



## News letter, March 2007

Dear Sir,

We at MedSupport Europe see it as our role to inform you of new and/or interesting subjects and developments. The medical device industry is constantly on the move and inspires those involved in it. We aim to send you a few short notes and we have tried to keep it short. Time is a precious and limited resource.

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### **Medical Devices: Lessons from the consumer industry**

When looking at the aspects time-to-market and product design the medical device industry can benefit from the norms in the consumer industry. Of course the medtech industry cannot simply copy all processes as it is dealing with other and additional requirements. So, benchmarking is certainly advisable.

Comparing technical medical devices these days with some 20 years ago, we all see tremendous progress in product design. Next to the obvious functional requirements the end user's perception and expectations are clearly taken into account more now. From our recent work in the home care market we have come across some very good examples of this observation.

- > Inogen One, a new portable oxygen concentrator, focused on patient needs;
- > Niox Mino®, the latest development for Asthma management: new technology and ergonomic design; and,
- > Watchhaler™, an innovative holding chamber, turning inhalation into child's play.

Medical devices used in home care may be considered as bridging the gap between consumer industry and medical device industry. Clinicians and patients/consumers are involved. With time to market we see similar developments, although a lot can still be gained here for the medical device industry. From our past experience and research we have come to learn that our industry is working hard to contain product development time; certainly when it comes down to design, development and trials. However, when product introduction is approaching generally too little focus is put on the actual business development from a market point of view. We have seen many situations where precious time is lost as these processes, which could have run parallel with developmental processes, had been started too late, resulting in delayed product introductions. The consumer industry is used to starting up a next process early on, sometimes before a previous step is finalized. This is referred to as fuzzy-logic decision making. Please let us know if you want to receive a full article comparing these two industries.

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**Reimbursement is crucial**

Reimbursement is an important part of the healthcare system in every country in the world and creates a challenge for many medical device manufacturers. Not only is it coming into play in Primary Care, in the Home Care situation, but also in numerous cases when devices are used in the hospital with medical devices implanted in patients or medical procedures performed on patients.

To have a medical device accepted and/or registered for reimbursement the device company has to follow a cumbersome path which varies per country and per product. This can be a time consuming and costly activity.

*Reimbursement in European countries*

Every country in Europe, including all 27 EU member countries, has implemented their own reimbursement system. This varies from having to register your product separately (among other in Germany and Switzerland) to finding out if your product fits into the local existing medical procedure (France, Belgium and the Netherlands). To be successful here means you have to know the individual, formal process, and you better know your way around with the relevant people and institutions involved.

*Finding the path to having your medical device reimbursed*

MedSupport Europe can support your company in determining the right entry strategy. What is the route to reimbursement (description of procedure, costs and time needed to have your product registered for reimbursement); for which high priority markets (e.g. Germany, France, UK or other)? Which local specialized company is best positioned to support you to get reimbursement in place? Meanwhile MSE is ready to start the search and selection process in these markets for the required marketing and distribution network.

**Reimbursement is crucial**

It is our pleasure to present a collage of medical device companies we have recently worked for in reducing time-to-market for their products in Europe or in the USA.





**Touchpoints offer leverage**

In a recent assignment MSE used the "Touchpoint Wheel Analysis" to analyse and plan the market introduction of a new medical device. This proved to be a helpful tool in thinking about marketing communication and positioning. Most manufacturing companies - when launching their innovative product - are often so smitten by their own technology and/or functionality, that they overlook potential flaws in the overall customer experience. Or in other words: how does the customer (home care patient, doctor, nurse, technician, buyer, distributor and even your own staff) see, feel, experience the contact moments with your product and company? It is obvious customers will be interested in the features & benefits, functionality and pricing of products, but their overall perception will be highly influenced during all interactions, known as "touchpoints", with your company. Ironically, the product can become almost incidental, while the touchpoints become the most memorable aspects of the customer-company relationship. So what does the customer (using the extended definition) remember? Most of all perhaps, a client will remember frustration and anger caused by confusing or missing product instructions or caused by an unfriendly response over the phone.

What we want to point out is that it is extremely important to identify the touchpoints with the potential customers. The analysis can be split in Communications, Human exchange and Environment (offices, web site, trade shows etc.). These categories should be analyzed in the pre-sales, sales and after-sales phases. And bare in mind it is best to simplify the customer experience as much as possible. *Is the communication clear? Are the interactions efficient? Are the touchpoints in alignment with the intended positioning?*

We at MedSupport Europe can assist you in a thorough touchpoint analysis to give more insight whether your marketing mix and communication plan for positioning your product in the competitive European market are on target.

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**New Service: Quick overview, yet small investment!!**

MedSupport Europe is launching a new service in supporting the medical device industry to effectively speed up the business development in Europe. We are now able to offer a quick overview per market of potential business partners, by means of a long list of companies active in marketing and sales in your medical specialty area. Given our focus on business development in Europe our time-to-market in terms of sending you a quotation and in delivering the requested analyses is short!!

Kind regards,  
MedSupport Europe