

LAUNCH CODE

The industry's most-successful product launches share common strategies in the planning and development stages. BY STEVE NILES

Successful new drug launches result from early planning and a well-differentiated product that wastes no time in reaching the market once approved. In 2004, the most successful products in terms of first full-year sales came in a wide range of therapeutic categories, including depression, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, rheumatoid arthritis, HIV, and cholesterol.

Topping the list of best-selling products in their first full year on the U.S. market in 2004 was **Wellbutrin XL**, which generated \$851 million in U.S. sales. Three other new drugs surpassed the \$500 million level in their first full year on the U.S. mar-

ket: Lilly's **Strattera**, Abbott's **Humira**, and AstraZeneca's **Crestor**. An erectile-dysfunction drug, **Cialis**, was among the top 10 most-successful U.S. product launches. Also making the list were Bristol-Myers Squibb's **Reyataz**, Genentech/Novartis/Tanox's **Xolair**, AstraZeneca's **Iressa**, MGI Pharma's **Aloxi**, and Millennium's **Velcade**.

To ensure the success of a product launch, marketers should begin planning as early as possible in the drug's development process. Smaller companies will typically begin thinking about launch around Phase I, when a drug begins its clinical trials. Larger companies, typically top 10 companies, with more advanced market-

ing organizations and more resources, are able to start looking ahead to the marketing and commercialization aspects earlier in the development stage.

"What we've seen in our research and working with a lot of these companies is that they're able to start in preclinical development," says Jon Hess, senior analyst, **Cutting Edge Information**. "Before they even get to clinical trials, they're starting to put together some market research, on a relatively basic level, to look at what the competitive landscape for that drug might look like."

Companies with successful product launches have marketing organizations

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TOP 10 DRUGS First full-year sales in 2004

Brand	2004 U.S. sales
1. Wellbutrin XL	\$851 million
2. Strattera	\$656 million
3. Humira	\$555 million
4. Crestor	\$543 million
5. Reyataz	\$306 million
6. Cialis	\$207 million
7. Xolair	\$189 million
8. Iressa	\$176 million
9. Aloxi	\$159 million
10. Velcade	\$143 million

ANTHROPOLOGY NOT JUST FOR ACADEMIA

Insights that emerge from ethnography can form the basis of innovative product concepts, providing a competitive edge for pharmaceutical marketers. BY GINA-LOUISE MONARI

Pharmaceutical marketers who seek a competitive advantage for their brands are embracing ethnographic research. By observing patients and patient-doctor relationships in a more natural environment, marketers can obtain better knowledge about patients, physicians, and their actions. Among those that are applying this research methodology are **AstraZeneca** and health-care advertising agencies such as **MBS/Vox** and **Flashpoint Medica**. Pharmaceutical companies are realizing the benefits of ethnography with regard

to prescription decision-making, compliance, doctor/patient relationships, and medical devices. Barriers to implementing ethnographic research have included tradition, lack of knowledge about the benefits the research provides to brands, and lack of resources and direction on the client side. Networks such as **Omnicom Group Inc.** are educating pharmaceutical clients on how to best implement this research methodology. Despite the challenges, experts say an interest is growing among pharmaceutical companies.

Ethnography, not to be confused with

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LESS FREE WITH SAMPLES

Although sampling can help generate new prescriptions, pharmaceutical companies need to fix costly inefficiencies; e-sampling and vouchers are two techniques being examined. BY ERIC LADLEY

Cost-conscious pharmaceutical companies want to reform sampling, an inefficient but necessary practice that adds up to billions of dollars each year for the industry. E-sampling and vouchers have emerged as two ways to fix the sampling system, but they will not replace traditional sales calls as a way of promoting products to physicians. Sales calls, although expensive, will continue to be the most-favored technique because they remain the best way of reaching physicians and generating new prescriptions. Many physicians are uncomfortable with technology and dealing with a person, meaning that they will avoid or seldom use e-sampling. Vouchers can turn off consumers who like to receive samples immediately from the doctor's office. As a result of these drawbacks, pharmaceutical compa-

U.S. physician e-sampling use

Daily	17%
Twice per month or more	38%
Once a month or less	41%
Never	3%

Source: Datamonitor (datamonitor.com)

nies may favor non-Internet-based ways to improve sampling. Simply reducing the number of samples sent out and the size of the sales force could help by limiting unused samples and easing pressure on doctor's offices.

More than 1 billion samples were distributed by pharmaceutical manufacturers in 2004 and represented the largest

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Anthropology

from cover

ethnic or multicultural marketing, refers to a research approach that comes from academic social and cultural anthropology. Traditionally a successful consumer market-research tool, pharmaceutical clients have begun to take a serious look at the benefits ethnographic research can provide for their brands.

According to Tom Harrison, chairman and CEO, **Diversified Agency Services** (dasglobal.com), the Omnicom network has been involved in ethnographic research surrounding the launch of new products, understanding what patient and physician perceptions are around new products and how brands might be prescribed.

"Ethnographic research is a very important avenue to get insight around how and why people do what it is that they do, and create insight that is much deeper and more informational than what traditional run-of-the-mill focus group market research can provide," Mr. Harrison told *Med Ad News*.

Mr. Harrison is a firm believer in cultural anthropological research. Because cultural anthropologists understand how people think and the cultural underpinnings of why people make the choices they make, these experts can determine why some patients take all their medication on the exact hour that they are supposed to, and why other patients with the same condition will consistently miss taking their medicines.

"I've been in so many focus groups in my career where at the end of the day, the leader of the market research says, 'And this is what we think,' they never say, 'Well, this is what we know, and by the way, because we do think this, we think you need

to do yet another study,'" Mr. Harrison told *Med Ad News*. "Well, that's just playing the pain as far as I am concerned, and cultural anthropologic research is going to get the insight right the first time and be done with it."

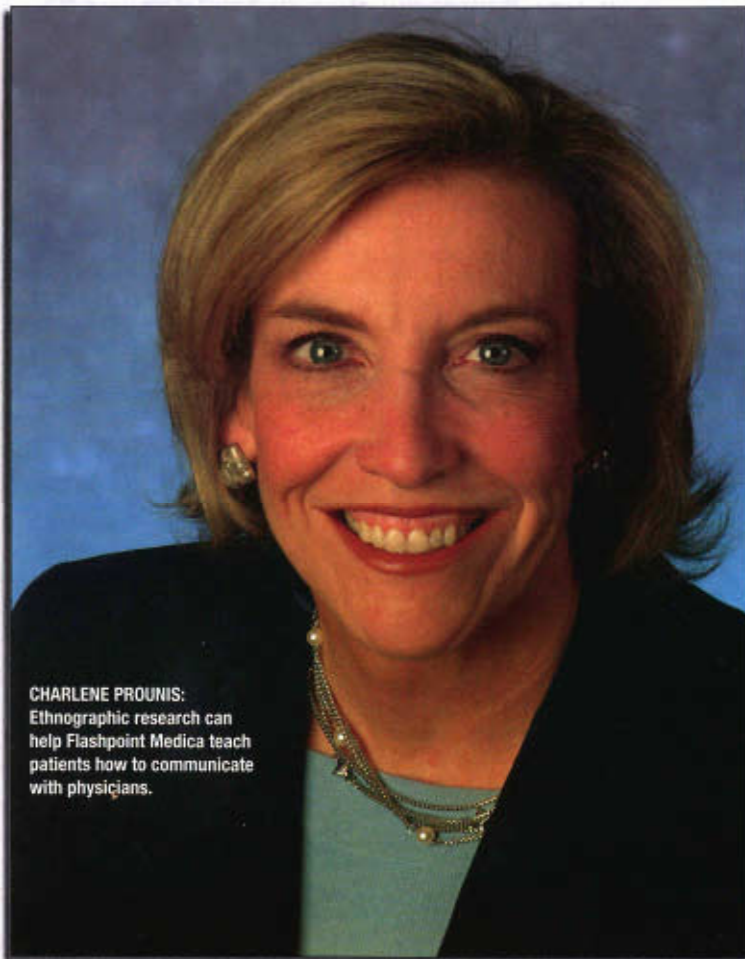
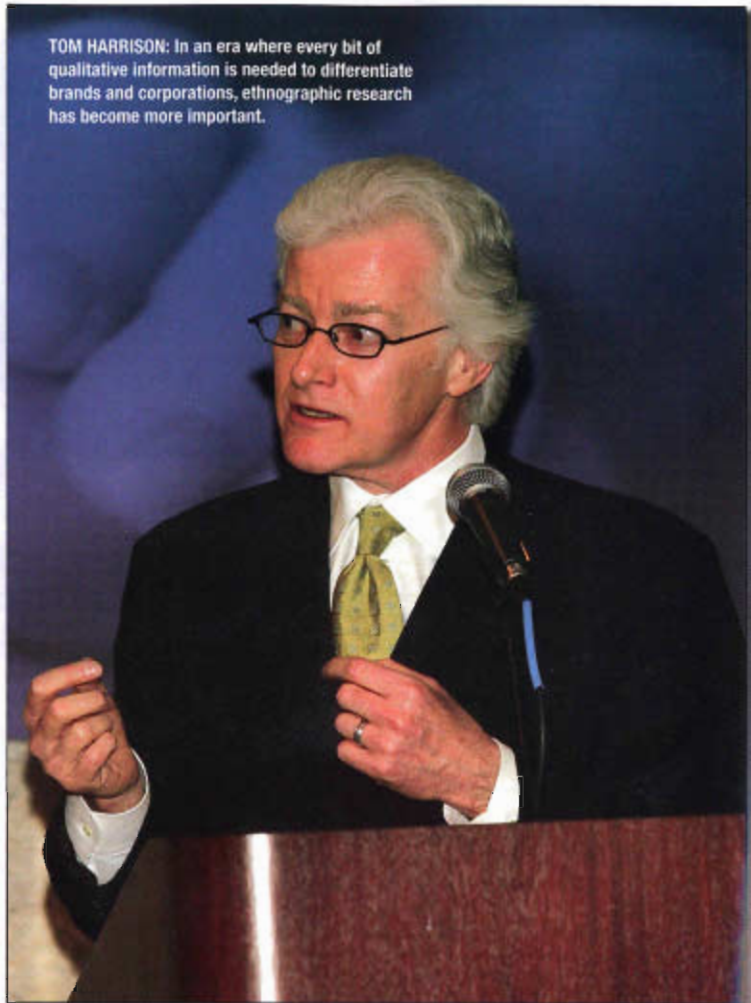
Omnicom agencies have done ethnographic work in the area of patient compliance and persistency in asymptomatic diseases, such as hypertension or hypercholesterolemia, and chronic conditions such as diabetes. In the area of terminal illnesses, Omnicom has focused ethnographic research on how patients facing cancer therapy make the decisions about choices of drugs, drug classes, and the prescribing habits of physicians. The network is in the process of hiring an on-staff cultural anthropologist for Diversified Agency Services.

According to business-research company **NOP World** (nopworld.com), the tools and techniques of ethnographic research focus on parts of the health-care field that have often been less thoroughly studied, such as doctor/patient conversations, patients' mental models of their conditions and treatment options, and the larger context of undiagnosed, not treated, and noncompliant patients. Pharmaceutical companies are beginning to work with ethnographic researchers to fill the gaps that traditional qualitative and quantitative research has not.

"Ethnography is a methodology," says Rick Robinson, Ph.D., global director, ethnography and observational practice, NOP World (nopworld.com). "Ethnography is an approach to understanding human behavior and the systems that give form to that behavior, or the reasons behind why people act and interact in certain ways, why they use certain things.

"Given that ethnography is a set of

TOM HARRISON: In an era where every bit of qualitative information is needed to differentiate brands and corporations, ethnographic research has become more important.



CHARLENE PROUNIS: Ethnographic research can help Flashpoint Medica teach patients how to communicate with physicians.

ideas about human behavior and a handful of techniques people can use to study those sort of behaviors, there are almost endless applications."

For at least the past 20 years, ethnography has been applied in business and professional research communities. According to NOP World, large-scale epidemiological studies and multinational comparative studies are examining the ways in which patients and physicians think about treatment, expectations, roles, assumptions, biases, and other sociocultural factors. These issues are being used as topics of investigation and explanatory elements.

The commercial benefits of ethnographic research include offering a different view compared with traditional market research applied in conventional sterile environments.

"Understanding the patient experience is absolutely critical to developing successful marketing communications in the industry in general," says Ari Shapiro, Ph.D., research director, Hall & Partners Healthcare (hall-and-partners.com). "What ethnography offers that traditional qualitative research doesn't is an opportunity to focus on particular kinds of relevant questions in greater detail."

Ethnographic techniques can include semiotics, informal observations, guerilla research, participant observation, formal observations site/situation, shadowing, interviews, ethnographic interviews, touring, debriefs, self-documentation, as well as diaries, video diaries/visual stories, and beeper studies.

Semiotics is an analysis of symbolic systems, representations, tropes, and their uses. Conversation analysis can be used to look at individual conversations at var-

ious levels, including tone of voice, inflection, gesture, body language, and subcultural references.

Some health-care ad agencies have set up their own ethnographic research capabilities for pharmaceutical clients. MBS/Vox, a consultancy company that is part of the **CommonHealth** group of companies, specializes in physician-patient communications. CommonHealth (commonhealth.com) is a **WPP** Group (wpp.com) company. MBS/Vox has linguistic experts and anthropologists on staff and uses consultants or thought leaders that have implemented and published ethnographic studies.

According to Joe Gattuso, partner and president, MBS/Vox, the two main techniques used at the agency include traditional ethnography with observer participants and a study called *Managing the Dialogue*. *Managing the Dialogue* involves videotaping actual physician-patient visits as well as separate post-doctor-visit interviews with the patient and the doctor. These videotapes are then transcribed and analyzed.

"When we compare the doctor's vision of what happened and the patient's vision of what happened against what really happened, a lot of times we get what sounds like three different visits because they've obviously heard and taken away different things," Mr. Gattuso told *Med Ad News*.

Flashpoint Medica was founded in March by industry veterans Risa Bernstein, Charlene Prounis, and Helen Appelbaum under the Omnicom (omnicomgroup.com) banner. The name Flashpoint illustrates the agency's approach to marketing a brand. Brand teams want a series of flashpoints, or the moment when something ignites, to be identified at key junctures along a prod-

uct's life cycle to ignite growth, managers say. Agency managers plan to leverage these critical moments to reshape a product's sales trajectory.

Flashpoint Medica plans to provide clients with tools to strengthen the interaction between doctors and sales representatives, and doctors and patients. Pharmaceutical companies want to improve the perceived value of these relationships, and the agency plans to open the channels of communication. The agency plans to use ethnography to examine the area of doctor/patient communications.

"Our approach is to help the patient learn how to speak in the doctor's language," says Ms. Prounis, co-president and managing partner, Flashpoint Medica

(flashpointmedica.com). "That is something that ethnographic research could actually help uncover — in terms of how do patients speak to physicians, and do they actually hear their questions and then when patients are listening to doctors, are they hearing what they have to say to them."

Ms. Prounis believes that an ethnographer can help assess problems and make recommendations by understanding the language and how patients and physicians approach issues and problems. Ethnographic research provides physicians more of an understanding of who their patients are and enables doctors to determine what needs to be said to specific patients.

"The one thing that we do know is there's a real disconnect between the doc-

tor and the patient," Ms. Prounis told *Med Ad News*. "The doctor will tell us, 'There's no time, I can't change, this is the way I am, I understand that I should be talking longer to the patients but there is no time.' Sometimes it's not how long they talk but it's the style in which they speak."

Although the agency does not plan to hire a full-time staff anthropologist, Flashpoint Medica does have access to an expert who is acting as a consultant to the agency.

Published reports say AstraZeneca (astrazeneca.com) used ethnography to better understand how consumers used the company's products. AstraZeneca worked with market-research company **Integrated Marketing Associates** (imalink.com)

to interview 15 patients using a particular product from the company's respiratory franchise. According to published reports, managers had their own perceptions of how consumers were using the company's brands, and with this market research they were able to check to see if people were using the medications the way the company intended.

Dr. Shapiro says because traditional ethnographic research takes researchers into the homes of patients, this gives researchers the opportunity to interact with the participants over a longer period of time. Researchers can follow stories as they unfold, potentially visiting patients multiple times, during a longer period of time.

"You're seeing how their knowledge changes, you're seeing how their health changes, you're seeing how their relationship with physicians change during a period of time, and it gives you a closer and more accurate read on prescription decision making," Dr. Shapiro told *Med Ad News*.

The pharmaceutical industry can use ethnography to improve communications targeting and message effectiveness, according to Allan Steinmetz, CEO and founder, **Inward Strategic Consulting** (inwardconsulting.com), a dynamic management-consulting company. Companies will need to learn how to conduct this kind of research and use the research to their advantage. Companies can also turn to several syndicated market-research companies and consumer advertising agencies that have ethnographic panels to provide key insights.

According to Mr. Harrison, tradition, lack of knowledge about how this research can benefit a company's brand, and upfront costs seem to be the biggest barriers to using ethnographic research.

"We're trying to overcome the barriers by educating the clients on what cultural anthropologic research is and then the value of the anthropologic research," Mr. Harrison told *Med Ad News*. "We have to show them case studies and explain to them the difference and how we get to the data, how we get to the insight, how we get to the truth."

Breaking the language barrier is another challenge that needs to be overcome. According to Dr. Shapiro, certain individuals understand that the scientific medical model for understanding illness and disease, patient life cycles, and treatment algorithms is much different compared with how patients understand these issues.

"It can be a challenge when you're actually faced with a patient who refuses a life-saving therapy or a patient who — educate them as you might — still does not understand the difference between therapy A, therapy B, and therapy C," Dr. Shapiro told *Med Ad News*. "It can be a challenge because the pharmaceutical industry is populated by doctors, populated by people who understand things through the medical lens and not necessarily through a patient's lens."

Mr. Harrison believes that the pharmaceutical industry will embrace ethnographic research in its marketing efforts.

"This is an industry like every industry," Mr. Harrison says. "There are early adopters, there are traditionalists, and there are the ones that will come on board after everybody else in the world has done it. [Ethnographic research] is going to be picked up in exactly the same way. A year from now most of the companies will be using ethnography, and those that are not using ethnography won't be as competitive as those that are using it. □

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