



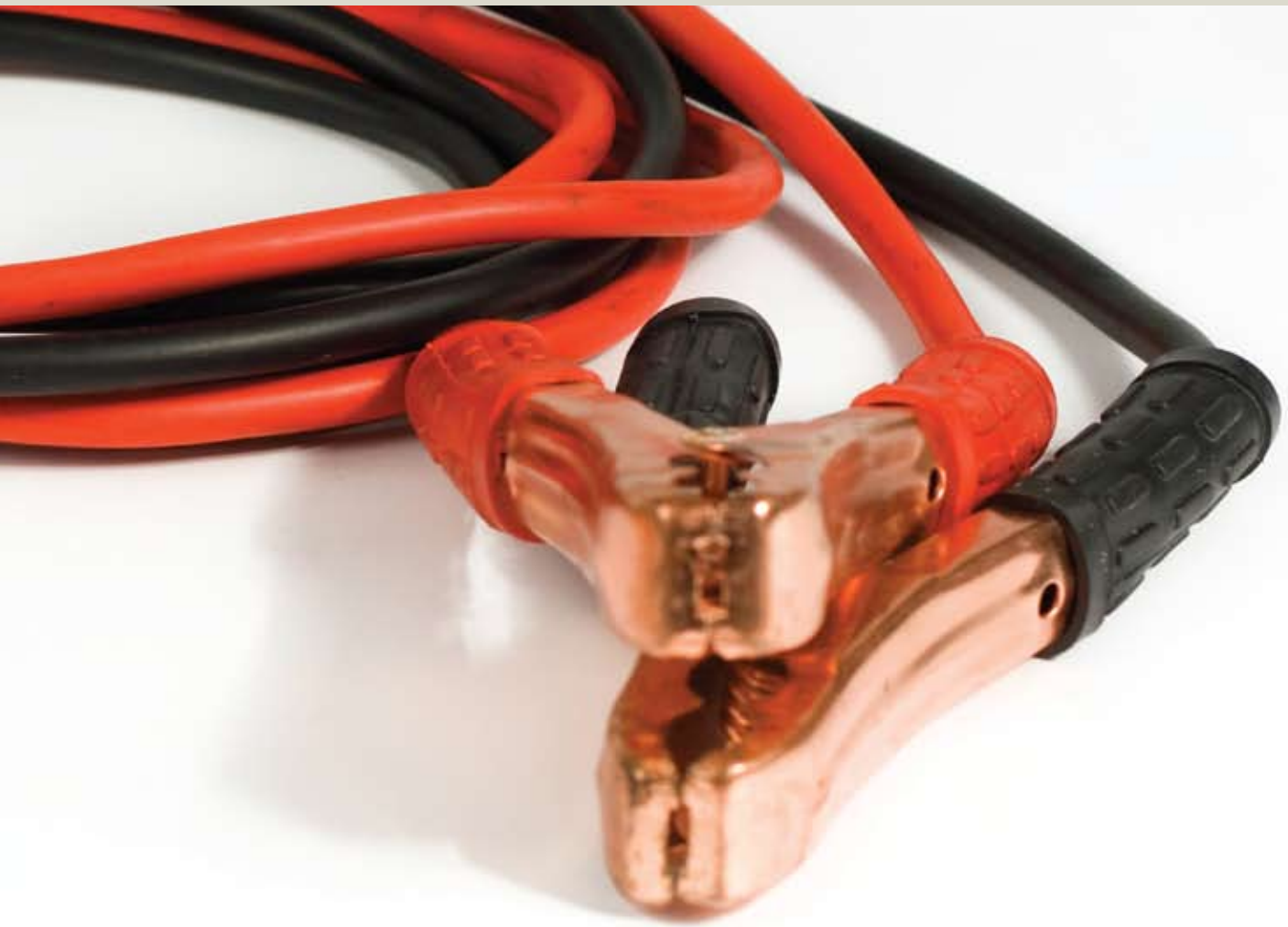
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**CAMILLE DESANTIS** and **MARIA CASINI**,  
Co-Presidents of Guard Dog, talk about the  
commercialization of science: **The value  
of early integration of brand identity  
development into product development**

# Jumpstart on Branding



**Future Pharmaceuticals** Within new life sciences companies, it is often seen that the scientists — who have been hard at work developing the products — form the foundation of the initial management team. **Does this create any challenges to the commercialization of the science?**

**Camille DeSantis** This creates what we call the 'asymmetric information dynamic.' It's only natural that a life sciences company's senior scientists will know more than the average stakeholder about the value of the product in development. The problem is that being scientists they are typically not experienced or trained to think about their scientific work within a business framework.

**FP Is the asymmetric information dynamic cause for problems?**

**Maria Casini** Having a different perspective can lead to devaluation of the product by analysts

and subsequently investors because they won't understand or appreciate the value of the product if only the science attributes are presented to them. For start-up companies this devaluation of the product could also have a negative halo effect devaluing the company itself. This asymmetric dynamic really needs to be balanced, as commercialization of life sciences products require large amounts of capital.

**FP Wouldn't the science be the most important news to convey to investors?**

**CD** Clearly science cannot be ignored, but it is a question of balance. Investors are not particularly interested in scientific value, but rather earning a return on their investments. So to earn this return, the market really needs to perceive the product's value and be willing to use that product, resulting in sales and revenue generation down the line. To the investor, the product's true value is based on its market potential, and

this needs to be communicated very clearly, and in terms that will resonate with them.

**FP** Many start-up life sciences companies, and some larger ones, do not initiate brand development until the product is in Phase III. **Is this timing correct?**

**MC** The ideal time to begin brand development is much earlier — as early as Phase I and certainly by Phase II. Brand identity development is an amalgam between brand identity strategy and strategic brand design and both play key roles in helping top scientists convey the true value of the products that they've dedicated so much of their time and efforts towards developing.

**FP** What are the components of brand identity strategy that can be developed at such an early stage?

**CD** Brand identity consists of positioning, archetype and value proposition, and to develop

## JUMPSTART ON BRANDING



these three components, the initial work must include a competitive audit, a market assessment and customer profiling. Market research is critical at this phase. One of the main reasons companies experience difficulty in finding investment capital is that insufficient attention is given to this important process upfront. This evaluation is mainly done by a non-scientist to ensure that the product makes sense in a commercial setting. It also identifies the terminology that will form the basis for critical conversations with the non-scientist stakeholders, such as investors, potential partners of the company, physicians, and ultimately patients. A unique lexicon for the brand will be developed during this phase as well, and that will resonate with key stakeholders to help them better appreciate the value of the product, even at these early stages in development. This is also an ideal time to create a generic name for the product and to begin the process of developing a trade name.

This work is critical because rather than talking with investors about the science of a product, we're sharing general disease incidence and prevalent statistics. Company executives can clearly explain their strategy for gaining market share and this is more motivating as it will translate directly into the potential return on the investment, and this will make the conversation more satisfying for everyone involved.

### **FP** And what about the science itself? Is how the science becomes visual important?

**MC** Strategic brand design of the mechanism of action of the product is critical to communicating its value. Investors will glance at the science, and very often it is the science that makes the product unique, but by visualizing the mechanism of action, we create clear, concise and readily understandable messaging across key stakeholder audiences. If only top scientists can understand

**“THE PROCESS OF BRAND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IS LIKE THE DRUG DEVELOPMENT PROCESS ITSELF AND IS CONDUCTED IN PHASES.”**

– Camille DeSantis

the mechanism of action, the value of the product will never be appreciated. So it is critical to simplify the mechanism of action and conduct market research with key stakeholder audiences to ensure that the mechanism is not only readily understood, but also the value of it is appreciated within the context of that therapeutic category.

### **FP** The process seems almost scientific in nature. Is the process really that rigorous?

**CD** The process of brand identity development is like the drug development process itself and is conducted in phases. When brand development begins as early as Phase I, it gives start-up companies and even late-stage companies a jumpstart to create early experiences of their products that begin to build strong, singular brand identities and images within the hearts and minds of their key stakeholders. The process is rigorous and it is very effective.

### **FP** What three key ideas about brand identity development would you offer to top scientists with a novel product in Phase I?

**CD** The first of three key takeaways for every early stage company or even later stage companies that have a product in Phase I or even early Phase II is that the science alone is not motivating, and developing a brand identity strategy that can be clearly communicated to key stakeholder groups, both verbally and visually, will pave the way to the successful commercialization of the science.

**MC** The second of the three key takeaways is that brand identity development is a rigorous multi-phase process. Each phase is critical and necessary even if there are limited funds for early brand identity development, the process should still consist of the same steps, but we recommend that the clients alter the depths of the steps rather than skip a critical step in the process.

**CM** The last of the three key takeaways would be to not delay incorporating brand identity development until Phase III. Early brand development can help companies improve the valuation of their products upfront among all their key stakeholder audiences. It's very important not to delay this process because you will be constantly playing catch-up in communicating with your key audiences. **FP**



**CAMILLE DESANTIS** is the Co-President and Managing Partner, Brand Strategy and Client Services, Guard Dog Brand Development. Ms. DeSantis has 25 years of award-winning experience in clinical practice and healthcare brand development, creative direction, marketing, market research, medical education, interactive, public relations, and developing branded materials for both professional and consumer audiences. She has held senior brand strategy, creative, and management positions at prestigious agencies including Edelman and BioScience Communications; Accel Healthcare Communications, an Omnicom group company, and the Grey Healthcare Group. Ms. DeSantis is the creator of numerous brand development processes, including the proprietary and proven brand identity process called GUARD.



**MARIA CASINI** with over 23 years of branding, advertising, and design communications experience, Maria Casini, Co-President and Managing Partner, Strategic Brand Design, Guard Dog Brand Development, applies her proven brand-building expertise, working with clients to exceed expectations and get results. Her consumer approach to professional advertising has led to an impressive career with creative management positions in prestigious pharmaceutical communications agencies including Grey Healthcare Group and Bates Healthworld. Ms. Casini has significant experience with consumer brands from Procter and Gamble, such as Olay, Aveve, and Nyquil, and has communicated the benefits of those brands visually to both a consumer and professional medical audience.