

MAKING THE LEAP FROM PHARMA TO PRE-COMMERCIAL

A FIELD GUIDE FOR THE NEW CCO

By Curt Staab, TGaS Advisors, A Division of TRINITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TGaS Advisors' Emerging Life Sciences Network (elsN) has gathered advice and lessons learned from a broad-based CCO peer network to create this guide, the first in a series designed to help CCOs manage day-to-day and for the long-term. In this White Paper, we provide an overview of a CCO's responsibilities, resources, and expectations. Future issues will offer advice from peers and experts on launch planning and hiring.

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The opportunity to head commercial activities for a startup biopharma company is exciting and, for many commercial executives, an unparalleled opportunity to use their business and management skills in a new arena.

The reality? TGaS interviewed 21 CCOs and found that yes, it's exciting, but also filled with unexpected surprises and challenges. The majority of those we interviewed had no prior experience as CCOs, and their time in the job ranged from three months to three years, with most in the six-month to two-year range.

The CCOs offered this top-line advice for newcomers to the job:

- Expect little prior development of launch strategy
- Begin work on a detailed launch plan as early as possible
- Listen to and learn as you develop relationships across and beyond the organization
- Be prepared for a different level of visibility within and outside the organization

CONGRATULATIONS! ---

YOU'VE JUST BEEN

NAMED THE NEW CCO!

NOW WHAT?

WHAT SURPRISED YOU? ---

CCOs identified four areas – culture, knowledge, visibility, and approach – that differed from their expectations:

Culture. CCOs encountered a very different culture when they moved to a small biotech. They found it much less bureaucratic and political and much more open and collaborative. This proved to be a significant benefit given the importance of relationships.

Knowledge. Many new CCOs were used to a compartmentalized work environment where they had others to turn to for specialized tasks. In a small company, they had to become far more conversant with scientific and technical knowledge, while others needed to become familiar with processes and functions that were new to them.

Visibility. “There are no off-mic moments,” said one respondent. Even CCOs who had held senior positions in large companies were surprised at how much more visible they were with their colleagues, boards, and investors. Many CCOs felt isolated in their new role initially. People were looking to them for direction, but they weren’t always sure where to turn for resources and support.

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Recognizing this need, TGaS formed a CCO peer group to share experiences and advice. The message: “You’re in the spotlight, but you’re not alone.”

Approach. Another important observation related to scale. Resources taken for granted at larger organizations were much harder to come by at startups. CCOs found the budgetary environment much less forgiving, forcing them to assess needs versus wants far more critically.

WHAT WERE YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGES?

The most common challenges for our respondents were daunting if not surprising.

Building relationships with the Board. Relatively few CCOs encountered boards with extensive, relevant commercial experience. They were often challenged to educate the board on the needs for resources to commercialize adequately. One CCO recalled hearing, “Why do we need you? This product should sell itself!” Many CCOs found it beneficial to develop individual relationships with particularly challenging board members.

Expanding beyond commercial. In keeping with the need to become more knowledgeable about aspects of the business previously unfamiliar to them, most CCOs found they needed greater contact with other parts of the organization. Investors and Wall Street analysts were a brand new, high-stakes audience for many.

Expanded job responsibility. CCOs found themselves in charge of sales, marketing, and market access, and needed to be knowledgeable about medical affairs and other functions. This required, as one respondent put it, “ruthless prioritization” in terms of time and budget. Another described it as “executing a launch as you’re trying to build the infrastructure and pull together a team.”

Market development. Many startups are focused on new or niche indications, creating an additional set of challenges. New products and therapies often require extensive market development, creating challenges to data and forecasting. Therapies for rare diseases have a special set of challenges with regard to identifying patients.

KEY CHALLENGE
“EXECUTING A LAUNCH AS YOU’RE TRYING TO BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND PULL TOGETHER A TEAM.”

One respondent identified three significant challenges: “1) Differentiating technology from predecessors; 2) demystifying technology with external stakeholders; and 3) making a strong investment in disease and technology education.”

An openness to new ideas and related disciplines paid off for many CCOs in unexpected ways. One observed, “Tapping in and listening to the insights of colleagues in medical affairs and patient advocacy about the patient journey and unmet needs were things I would have missed if I tried to ‘plug and play’ with what I knew from previous successful launches. Gathering insights from colleagues early on was important and made us rethink how to approach our commercial strategy.”

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“YOU’RE IN THE SPOTLIGHT, BUT YOU’RE NOT ALONE”

Advice for a peer joining a small, pre-commercial company:

- Develop a detailed launch plan
- Educate senior stakeholders to create more realistic expectations for resource needs and launch strategy
- Develop relationships across the organization
- Choose the right vendors to support your launch plan
- Share your experiences, concerns, and advice with a network of peers

Next in our commercialization series:

Developing Strategic Launch Plans; Creating Effective Commercial Organizations through Hiring and Outsourcing

To join our info list, contact Curt Staab, cstaab@tgas.com.

About Curt Staab and the Emerging Life Sciences Network (elsN)

Sr. Vice President Curt Staab leads the elsN, a membership organization and division of TGaS Advisors launched in 2015 for emerging and pre-commercial life sciences companies. Members have access to peer-driven data and insights, answers to operational and strategic issues, and advice from peers and industry veterans during the critical early stages of commercialization. A 30-year industry veteran, Staab has advised more than 100 biopharma companies during his career with TGaS, where he also led the Sales Advisory Practice.

About TGaS® Advisors

TGaS Advisors, a division of [TRINITY](#), is the leading benchmarking and advisory services firm for commercial organizations in the life sciences industry. With a roster of large, emerging, and precommercial life sciences companies, TGaS provides robust comparative intelligence and collaborative network membership services. The team includes more than 50 experienced professionals, most with senior-level experience in the life sciences and related industries. To learn more, visit www.tgas.com.

About TRINITY

TRINITY is a trusted strategic partner, providing evidence-based solutions for the life sciences. With over 20 years of experience, we are committed to solving our clients' most challenging problems through exceptional levels of service, powerful tools, and data-driven insights. TrinityEdge is our proprietary approach to integrating customer insights, data and analytics, and technology to solve and scale. TRINITY's range of products and solutions includes industry-leading benchmarking solutions, powered by its subsidiary TGaS Advisors. TRINITY, together with TGaS, has five offices throughout the US, including Boston, New York, Princeton, Philadelphia and San Francisco, as well as Toronto, Canada, and Gurgaon, India. TRINITY is also opening an EU office in Munich, Germany. To learn more about how we are elevating life sciences and driving from evidence to action, visit trinitylifesciences.com.