



**Scientific Communication Applied to the Beauty Industry:  
Challenges and Opportunities**

*“A concerted and innovative approach to strategic marketing and corporate communications”*

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I N C O R P O R A T E D

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## **I -Executive Summary:**

This paper will present the current challenges the Beauty Industry faces as our society enters the new biotechnological age.

It will detail the nature of these challenges, the changes that need to be made in order to face them as well as some of the solutions available.

The penetration of advanced biotechnologies in the development process of skin care products has created both problems and opportunities for the business.

A perfect understanding of the scientific nature of the business by each stakeholder is crucial in order to address the problems and take advantage of these new and unique opportunities.

By detailing the problems, we will take an in depth look at the way science is conducted in today's beauty industry, and provide suggestions as how to maximize the benefits of research for this industry.

## **II - The Challenge:**

A deep shift is occurring at all levels of our lives, and those who do not identify that change and the changes it forces us to make will be left behind in the economy race.

This is true for health care companies, but also consumer products manufacturers, technology providers, country leaders and policy makers.

Biotechnology is entering our lives faster and deeper than any other technology ever has. The failure to understand the scope of this phenomenon and its implications will have catastrophic consequences.

Our choice today is not whether or not our countries will be "good at" biotech tomorrow, but whether or not they will remain in the economically strong group of countries leading today's world.

The beauty industry faces the same choice. It needs to address this new challenge, to stay ahead of the game, avoid untimely problems and take advantage of all the opportunities created by the penetration of advanced sciences.

Science is at the core of the beauty business. The recent and formidable acceleration of new discoveries in Biosciences deeply impacting this business and its consumer base, calls for a new level of scientific communication programs.

A perfect understanding of the scientific nature of the business by each stakeholder (employees, investors, industrial partners, sales force, distributors, government and consumers) is critical.

Failing to address this issue may result in:

- Loss of consumer confidence
- Impaired brand image
- Internal conflicts
- Lawsuits if the communication of science is mishandled or misleading
- Ultimately, loss of leadership for those that drive the field

This paper describes the emerging needs for Scientific Communication in the field of skin care and a methodology to implement an innovative and successful communication program fully integrating science for better development, production and marketing of beauty products.

## III - The many faces of scientific communication

Scientific communication is a generic term, describing all communication that can be crafted for and around science. It includes programs, materials, policies, all aimed at conveying a scientific message to different audiences for different purposes.

### 1- Why “*Scientific Communication*”?

There are many purposes behind scientific communication. It has become a must in the beauty industry and the first ones to acknowledge that need and act on it through adequate programs will be the first ones to collect the full benefits of such measures.

#### A - Increasing the visibility of science

The main purpose of scientific communication is always to increase the understanding or the visibility of a given scientific message, but for many different reasons and on a wide variety of scales.

- Scientific communication can be a new element of strategic marketing, when science is used as a full marketing tool and aimed at the public.
- It can be used to build up and sustain a company culture around science, in order to prepare for that strategic marketing shift.
- But it can also be set up on a much narrower scale, to better train the sales force, or exchange information within the R&D department.

In any event, this very specific kind of communication is better orchestrated around a concerted communication and/or marketing strategy.

#### B- Filling a void

By using Scientific Communication we can give science the voice it traditionally lacks, yet so crucially needs and deserves:

- Scientists may have trouble communicating if they are not used to it or do not even see the need for it. Scientific communication can be the advocate of science in an increasingly scientific environment.
- Most communication and marketing staff do not have the scientific training that would allow them to approach the scientific concepts now commonly used in the development of modern high-end skin care products. A sound scientific communication program can help train them on the specific research conducted in the company and craft a better message to the public.
- Beauty was not always scientific, at least not at the level it is today. The message that beauty companies invest heavily in science is not one that makes its way very easily through to investors or one that companies are used to crafting properly.

Because the level of sophistication of skin care products has tremendously increased, addressing these issues is now essential to the successful development, production and marketing of such products.

#### C - Delivering quality

Scientific Communication also allows audiences that traditionally do not approach it, to get more than just a “whiff” of the scientific message: it brings them information from the source in an understandable, yet exhaustive form.

It should involve input from the scientific departments. This message, if crafted properly, will inform the marketing arm and also will give R&D an integral part in the corporate communications process.

***It is possible to convey very sophisticated scientific concepts to non-scientific audiences. It just requires adequate tools, techniques and know-how.***

***The key is the quality of the message that is delivered and of the package it is delivered in.***

## **IV - Where the needs are:**

### **1 - Urgent/pressing needs**

#### **A - Integrating science in the marketing mix**

The most pressing need for Scientific Communication in the Personal Care field today is in the successful integration of science within the marketing mix.

Most companies specializing in skin care treatment claim the use of advanced science in their products. However, the level of research involved in the development of these products varies greatly from one company to another. Also, the scientific message is rarely very sophisticated.

Only by using a carefully crafted and sophisticated scientific message can skin care companies that integrate advanced science in their products (sophisticated scientific programs and R&D) find a point of difference with those who don't and who still collect the benefit of pseudo-scientific claims.

Moreover, by bringing quality scientific information to the public, through the marketing of their products, or through specific programs aimed at increasing awareness on skin health issues, these skin care companies that invest heavily in science will position themselves as serious scientific information providers and advanced skin care developers, thus building a base of educated and loyal customers and visitors to their information outlets.

***This is particularly crucial as the average consumer's ability to understand the full value of advances in life sciences is increasing everyday.***

The leap in bioscience advances has already started to impact society in much the same way that the high tech revolution did 30 years ago

The explosion of Biotech in many sectors of our economy is deeply impacting consumers. This shift, materialized by the decoding of the human genome, was announced in the year 2000, right at the edge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, almost symbolic of a new era. It will change the way we relate to science. It will no longer be just an area of knowledge but rather an integral part of our lives. We will soon have gone so far in the advance of nanotechnology that the building blocks of our machines will no longer be electronic microchips, but rather molecules.

#### **B - Communicating the importance of science to investors**

The investment a company pursues in its research tools is a major factor for investors. Even more so because it is not a traditional trait of beauty companies, at least not to the extent it has developed in the last few years.

Traditionally, a lot of the beauty companies were considered part of the fashion world; some others came from the detergent business.

It is important for these companies to show that they have successfully integrated real research programs in the development of their products, and do not rely solely on their suppliers to provide them

with advanced formulation aids, active ingredients, production technologies, etc. (This is usually the case for smaller, less advanced companies).

Demonstrating to investors why science is so crucial to stay ahead of competition, that it is now a real part of product development, and that it is run by the best in the business in the most efficient fashion, are essential points.

***It is especially vital to show that these research programs are run successfully within the companies, making the best use of every R&D dollar ever spent. A smart management of science is not all that common and should be emphasized.***

But the most essential of all, is the fact that research generates profits, when it is well managed and when it is well used in the marketing of products.

## ***2 - Mid and long term planning –meeting urgent needs through a carefully planned and multi tier strategy***

The goal of such an evolution in the marketing strategy is ultimately to build or sustain a new image for the company. This links the company's image to a stronger and more credible scientific message – one that will really benefit the customer.

In order to achieve that goal, it is necessary to implement a strategy that will allow the building of a company culture that is strongly based on science.

It will have to exist at all levels, originating in R&D, spreading through the whole company, all the way to marketing and sales, also to senior management and investors. It will finally reach the consumer in an efficient manner.

Such change does not happen overnight. It requires the implementation of scientific communication programs at all levels of the company in a very timely fashion.

### **Timing is everything**

Building a culture is a long-term commitment. But as important as time, is sequence. Certain steps have to be taken before others, some need time, and some can happen instantly. Following a logical sequence helps secure the success of these efforts and avoids wasting precious time and resources.

It is important to take into account the environment in which the company evolves: overall market trends in beauty and in science, recent scientific news, policy changes, great public debates, etc.

The debate on stem cells in 2002 brought to the forefront of public interest the issue of research and ethics, and shed a whole new light on the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases, raising awareness on their incidence, repercussions, etc.

It brought about a societal change because it hinted to the consumers that the science that they thought was not even mature yet or that they had no notion of, could change their life in the very short term. Whether that notion was perfectly accurate or not is another matter.

Nonetheless, they acquired a vocabulary, a culture of the field through the debate that could allow them to approach many more messages relating to that field of science in the future. Everyone knows by now that Michael J. Fox has Parkinson's disease, that it is a neurodegenerative disease and that his only reasonable hope today lies in stem cells research. That is a huge leap from just 5 years ago.

## V - A concerted and multifaceted approach

There are several major levels to consider in operating a real shift towards an improved scientific image. The first wave of communication should take place internally:

Information pertaining to science has to be better communicated and understood:

- Internally:
  - Within R&D and technical departments
  - From R&D to the rest of the company: PR, MK, Investors relations and Upper management
  - To educate the sales force

This is a time where the company builds and sustains a culture. It is important to first complete these steps before moving on and transporting this culture outside. Such campaigns will be stronger, more credible and more efficient with this background. Or, to put it less mildly, a campaign run without this background could be a complete waste. Science is based on facts, and brings credibility to anyone who practices it skilfully. Credibility is therefore key to its efficacy when used as a marketing tool.

- Externally:
  - To opinion leaders and advocates (dermatologists, beauty editors, etc...)
  - To consumers
  - To investors

### ***1 - Within R&D and Technical departments.***

As we mentioned earlier, the vast majority of scientists may have difficulties communicating. In order to build a culture based on THEIR work, it is essential to show them the benefits, the fun of communication, and to train them to that end.

Giving people a voice usually also gives them legitimacy. It reinforces their sense of purpose and their ability to use their talents to their full extent.

#### ***A quick note about scientists***

Researchers are highly creative. Making them happy makes them more efficient. Like any category of workers, they need comfort, and a sense of purpose. But unlike other workers, their loss in creativity is directly linked to their loss in productivity.

Imagine managing artists! Most really good researchers, yet very thorough and factual, have a deep need for space in their thinking process. Because modern research can generate so much data, so quickly, we need imaginative and intuitive scientists. The scientists that spend their time collecting data and hoping to get something out of it, without taking the risk of choosing one direction or another do not profit science. So, in order for science to be productive, it has to be lively. Ideas have to circulate, information needs to be shared, and, within a large private research structure, researchers have to find a sense of purpose, and a sense of belonging. They need to know why they work; they need to see what becomes of their work; and to feel part of the whole company structure.

Often, there is a very strong sense of separation in the R&D department from the rest of the company.

These needs and problems can be addressed by implementing the proper internal communication tools, aimed at:

- Increasing the circulation of scientific information within the research department
- Bringing company information to the research departments, allowing this group to tie their research in with marketed products
- Building a company culture in which there is a space for scientists (even a fashion driven company, if it employs scientists, should communicate this in their corporate communications)

program, so as to allow all members of the structure to recognize themselves in the message sent outside).

- Including these teams in the development process rather than imposing it on them, by seeking their input and having them work with other teams in the company structure.

## ***2 -From R&D to the rest of the company: PR, MK, Investors relations and Upper management***

R&D also needs to be promoted within the other departments. Often the research is not properly understood by non-scientific personnel. This information has to make its way through all other departments. It allows the company to build a corporate structure articulated around its true essence, and lets non-scientific personnel access essential information that, if properly formatted will turn into valuable working materials for new and innovative marketing strategies.

We know from experience that, if scientific information is properly formatted and distributed, it triggers a lot of interest on the part of the so-called “non-scientific” department. It also brings these departments inspiration.

They like to know, they want to know more. Once they do, they use it.

It also has to reach all the audiences apt to use it.

And it has to reach them in a timely, proper sequence.

Because R&D is now ready and able to communicate, the information can go further within the corporate structure, to prepare its “coming out”, its exposure to the public, as a full blown marketing tool, which is the ultimate goal of such strategy.

### **A - Marketing, PR and investors relations:**

Because they will approach “intermediary” targets (namely opinion leaders and press), before the scientific content can reach the public, PR should be the first department to be targeted for scientific communications. However, because PR and marketing work very closely, if they can agree to keep their own actions in sequence (marketing should leave PR the time to craft and implement a good scientific communications strategy with their opinion leaders and press contacts before it brings the information to a now well prepared public), they should receive the information together.

The same goes for investors relations. Major evolutions need to be understood early on there too. This allows for the federation of resources allocated to the production and dissemination of the information and a concerted culture building effort.

### **B - Talking to opinion leaders**

It is vital to include this group first when bringing the science outside of the company. They can be dermatologists, prominent members of the scientific community, renowned consultants. They are commonly invited to speak at professional gatherings, scientific meetings, shows. Their opinions are listened to and respected.

They benefit from a high level of visibility. They are great advocates for a brand.

In this category, we also like to include beauty editors. The feminine press is where a large number of customers get their information from.

With great visibility comes great liability. The information they get, the setting in which it is delivered, the way it is presented, must be impeccable. There is no room for error at this stage. And, unfortunately, errors are all too common.

## **C - Educating the sales force**

Because the sales force's own target will ultimately be the subject of a scientific communications campaign, it needs to be ready. May it be an internal sales force or a network of distributors; they need specific information. They need not only to be informed but also to be trained. They need to be able to answer questions from their consumers once the information gets to them. At that stage, it is important to craft specific training tools. But we will come back to the tools later.

## **3 -Bringing science to the public**

This is not as delicate a proposition as it may sound. Many underestimate the public's ability to process sophisticated information. What is essential here is to craft a message that is accessible (properly popularized, and for this very matter we cannot stress enough the importance of using scientifically educated editors and communications consultants, so as to bridge the gap flawlessly), and responds to the market's expectations. If the general press is having a debate on low carb diets, it is time to talk about the deleterious effects of sugar on skin and bring forth those products that target glycosylation. If the debate centers around the immune system, talk about those products that boost the immune system or protect it. A topic as old as antioxidant can be perfectly easily reshaped so as to fit that purpose.

## **VI - Methods and Tools**

A whole array of tools is available to companies willing to implement such strategies. However they are better used in a concerted effort.

In our experience, and because of the nature of those who practice it, research is "personal" to a company. Research and technical departments foster some of the most dedicated and passionate people I have ever met. It is important that the communications efforts at that level which stems from these departments reflect this.

### **1- Methods:**

#### **A - Properly formatted and distributed information:**

- **Easy to access** – time is of the essence, this is an argument for web based information (a user having to click too many times to get the info he/she wants will quickly get discouraged and probably never come back to the site/tool he or she was using), but is valid for any kind of information, whether solicited or not. Paper newsletters fall on the desk of the recipient, so should web-based newsletters. If the information comes out of a centralized knowledge management system, it has to be easily accessible by the target audience, who is to be reminded often of its existence.
- **Pertinent** - the information has to mean something to the audience, tie in with a product or a current trend (e.g. talk about sugar in the midst of the low carb craze) that the readers can immediately identify in their everyday landscape.
- **Entertaining** – the time allocated to unsolicited materials is stolen time, it has to be good.
- **Up to date** – the information is there to trigger marketing ideas, PR impulses, it has to be related to the most recent discoveries or trends, or the reader will have found it elsewhere, and immediately lose interest. Who wants to read yesterday's news?
- **Easy to understand** – Drowning people in scientific jargon only satisfies the ego of the writer, or his laziness. It annoys the reader who feels humiliated and outdated.

Please note that nowhere do we say that the information has to be simple or simplistic. It is essential to understand that the value of the scientific approach lies in its sophistication. Bringing simplistic, common, overused scientific notions to even the least educated of audiences is simply a waste.

*It is no longer a valid argument to claim that because the public is not specifically educated in science, it can't understand it. People understand high tech, and they are now starting to understand biotech.*

### **B - The right audience at the right time:**

Any strategy of this kind should benefit from a proper announcement. Because it leads to major transformations in the way the company communicates inside and outside, it is much more efficient when presented as a concerted strategy, as a company project. Involving the recipients of the information on a regular basis is essential, but constituting a team involving all concerned departments at the onset of the project is an even better idea (see "federate thinking" further down).

Communication is never imposed upon people, and any new and innovative strategy can only be fully efficient if "embedded" in the fabric of the company.

### **C- Federate thinking: create all inclusive creative think tanks:**

The goal of scientific communication strategies is to gather all players around science, to create a new culture that will involve all levels in the company. It is therefore essential to involve representatives of all departments when crafting such strategies. The information may stem from R&D but the way it is delivered and what is important about this information are everyone's concern. Moreover, those who traditionally do not get access to scientific information and those who do, have different expectations and needs.

### **D - Audits- survey and validate:**

It is important to constantly audit the results of the scientific communications strategy, in terms of goals achievement, perception, acceptance, etc.

### **E - Work from the inside out:**

Science is at the core of the company and the starting block for scientific communication. Start there and never forget to get back there if and when readjusting your strategy.

### **F - Use outside and specialized advice:**

Scientific communications is a fairly new concept, typically not taught in traditional management curricula. It is important to go out and seek those professionals holding not only experience in scientific communications, but also a scientific background and experience allowing them to relate efficiently with your scientific teams. They will provide expert advice as well as an efficient interface between these departments and the other entities included in the program.

## **2- Tools**

### **A - Centralized enterprise knowledge management systems –**

This should be the central logistical element in the set of tools used.

One of the major obstacles for the use of E-Learning tools is the belief that personnel do not embrace the technology as a valid learning or information tool. Do not misunderstand your target audience's cognitive abilities. Most employees have been exposed to the Internet for at least 5 years. Only those who left their working environment before 98 did not HAVE to use it. Despite this lack, people still gained access to the Internet, profoundly changing the way they seek and treat information. My parents, respectively 64 and 73 years old use the Internet routinely. Their learning curve is slower than that of a 12-year old kid when it comes to the use of the tool, but there is no longer a psychological block.

All individuals having entered or still being in the school system after 1990 LEARNED to learn with the Internet. This means that their very cognitive abilities have been shaped by the tool in ways that we can only merely evaluate.

***Key benefits can be expected from using a centralized enterprise knowledge management system to implement science communications programs:***

***To deliver anywhere, anytime the most up to date contents***

No need to disrupt people from their daily work. They are warned of new information available inviting them in a selective way to connect to their personal portal and review the details of the information distributed to them. Personnel can have access to specific programs according to their position and departmental focus. Programs can be taken from anywhere at anytime so people will do it at their best time, increasing retention and motivation.

***To build up a general Knowledge Management system:***

This system is a great tool to spread information in a very controlled manner. It is a great training device if validation is an important part of the education aspect of the program. Because all actions taken through the system are monitored and kept a record of, it is the ultimate compliance tool. It is as easily implemented to train personnel on new regulations as it is to train sales forces or to purely inform staff.

This system allows the company to provide on demand proof of compliance with regulation guidelines when it comes to the mandatory training of personnel.

***To monitor corporate compliance and anticipate gaps:***

Managers will know how people progress along with their schedule, and if they have concerns or suggestions. They will get a clear idea of how a specific program succeeds or how a specific audience performs. Keeping track of people's interest in the information program helps re-evaluate its pertinence and evaluate its effectiveness.

***To quickly implement changes without disturbing current progress:***

Science is a rapidly evolving field. Information has to be updated on a regular basis. Contents updates are easy to manage, at a minimum cost: simply that of input, without the cost of production. Program upgrades are transparent and automated.

***To keep budgets in control:***

Most internal communications programs can end up being fairly costly:

Different programs run in different departments, mobilizing a different set of resources each time.

Printed materials need a minimum volume to be cost effective (a 6 page color newsletter on decent stock can run up to two dollars a piece even with a 1000 copies) and they are by essence obsolete in a few weeks.

Sales training materials also tend to be produced on materials that are not easily updated.

The use of a centralized system allows:

- The federation of resources
- The crafting of a sound strategy, integrated at all levels (internal, sales, investors and public)
- The optimization of the program through easy and flexible updating of the information
- A flexibility of choices when it comes to the management of contents that can be done in house or through outside resources.

***To protect intellectual assets with an affordable and sustainable enterprise system:***

It is crucial that all contents bearing the company's intellectual properties and strategic implementation be under tight control of the company's management and kept within the organization. Secured access control, inviolability of records and controlled reporting are key factors for a successful communications program implementation. To keep resources dedicated to the company's domain of excellence it is important to not divert personnel or money. An acquisition's cost strictly linked to results and a self operating system will make it possible for even smaller departments to run their own science communications and compliance programs.

***To keep everybody in the loop before, while and after programs implementation:***

Integrating your communications program system within the rest of the organization allows links with documentation, marketing and R&D resources helping consolidation of understanding and commitment to such programs, thus reinforcing the aim of the program itself.

**B - Newsletters:**

The assets of newsletters is that they are a well accepted and familiar format, can deliver very varied kinds of information and can be delivered in a paper format as well as an electronic one. However, the information is static and cannot be updated. We like the electronic format because it allows us to give readers access to archives, or reference them in more recent articles. It also categorizes the information in such a way that the recipients get familiar with it and look forward to their favorite features. It can deliver news as well as more serious and in depth topics or very recreational information.

It can be a forum for readers.

**C - Events:**

Working with PR, integrate science into traditional events such as product launches. Become a real scientific events provider: find a strong direction of research within your R&D and through seminars and conferences, using your outside experts.

**D - Internal events:**

Build a community around science by organizing internal events, opening the doors to the lab, etc. However, if events are excellent tools when used outside of the company (sales force training, opinion leaders, public, product launches), their use as an internal communications means is limited to specific purposes: only when it is crucial to bring people together, should it be done. Time is too precious to be mobilized in the amounts needed for a seminar. Use these sparingly. It also contributes in making them special.

**Conclusion:**

Scientific communications is a young yet crucial area of modern communications for the beauty industry. Its implementation is essential and requires specific skills and a sound strategy. It takes time and focus on the part of all parties involved. It brings about a shift in company culture and strategy. However, it is what will, in the long run, differentiate those companies that invest heavily in research and obtain results from those that do 'junk' science. For today's customer, the distinction is not yet all that obvious. And it should not be this way. A company that believes in science and brings it to its customers should be collecting the full benefits from it. That is what scientific communications brings to the table: a real return on the scientific investment.

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