



PATHS TO PHARMA

The road to a successful career in healthcare marketing can be a long and winding one, and is often fraught with questionable positions such as toilet cleaner, news anchor and Tom Cruise's PA. **James Chase** looks at the journeys of seven executives who made it

THE VIDEO TECHNICIAN



Joe Shields, Product director, Enbrel, Wyeth BioPharma

Time in the industry: 11 years, 3 years with Wyeth

Original career plan: Communications, mainly TV & film

Previous jobs: Freelance video technician, writer & producer/director; manager of multi-media studio (within a specialty chemical

company); global marketing communications manager (within a specialty chemical company); manager, employee/sales communications (Astra Merck); manager, merger communications (Astra Pharmaceuticals); senior manager, external affairs (AstraZeneca); healthcare strategist, interactive agency; senior manager, e-promotions & consumer marketing (AZ); leader, emerging business technologies (AZ)

How did you enter the industry?

In 1997, I answered an ad in the newspaper for a communications manager at Astra Merck. I had hoped to learn more about how to do product management, after hearing that there was an abundance of both marketing resources and talent in pharmaceuticals.

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

At one point I wanted to write a book called, *All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Film Production*. The dynamics of making films teach many lessons: how to identify, assemble and manage the talent required for a specific project, even if that project only lasts one day; how to truly appreciate diversity, since each person is selected for the crew for their specific skills and experience, and that good ideas come from everywhere; how to ensure a quality product, and enforce quality standards among the entire team; and make swift decisions and communicate them broadly, since the entire operation grinds to a halt if the direction is unclear at the top. With the integration of the Internet and video, I think my previous experience will continue to serve me well.

Ever think you'd be working in healthcare marketing?

I will likely never discover a new medicine or build a manufacturing line. My strengths are simplifying the complex and helping organizations communicate with their constituents through authentic stories. My father died of a heart attack when I was eight years old, and I believe this eventually led me into healthcare. The purpose and the content of what I do with my work life is as important to me as the way that I go about it.

What have you gotten out of the industry?

Some of the smartest and most dynamic people in business today work in healthcare marketing, and knowing this pushes me to keep up with them. Every day is a different challenge and I feel this industry has made me a much better marketer.

What has surprised you most about it?

Nothing brings a hush over a room quite like a patient telling her personal story of fighting a disease. It's truly humbling to hear about people trying to live ordinary lives while overcoming extraordinary difficulties brought on by illness. Real life is always more powerful than fiction. So when people say that "healthcare is different," I now know exactly what they mean. Often the work we do has the potential to change someone's life for the better. I take that responsibility very seriously.

What would you have done differently?

Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple, said that one's choices make perfect sense only when looking backward. I think he's right.

THE ONLINE NEWS EDITOR



Chris Schroeder, CEO and president, The HealthCentral Network

Time in the industry: 3 years, all with HealthCentral, although I've covered online health issues in the news business for nearly a decade

Original career plan: I wanted to play for the Mets until I faced my first 95 mph fastball. Then I wanted to run a media/information business and occasionally enter public service. I studied history,

which teaches you all you need to know about human nature.

Previous jobs: To help pay for school expense I did sales for a men's clothes store, managed an ice cream shop, washed toilets at college and was a science librarian. It prepared me for the internet, where individuals control all their information and communication. I ran all the online businesses for *The Washington Post* and *Newsweek*

How did you enter the industry?

I lost some incredibly close people to health issues and found that finding people online who'd been through the same situations was immeasurably helpful, funny and inspiring.

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

A thousand, mostly from mistakes. But I also served briefly as a staffer to the secretary of state when the Berlin Wall fell, Nelson Mandela was released, the Soviet Union collapsed, Chinese dissidents quote Jefferson in the streets—I learned that, that which we take for granted as a norm may turn on its head in an instant.

What have you gotten out of the industry?

Patience and fortitude, F.H. LaGuardia's motto. I also have learned a ton from people who get up in the morning and go to bed again having saved people's lives. Biotech and pharma have had a huge impact on people's lives. And most of the marketers I now know as friends are proud of this.

What has surprised you most about it?

How deep and long the path is for many health marketers to embrace what is clearly a God-send to them. Hundreds of thousands of conversations are happening out there online on their products. The decision not to enter the fray is a decision to not be where audiences care. It will change. It just will take longer.

What would you have done differently?

1,000 things from 1,000 mistakes. But always the most important is having the best people in the right roles and fit.

THE SECURITIES ANALYST

Charlotte Sibley, SVP, leadership development/talent management, Shire

Time in the industry: 30 years, 3.5 at Shire

Original career plan: I majored in French and German at Middlebury College and intended to go to Yale for a PhD—and then become a college professor of French literature

Previous jobs: Pushed drugs on 42nd Street (market research manager at Pfizer); market research for Hot Instant Meals (at Lipton); Wall Street—securities analyst for the drug industry; market research for various drug and device sectors; led teams in business development at Pharmacia, Millennium and Shire

How did you enter the industry?

Interest in science (even though I was not a science major); interest in focusing on the “steak” more than the “sizzle”; and interest in understanding needs of physicians and other HCPs. A lot of my MBA classmates thought it was weird. Most were going into investment banking, management consulting or consumer marketing. One said to me: “You’re going to Fizzer? What kind of a company is that?” I said: “It’s Pfizer and it’s a pharmaceutical company.” “Farma? Like an agricultural company?” “No, a drug company,” I replied. He just looked puzzled and said, “Why?”

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

Marketing research taught me how to frame an issue and determine the real objective. Strategic forecasting requires identifying the key events that will have a significant impact—and quantifying the impact of such events. Competitive intelligence helps me think about the broader landscape and competitive response.

What have you gotten out of the industry?

The satisfaction of helping people develop and grow so they can develop great medicines.

What has surprised you most about it?

How we have missed so many opportunities to convey our value to all stakeholders—and now we have (unsurprisingly) a poor image.

THE MOVIE STAR’S ASSISTANT

Fabio Gratton, Co-founder and chief innovation officer, Ignite Health

Time in the industry: 11 years, 8 years with Ignite Health

Original career plan: I studied film & television at UCLA. Like most of my classmates, I had big dreams of being the next Spielberg.

Previous jobs: I worked in the Paramount Pictures story department throughout college

where I read hundreds of movie scripts—that’s where I developed a passion for storytelling and scriptwriting. Then I went on to become assistant extraordinaire for some of Hollywood’s heavy-hitters, including the president of Paramount Pictures, John Goldwyn (grandson of Samuel Goldwyn, the “G” in MGM), and most notably Tom Cruise’s personal assistant—where I learned that the temperature of water and coffee can make or break your career

How did you enter the industry?

There were two critical factors: a death in my family required me to take a break from Hollywood, which ultimately led to losing touch with some key industry contacts. Upon returning to California, I found myself facing some financial hardships as I was trying to re-integrate in the screenwriting world. For a brief period I considered going to Law School. While I was preparing for the LSATs, I took a temp job at a healthcare ad agency—they needed someone to transcribe handwritten notes from paper to computer. At first at I was a little concerned that it would take too much time away from my screenwriting. I was also worried that I would somehow become a healthcare insurance salesman (keep in mind I had no idea what the heck a healthcare agency did).

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

Almost everything I learned in film school and from my stint in Hollywood applies to my job now. In order to produce a movie, you need to have a story and a vision, you also need to be able to work with a lot of different people and appease many egos. That’s also advertising. But probably the most important thing I learned came from spending a lot of time serving other people—making them coffee, picking up their dry cleaning, knowing exactly what temperature they like to drink their water—all of this taught me a great deal of patience and humility. I can’t speak enough of how important it is in our industry to listen, serve and earn the right to have a seat at the table. I also learned what kind of leader I wanted to be should I ever get the chance to manage others. I wanted to be kind, fair, reasonable and visionary. I also have a great deal of respect and appreciation for all those people that gave me a chance when I had absolutely nothing to offer except heart and desire. Now that has become an important quality when looking for talent—because if someone had evaluated me on my résumé alone, I would still be making Tom Cruise coffee.

What have you gotten out of the industry?

I never in my life imagined I'd be doing this—but now that I'm in it I think it's one of the greatest industries in the world. Where else could you tell stories, be creative and actually help people?

What has surprised you most about it?

How many people don't see the possibilities we have to do great things. So many people tend to look at this as just another job. I guess my odd journey has given me unique perspective that makes me appreciate every single day that I do what I do—and I remain passionate and optimistic about the future.

What would you have done differently?

At first I resisted letting myself fully commit to this new career path for fear that it meant I had somehow given up on my dreams. But I honestly believe that everything that has happened along the way has had a reason and purpose and I wouldn't change a thing.

THE TREE PLANTER

Ross Thomson, chief ideation officer, Vox Medica

Time in the industry: 25 years in advertising, 3 months with Vox Medica

Original career plan: To become a graphic designer

Previous jobs: Creative director; chief creative officer, worldwide; tree planter — as a student back in Scotland, I helped plant a forest in my old neck of the woods (literally). It's still there, I branched out

How did you enter the industry?

I needed a new challenge. Consumer was just too comfortable. Today's healthcare advertising is akin to where consumer was in the '60s—at the start of a creative adventure—and in that sense I like to think we're pioneers. It's still a great big adventure.

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

Long, unproductive meetings are my bugaboo. I've watched my fingernails grow in some. Make 'em more constructive, less political and PC-centric, and let's all have an extra week of vacation.

What have you gotten out of the industry?

I'm surprised every day. While working on Advair Diskus I realized the reason my mum's asthma drug wasn't working was because she probably had COPD. I flew back to the UK and detailed her doctor. We're here to help people—promoting 20% more nuts in a candy bar is not what I want to do.

What would you have done differently?

Absolutely nothing.

THE COMPUTER WHIZ

William Kenderdine, Global online marketing project manager, AstraZeneca

Time in the industry: 8 years, all at AZ

Previous job/background: Electronic technician intern; microcomputer technician; microcomputer sales rep; numerous systems analyst roles; intranet developer; web developer, tech team leader; web developer, AZ; global e-communications manager, neuro-

science; global e-marketing project manager, Crestor and later Seroquel

How did you enter the industry?

Keen mind, self-starter, detail oriented, creative, problem solver with just a dash of humility...but seriously, network connections are always helpful. Over the years I worked for many different employers in many different industries. Keeping up with my network eventually paid off with an AstraZeneca interview.

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

It may sound trite, but "learning how to learn" is huge. Look at my job list. I had to learn on the fly and quickly become a productive team member. Second to that would be interpersonal skills and/or leadership skills. I always had to influence my peers and vendors to deliver the project on time, budget and quality.

What would you have done differently?

I would chase a pharma sales role. From my current vantage I can see the value of "carrying the bag."

THE TV NEWS ANCHOR

Ross Joel, CEO and Co-Founder, OR-Live

Time in the industry: 14 years, all with OR-Live

Original career plan: TV anchor/reporter

Previous jobs: Spent nine years as a television anchor/reporter for NBC-affiliated TV stations in Vermont and Hartford, Conn.

Nominated for a News Emmy Award in 1994

How did you enter the industry?

I got sick of chasing fire trucks and police cars for a living

What valuable skills did you pick up from your previous roles?

An understanding of video production and sales

What have you gotten out of the industry?

I find it very interesting and ever-changing.