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Global Marketing Management Scorecard: A Tale of Two Multinational Companies

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Abstract

With the growth of global businesses and expanding international marketing and sales operations it is becoming increasingly difficult to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of worldwide commercial efforts. Based on executive interviews in both the U.S. and in Europe, this paper summarizes the experiences of two large multinational pharmaceutical companies in their development and use of a global marketing management scorecard that is intended to improve their ability to allocate and evaluate the effectiveness of global commercial resources. Results suggest Company 1 realized comparatively quick results with a greater number of countries and saw the resulting ability for better marketing management dialogue and strategy development. Company 2 took much longer to see results equivalent to Company 1 but had greater country acceptance at early stages of development and saw the scorecard increase the speed and accuracy in the sharing of information. Both feel that their global marketing performance has been enhanced as a result of the scorecard. Specific approaches and steps used, and difficulties encountered, in the development and implementation processes are discussed as how they were handled by these companies. Suggestions for future research include the need to examine other industry experiences and to quantify scorecard benefits.

Key words: scorecard; multinational company; global marketing; global management.

Introduction

The concept of a balanced scorecard was introduced by Kaplan and Norton (1992) and positioned as a logical addition to, and improvement on, the use of financial analyses as a primary single tool for corporate strategic planning and assessment (Holman et al., 1991). The use of the balanced scorecard concept within the corporate community rapidly grew in the following years to the point where Frigo and Kromwiede (2000) estimated a minimum of 40% of the Fortune 1000 companies were using some form of the balanced scorecard concept. In a survey conducted by Kaplan and Norton (1992) 100% of the companies seeing “breakthrough results” were using the balanced scorecard as an integral part of the strategic planning process with much of these results due to balanced scorecard helping organizations to measure what is most important and allowing management to focus on the key effectiveness and efficiency elements of their overall operations.

While the literature goes into some detail of how balanced scorecards can and are being developed (Kaplan and Norton, 1992, 1993, 1996a, 1996b) at the domestic or national level, there is comparatively little regarding the actual detailed internal development process of balanced scorecards by major corporations at global levels. There is also literature suggesting that in addition to using them at the overall business level there is reason to use the balanced scorecard concept at the departmental levels as well with departments such as human resources (Hargood, 2002), research and development (Li and Dalton, 2003), supply chain management (Kleijnen and Smits, 2003) and hospital emergency care (Huang et al., 2004). One department that is critical to the success of any multinational corporation is marketing. Despite the evidence of growing global competitiveness and the importance of the marketing function in such a competitive environment as well as the potential beneficial use of balanced scorecards in a competitive environment (Landry, Chan, and Jalbert, 2002), no literature could readily be found using major reference databases regarding the development and implementation of global marketing scorecards.

The major business management problem addressed by this paper is that of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of large and complex companies, specifically the commercial operations of global corporations. The purpose of this paper is to address this problem and the deficiency of marketing and sales management scorecard information in the research literature by exploring the experiences of two large global pharmaceutical companies with their development and implementation of a global marketing management-specific scorecard.

The Balanced Scorecard And Marketing Metrics

Kaplan and Norton (1992) began their article with "What you measure is what you get" (p. 71), and in doing so recognized that organizations will focus on those objectives on which they are being measured. They built a case not only for business metrics covering key financial measures that report the results of past actions, but also using "operational" measures that are the critical drivers of future financial performance. Kaplan and Norton suggested that a balanced scorecard covers four areas including: a financial perspective; customer perspective; internal business perspective; and innovation and learning perspective. These latter three perspectives – customer, internal business, and innovation and learning – are the areas included in their concept of "operational" measures. If done correctly, they argue, vision and strategy and not control are the center of the balanced scorecard. In fact, research has supported their view that financial measures alone have little correlation with the future market value of a company and that operational measures such as customer relationships and brand strength are more closely linked to value creation and share price (Roberts and Styles, 2001).

Since Kaplan and Norton's original work many researchers have confirmed the value of the balanced scorecard concept (Voss, 2000; Atkinson and Epstein, 2000; Inamdar, Helfrich, and Menitoff, 2000; Roberts and Styles, 2001; Radnor and Lovell, 2003; Nathan and Pelfrey, 2004), especially the value of non-financial performance measures (Ittner and Larcker, 1998) with recent work suggesting the balanced scorecard be used at the departmental level (Hagood, 2000; Li and Dalton, 2003; Kleijnen and Smits, 2003; Huang et al., 2004).

Taking the position that marketing departments need to become more metrics oriented McCollough (2000) stated "Marketing is on the precipice of much-needed change" (p. 64), and marketers must change senior executives primary perception of marketing as an expense to a perception of one where marketing is an enhancement of a company's overall profitability. McCollough believes marketing metrics is the way to change senior management's perception.

Based on the results of a 30-month study by the London School of Business, Ambler (2001) argues that companies are successful due to the increase in the value of their brands and that brand equity is the upstream reservoir of cash flow. He believes that marketing metrics are the key to providing the insights necessary to assess whether or not the brand asset has truly grown and lead to longer-term profitability. He suggests that even while there is pressure for marketers to be more accountable, the marketers themselves have mixed feelings. The marketers are, in general, welcoming the increased respect, but are uneasy with what they perceive as more controls on what they can and cannot do if, for example, their creative approaches are not perceived to improve a given metrics in the short or long term. As suggested by previous researchers, Ambler found that marketing metrics fell into categories depending on the nature of the business and are calculated differently in various business sectors. Even though he believes that firms should choose their metrics according to strategy, he admits the pressure of business practitioners to provide a short generic list of market metrics. Thus Ambler reports the top ten brand equity metrics in the UK as:

- Awareness
- Market share (volume or value)
- Relative price (market share value/volume)
- Number of complaints (level of dissatisfaction)
- Consumer satisfaction
- Distribution/availability
- Total number of customers
- Perceived quality/esteem
- Loyalty/retention

- Relative perceived quality

In another study, Clark (2000) reviewed the history of research in marketing performance measurement and suggested 4 categories of measures should be addressed. These include (with sample measures):

- Health of brand or company reputation (awareness; strength
- of image; favorability of image; and uniqueness of image)
- Sales and profitability analysis (unit sales; and value sales)
- Health of customer base (size, growth, profitability; relative
    - customer satisfaction; retention rate; frequency, recency, amount
    - and type of purchases; and penetration of target market)
- Quality of marketing inputs (strategic activities specific to firm;
    - employee surveys regarding marketing orientation; and % of
    - sales from new products)

As can be seen from these studies there are a significant number of suggested marketing metrics that go beyond just the "financial perspective" of the balanced scorecard and can be seen as addressing the "operational" measures (e.g. customer satisfaction, marketing orientation surveys, loyalty, uniqueness of image, etc.). This suggests that marketing metrics are also evolving in the direction of the balance scorecard and would also suggest that the development of a marketing-specific balanced scorecard would indeed be possible. In fact, there is recent evidence that the balanced scorecard approach is being taken at the marketing-specific level (Wyner, 2003; Kim and Hwang, 2003). However, the challenge of developing and implementing a global marketing-specific scorecard may well be greater than doing it at the domestic-only level, which is the apparent level that most all the literature on the subject addresses the subject of the balanced scorecard.

Method Of Data Collection And Company Descriptions

Two large global pharmaceutical companies were involved in this analysis. Both were chosen as a result of personal contacts of the author and previous consulting work with the companies. It was through working with these companies that their development of global marketing scorecards was known. Senior marketing and sales executives, as well as general management were personally interviewed. Domestic (U.S.) and global marketing, marketing research, and sales information personnel were also interviewed and since both companies had major U.S. operations but were European-owned, executives in Europe were interviewed as well. In addition, minutes of meetings and drafts of development plans were also reviewed, as were examples of the final and/or current scorecards. The two companies agreed to participate on condition that they remain anonymous.

Each of these two companies has multi-billion dollar global sales operations with marketing operations in well over 50 countries. Both companies have the highest percentage of their sales in what the pharmaceutical industry labels as the "Big 8" countries (United States, Japan, Germany, England, France, Italy, Spain, and Canada), with the United States being the greatest single country source of both companies' revenues, and also having the greatest percentage of marketing activity. The marketing research firm IMS estimates that 85% of the world's pharmaceutical business, in terms of revenues, are represented by these 8 countries with over 40% coming from the U.S. alone. Given the importance of the U.S. both companies have large and sophisticated marketing, sales, and marketing research operations in their U.S. headquarters. Both companies have nearly identical customer-bases, with a number of competing global product lines. Also of note is a phenomenon common to the pharmaceutical industry; both companies have the majority of their marketing expenditures, and therefore marketing activity, focused on personal field selling.

Results: Company 1

Company 1 represents an example of a formal and coordinated global effort to establish a global marketing scorecard. The first steps towards the eventual development and implementation of a global marketing scorecard began when the Worldwide Pharmaceutical Management Committee, consisting of the senior manager in charge of global operations, country business managers of the "Big 8" countries, and managers of key staff departments, set the goal of significant improving the business' marketing and sales effectiveness in these eight main countries. A subcommittee was set up to oversee this important project and a task-force was formed to identify opportunities, problems, and develop and implement solutions. A group of the company's senior marketing and sales managers representing each of the "Big 8", or main countries, and two representatives from smaller European countries were chosen to be members of the task force.

A U.S. senior marketing manager was selected as the task force leader and responsibilities temporarily altered to allow this manager to spend at least 50% of his time on this project. Similar arrangements were made for task force members in each of the main countries. Administrative and support staff were also identified and had the job responsibilities adjusted to give significant support to this project. The first step of this task force was to complete a "needs analysis" in each country (identification of the primary gaps between strategy, goals, and performance) as well as a literature review of current industry best practices and work with a consulting firm who completed a benchmarking study on key industry marketing and sales practices in a number of the main countries. One of the first outputs of this project was a list of critical marketing and sales success factors for the marketing and sales organizations of the largest and most successful pharmaceutical companies. Of the critical success factors identified, seven were believed to be the most critical for this organization, i.e. having the greatest opportunity for improvement. Of these seven identified factors, the development and implementation of a global marketing scorecard was considered one of the most critical.

The company's worldwide management committee clearly agreed with this task force finding of a need for a global marketing scorecard along the lines of Kaplan and Norton's balanced scorecard concept. There was the perceived need for all countries to use common marketing metrics which would allow the business and marketing management teams in each of the eight countries to focus on the issues identified as most critical for both global and local business. It was believed that a global marketing scorecard would be a potential aid in the discussion and formulation of future global strategic actions, as well as help to focus the country managers in their sharing of best practices between countries. In addition, they believed these metrics would serve to reinforce the vision and appropriate strategies throughout all main countries. The management committee clearly communicated throughout the global organization their support for the development and use of a global marketing scorecard.

The assigned task force began their activities by addressing the questions of "what are the best things to measure and against what do we evaluate these metrics?" There was clear agreement that the metrics needed to tie to the identified critical success factors, vision, and strategies of company and address both key relevant financial and operational areas. The Worldwide Management Committee wanted the ability to look at specific products and performance, by countries, regions, and the world, and measure the impact of various global initiatives. Their goal was to be able to aggregate all products into product groups and total business across key metrics identified.

In identifying the specific metrics to be used across countries the task force members worked closely with the country managers and their marketing teams. There was no shortage of suggestions from various team members and country managers – each had something they felt strongly about, which would highlight a particular strength of their country. These suggestions were not always compatible with those suggested by other countries, or necessarily related to key strategies or vision. For example, one country wanted product sales by a sub-category of customer group in which they were strong – a subgroup which did not exist in other countries.

As could be anticipated there were a number of challenges for this global team. Virtually every country wanted a different set of metrics, often arguing for those metrics that would make their country look best in comparison with the others and arguing against those metrics that may not be as flattering. Perhaps, the most significant problem reported though, was the difference in data availability and compatibility, especially at the individual customer level. While the end-user of prescription pharmaceutical products is the patient, the real customer is, in most countries, the individual physician. Due to the sensitive nature of health care information, and the fact that with the exception of Japan, most all prescription products are not distributed directly to the physician for sales to the patient, information on what products the individual physician is using can be difficult, or even impossible, to obtain in many countries. Related to this problem was the fact that some countries had much more secondary market research data available or secondary data of a different type, than other countries. Financial reporting processes that impact product marketing margins also varied to a greater or lesser degree between countries. Another problem was the differences between individual country marketing strategies, as this company historically tended to allow a great deal of freedom for individual countries, or regions, to develop country level marketing strategies.

This latter problem of country marketing strategy differences was addressed by setting up a new global marketing group whose responsibility included the coordination of appropriate global marketing strategies, such as product branding and positioning, across countries.

Many of the other problems were addressed by deciding to develop this global metric scorecard in multiple phases over a period of two-three years. In this fashion, the company could begin by addressing some of the more "generic" metrics that were immediately possible while developing the methodology and tools to address other metrics that were felt to be important. In some cases laws and/or regulations are changing in several countries that will allow better data availability in the near future.

It was believed the multiple phase approach would allow the company to get some experience with the information systems that were being developed for these metrics and to evaluate the importance and use of this first set of metrics. This evaluation would allow for some metrics to be deleted or altered before adding more, as it was recognized that too many metrics would dilute the visibility and perhaps value for all of them. The phased approach would hopefully prove to marketing and sales management that senior management would not be using them for control purposes, perhaps making it easier to put more "sensitive" metrics in latter phases. While it was the goal to have a global marketing scorecard addressing all four areas suggested by Kaplan and Norton (1992), it was decided they need not use all of them to be within the first phase of the process but could add some later, especially if data collection and consistency would be a problem

In addition, it was agreed individual countries would, in addition to the global marketing scorecard, have a local marketing scorecard addressing future phases of the scorecard or items unique, or uniquely important, to a given country. A project to better coordinate financial reporting across the main countries was begun and, finally, there were many meetings and communications between task force members to narrow down the original possible list of metrics while still addressing both financial and key operational metrics.

The new global marketing group was chosen to manage the global marketing scorecard with dedicated personnel including technology personnel assigned to the project for software development with the large majority of the necessary data for the scorecard being obtained from individual countries. Phase 1 of this company's global marketing scorecard included:

- Net sales and profit (marketing margin)
- Market share (sales value)
- Total prescriptions
- Prescription share
- Detailing (sales calls & # products/call)
- Detailing Share of Voice (percentage of total market sales calls)
- New prescriptions
- Number of prescribers (total, plus change)
- Sales per representative
- Sales obtained per sales call
- New prescriptions generated per sales call
- Customer (all groups) targeting, including reach and frequency
- Customer (physician) retention
- Percentage of marketing programs launched on time

Each metric was calculated for each product across all product lines. Each of these metrics was compared to budget or goals and in some cases compared against benchmarked competitors (in the largest and most important of the main countries). The majority of these metrics were seen as key indicators or drivers of revenue and profitability with the latter two on this list (customer retention and marketing program launches) being more operational in nature. Each metric was clearly defined by the task force and suggestions made as to how calculations should be done if there is not reliable primary or secondary data available. All overall marketing metrics for each country such as net sales and market share, were approved by the Worldwide Management Committee upon recommendation by the country manager.

In at least some of the main country-specific scorecards human resource personnel were involved to develop marketing personnel metrics and even R&D personnel were involved in helping to define product development and marketing joint metrics. In virtually all countries, the financial departments were involved fairly early in the scorecard development process.

For the presentation of the scorecard a computer format that could easily be printed was developed. A "traffic light" approach was used where the metric is seen on the computer screen in the color green if the metric is greater or equal to 100% of goal; it is in yellow if above 90% but less than 100%; and it is seen in red if below 90% of the stated goal. The format of the information system's screen allows for easy comparison across countries or regions.

Meanwhile, each of the individual eight main countries developed their own marketing metrics scorecard. These local scorecards not only include the Phase 1 global metrics, but were often focused on the metrics to be included in latter development phases of the global scorecard. Some of the metrics seen on these local scorecards addressed personnel marketing skills and experience, new and innovative marketing programs attempted, and measures of customer satisfaction. The majority of this was accomplished in a little more than one year from the initial meeting of the task force.

Results: Company 2

Company 2 represents a more informal approach to the development and implementation of a global marketing scorecard. In this case the idea to develop the scorecard began at the local level within the U.S. marketing research department. The U.S. operation was going through another growth spurt with a number of new products and was in the process of upgrading their own marketing metrics. A marketing research manager, based on his readings of the scorecard concept, made a proposal to marketing and country management to develop a computerized scorecard that would be accessible to the entire U.S. headquarters management team. The U.S. country manager and senior marketing manager liked the idea and supported the efforts of the marketing research department by approving funds to assist in the software development, although no additional personnel was assigned and the initial effort was to be limited to one product. The marketing research manager maintained all previous job responsibilities while adding this as an additional project.

The project was given to the marketing research manager who had the initial idea to develop a marketing scorecard based upon a balanced scorecard concept similar to that of Kaplan and Norton (1992) involving both financial and operational metrics. He solicited the support of a group product manager who became an enthusiastic partner. Primarily, developed by these two individuals, the initial concepts for the metrics to be included in the scorecard were clearly based upon the need of one product and focused on sales force activity and product sales in the U.S. As they increased activity and involved the information technology department other marketing groups began to hear of the project and interest in the project broadened with other departments such as the sales information and systems and information technology departments offering assistance.

With the visit of a global marketing manager from Europe the project began its global orientation. This global manager was responsible globally for the product with which the scorecard was begun and liked the idea, believing that since the idea came from the U.S. and not European headquarters the chance of implementation would in his opinion be more likely. With every visit to the U.S. operations this global manager spent more time with the project and increasingly saw it as having global potential. Within a year the U.S. operation had identified for their test product 10 marketing metrics to include on their product-specific scorecard including:

- Sales and profitability (gross and net sales; profits vs. budget)
- Market performance (total prescriptions volume and market share)
- Sales force (customer reach and frequency; sample shipment timeliness; direct promotion performance)
- Managed care (product access to targeted patients within class)
- Program promotional effectiveness

For the U.S. operation these represented a combination of both financial and operational metrics. Once approved, the software was developed and a "traffic light" approach was used similar to Company 1. The U.S. operation then presented the results to the local management committee who then with the support now being given by all product marketing groups approved the funds necessary to extend the process to all other product groups within the U.S.

As this phase began to reach its conclusion in the U.S., development of marketing scorecards began in other main countries such as France, Germany, and England for this same product and the first attempts were made to bring the results together from all four countries. Very quickly the problem of data consistency was uncovered and compromises were reached which would allow the data to be aggregated and compared across countries. As these countries were seeing success other "Big 8", or main countries began the development process, however in these cases development of scorecards for all products were begun at the same time. Similar to Company 1, it was found that different countries wanted different metrics and since the global aspect of the marketing scorecard was seen as secondary to the local marketing scorecard little or no attempt was made by the global marketing team to coordinate the individual metrics in the early stages of scorecard development.

Also, it should be noted that very little attention or support was given by the marketing departments of these countries to include operational metrics, as most all of the metrics used in the first scorecards by the majority of countries were financial. Throughout this process global business and country business managers were involved only in the background and the global marketing managers took responsibility for "spreading the word" and getting other countries to adopt the process.

Once all main countries had local marketing scorecards in place, there was a concerted effort by the global headquarters marketing management team to alter or add metrics that would allow them to more accurately compare country performance and overall global marketing strategy. Often these requested metrics, at least among the main countries, were of an operational nature. The time needed to get all main countries using some type of marketing scorecard, for at least some products, was a little more than two years from the time the U.S. operation began the process, or more than 3 years for all main countries.

Discussion

Despite the very different approaches to developing a global marketing scorecard, both companies had a number of things in common. Both companies, while expressing the desire for a "balanced" scorecard with financial and operational metrics in their early phases of development, found their major emphasis to be on financial and not operational metrics. This was perhaps due to the previous orientation of both management groups to financial analysis and the relatively easier access to the financial data. Both companies fell into a multiphase approach to development as this allowed for quicker, if more limited, results; allowed for easier scorecard development from a technological viewpoint; and allowed the marketing teams to become gradually more confident in the constructive use of the scorecard approach before getting into more "sensitive" metrics. Using primarily financial data at the early stages also did not slow down overall development as more of an emphasis on operational metrics may have required considerably more time.

While the majority of the metrics were different for the two companies, these two companies did run into problems with the compatibility of data between countries and both had to eventually put a great deal of effort into their ability to collect and merge the necessary data. Both companies chose computer-based systems for the dissemination of the scorecard and chose a "traffic light" or color-coded method of highlighting the status of the metrics. As would be expected marketing and marketing research personnel as well as financial and technology personnel were very involved in the scorecard development process.

These two companies did not have previous scorecard approaches in other areas of the company. Both now embrace the use of the global and local marketing scorecard and have taken recent steps to move the concept to other departments and also are developing business-wide global and local scorecards. Although it should be noted that in Company 2 the interviews and discussions did not give the impression to this author that there was quite as wide-spread a commitment to the global marketing scorecard as there was in Company 1.

Perhaps the most obvious difference between the development and implementation of the two scorecard approaches was in Company 1 senior management drove the process quickly through the organization freeing up resources to do so. While they did not use the strategy mapping approach now recommended by Kaplan and Norton (2004), they came much closer to having the recommended visual framework for integrating the needs of the organization's objectives than did Company 2 through their completion of a needs analysis that began with vision and goals. Through a more centralized approach Company 1 found it easier than Company 2 to incorporate operational metrics in the scorecard and was even able to involve a broader number of departments such as human resources and research and development in the early development of the marketing scorecard.

Through the involvement and commitment of senior country management, a multi-country management taskforce, additional personnel (global marketing team), financial resources, and a centralized development approach, Company 1 was able to get global and local scorecards functioning in all main countries in approximately 18 months. The more informal and decentralized approach of Company 2 resulted in a more modest local marketing scorecards on one product in four countries in approximately 2 years with an estimate of another year being required to have some version of a global marketing scorecard (all main countries).

One benefit that became apparent in the interviews with senior management of the two companies was their observations that "buy-in" or acceptance on the part of marketing management was critical. Company 1's centralized and relatively rapid process resulted at first in country marketing managers being concerned about the "over control" of their job activities as a result of the metrics and perhaps their "unfair" comparisons with other countries. Country 2's approach did not generally result in such reactions as the scorecard was seen, at least in the first phase, as a "local" project and by the time the global orientation began the marketing management staff had become accustomed to the use of marketing metrics and the scorecard. Thus Company 2's approach might be said to result in better "buy-in" by local country marketing managers.

When senior management from Company 1 was asked what they saw as the chief benefit of the global marketing scorecard the first thing mentioned was the ability to help focus their diverse global marketing organization on critical financial and operational activities and as a result allow for better dialogue between countries and better country management of the marketing function and marketing strategy development. For the senior management at Company 2, the major benefit of the scorecard was seen as the ability to quickly and accurately communicate critical information to general and marketing management so action can quickly be taken to correct weaknesses. Both companies believed company communication and performance, especially global marketing performance, benefited as a result of the global marketing scorecard, although neither had made any attempt to quantify these benefits.

At this point neither company appears to see a need to research the benefit obtained by their use of the global marketing scorecard, as they are comfortable with their own very positive impressions of its use. Both companies see the need to continue to improve on the metrics and expressed the recognition of resisting the desire to keep adding different marketing metrics leading to a reduction in their ability to focus on just the most important activities.

Finally, the information obtained from these two companies suggests that care needs to be taken when researchers ask companies about their use and experience with balanced scorecards. Both of these companies would rightly say they are using scorecards and that they have been shown to be helpful. However, especially at the early stages the scorecards were very different and the degree of operational metrics differed a great deal. It would be helpful if future research were to develop a classification system for scorecards that would allow for a more accurate grouping based on their common characteristics. Obviously, these are but two companies in the same industry examined in this study. Research is needed to confirm the experience of these two companies and compare these experiences with global marketing scorecard development in other industries, as well as attempt to quantify the benefits obtained through the development and use of a marketing scorecard on a global basis.

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