they can tap into a rich and varied vein of Industry experience from which to make suggestions to the person being mentored.

The singular output of mentoring is that the employee will have the time to examine and consult all the options, or even think about new ones, with the mentor's guidance. However, ultimately they will have to learn to decide the best course of action for themselves. To illustrate this point, Marty Brounstein<sup>2</sup> suggests, with his tongue firmly in his cheek, that the origin of mentoring lies in Greek mythology: Ulysses (for this perhaps read marketing director) was going off to fight in the Trojan War (read global brand planning meeting) and turned to his friend, Mentor, to teach his son Telemachus (read struggling brand manager) to fend for himself. In other words, Telemachus was to be developed without direct line management input, and could make mistakes and learn for himself without the pressure of having to deliver for the boss! And so the first mentoring programme was created (apparently).

At this point, it may be useful to sort out a few definitions, highlighting the difference between training, coaching and mentoring.

Training:

- Tends to be whole job or whole task orientated, and concentrates on developing the trainee's professional skills and addressing any concerns; or
- Tends to work towards certain levels of attainment and objectives that, once achieved, demonstrate the individual's readiness to perform the job or task.

Coaching:

- Tends to be tightly focused on developing a certain skill or improvement in a certain task, for example selling skills, presentational skills or branding skills, to enable the person being coached to deliver an optimal performance; or
- May include quite specific line management directional guidance.

Finally, mentoring:

- Tends to be more in depth in terms of offering support and advice, and may include

interpersonal as well as professional skills and critical success factors relating to career development;

- May produce objectives with which the mentor can help the mentee by offering specific coaching and training.

However, it is the more challenging two-way discussion, rather than the 'here's how to do it' tutorial that separates mentoring from the other categories. By being open with the mentor in a confidential situation, the employee can be helped to increase their confidence, take the time out to learn effectively, critically self-appraise and see things differently. This may include understanding the big organisational picture, developing a more flexible and receptive attitude to learning and improvement, heightening their ability to critique different ideas and strategies, learning how to overcome obstacles and difficult situations, and improving and further developing marketing skills.

Mentoring should, therefore, not just be confined to the individual's personal growth, but should also cover development within their job role – helping them to learn how to be more effective in the business.

For example:

- Which issues in the planning/management of the brand need resolution?
- Where can we make an immediate impact?
- Where can we identify actions to improve future performance or where do you need further challenge in terms of problem solving on marketing issues?

### What does it all mean?

So what would the reaction be to someone with senior pharmaceutical management experience coming into your company and mentoring your product/marketing/sales managers? As an Industry head of training and development comments: 'We have run such a programme for our product managers for over a year now. We have seen an improvement both in their confidence and also in the quality of their work through setting their own objectives and understanding how all the elements of our company need to align to make the plan happen.'

However, the final word should be left to a product manager who is currently being mentored. 'I have really learnt a lot from being challenged by my mentor about why I took a certain course of action in the past and why I was planning other actions in the future. In the flat-out daily toil, it's been great to have structured time to really analyse how I can become more effective in my job. One of the best aspects of mentoring is being able to run my thoughts past someone who is genuinely trying to help me develop my skills and future career prospects.'

In the end, it's all about making sure that

### Tips for Mentees

- Be open with your mentor to gain maximum benefit, advice and support
- Have faith and trust in your mentor
- Be realistic in your expectations
- Accept challenge willingly
- Be prepared to be asked to do the thinking about next steps
- Be positive about yourself and your ability
- Take time out to think about your development
- Be prepared to take some risks
- Be prepared to set the agenda for your mentoring



your organisation maximises its talent. As Tom Peters says:<sup>3</sup> 'Talent: Attract it. Nurture it. Mentor it. Reward it. Create the context in which it can thrive.'

Well, you couldn't say fairer than that to those demanding investors could you?

Or maybe they need some mentoring! ▲

#### References

1. Philip Kotler (2004) 10 Deadly Marketing Sins, Wiley
2. Marty Brounstein (2000) Coaching & Mentoring for Dummies, Wiley
3. Tom Peters (2003) ReImagined, Doring Kindersley

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