Positioning the CEO as the Face of the Corporation and the Chief Communicator of Its Message

A Case History of Pfizer and Global HIV/AIDS

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- Pfizer was able to change public opinion about how pharmaceutical companies are perceived in the Global HIV/AIDS crisis.

- Our CEO, Hank McKinnell, put a human face on compassionate but active HIV/AIDS response through his actions – actions leveraged through skillful communications.

- This change in attitude gives us hope that we can alter our current poor image in developing-nation-markets and regain public trust.

"If you are perceived as part of the problem, you will be treated as part of the problem."

"If you are perceived as part of the solution, you will be welcomed as a partner in the solution."

– Hank McKinnell, Chairman and CEO, Pfizer Inc

The Research-Based Pharma Industry and the Global HIV/AIDS Crisis

- “Perceived as part of the problem” – patent/IP issues dominated dialogues, overshadowed progress in new treatments.
- “Why aren’t they listening?” – messages not working.
- “Hey, let’s sue Nelson Mandela!” – allowed legal cases to overcome common sense.
- “Feel the fallout” – even companies not involved in HIV/AIDS were taking fire from activists/governments.

Hank McKinnell/Pfizer Chairman and CEO

- Only 12th Pfizer chairman in our 156-year history.
- First since Emile Pfizer born outside of U.S., first ever to build his career through international operations.
- “Grew up” in Pfizer’s Africa/Middle East Group.
- Determined to change perceptions of research-based pharma companies on HIV/AIDS.

2001-2002: Forging a Base for Action

- Suing Nelson Mandela isn't a good idea: helped broker end of lawsuit.
- Diflucan: Removed irritant by launching Diflucan Initiative.
- Patents: Made it clear that we would not enforce patent rights for critical medicines.
- McKinnell named to President's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS, only pharma executive so named.
- Joined UN Global Compact: first US pharma company to do so.
- "No one can solve this alone – but through partnership, we can make progress."

2003-2004: New Initiatives/Public-Private Partnerships

- Pfizer Global Health Fellows: sending our people to the front lines.
- Infectious Disease Institute: Pfizer partnership for major additional to African health care infrastructure.
- Southern States HIV/AIDS Prevention Initiative: supporting grassroots efforts in heavily affected regions.
- Vast expansion of Diflucan Initiative.
- Ryan White/Medicaid HIV/AIDS medicine price freezes/lobbying.
- 2004: Brokered new TRIPS agreement on critical medicines.

2005: Moving to a Larger Stage

- 15th HIV/AIDS Congress: First pharma company CEO to address general assembly.
- Tsunami Relief: Asked by US government to coordinate relief in Indonesia.
- South Asia Earthquake Relief: Appointed by President to CEO group for relief fund-raising.
- Emerging Message: We support investment in prevention, wellness, early diagnosis and aggressive treatment.
- Book: A Call to Action

Continuing/Next Steps

- Entry into global HIV/AIDS market: maraviroc.
- Recasting of Pfizer health benefits: Healthy Directions
- Promoting investment in prevention/wellness – cost of disease over cost of care.
- Supporting access for those who cannot afford medicines: Partnership for Prescription Access/Helpful Answers.

What Have We Learned

- Change is possible but it takes concerted effort over long time.
- CEO charisma can’t overcome bad policies or messages.
- Some people won’t be won over.
- Behind the scenes work as important as work on global stage.
- Positioning a charismatic CEO has risks/drawbacks
- HIV/AIDS is still a huge global threat, but world’s eyes have been opened.