

Should your New Product Planning function develop a playbook?

Q4 2016

In our work with NPP teams across a range of life science organizations, we've found that NPP teams face a strikingly similar set of challenges, all of which can limit team effectiveness:

- Cross-functional lack of understanding of the value the NPP team provides to the organization
- Lack of clarity around NPP roles due to changes in organizational structure, personnel turnover, or changes in organizational governance

- Lack of standardized NPP core processes and/or deliverables (which many times leads to disparate levels of performance between NPP team members)
- Animosity/personality conflicts between NPP members and cross-functional collaborators

If any of the challenges listed above sound like your NPP team, perhaps it's time you considered building your own NPP playbook. This article will help you get started.



1. Introduction

NEW PRODUCT PLANNING (NPP) teams instill commercial perspective into agents in development. The teams provide essential commercial insight across the development lifecycle, help companies invest and plan with confidence, and answer such questions as: What is the competitive landscape and our commercial opportunity? Should we advance to clinical trials? How do we best position our agent against emerging competitors? When considering these and many other commercial questions that support successful drug development, the importance of an effective NPP team becomes clear.

However, any of the challenges we have identified can disrupt the efficiency and effectiveness of an NPP team – and an ineffective NPP function can inadvertently lead to crucial gaps in commercial insight for a promising drug candidate. To overcome these challenges, we've helped NPP teams develop and successfully implement an NPP playbook.

The NPP playbook defines the NPP function and vision, outlines core roles, and adds structure to team responsibilities. After successful implementation, the playbook s improves the NPP team visibility in the organization, drives organizational alignment, fosters senior management buy-in, and increases the quality of NPP team and NPP cross-functional collaboration. In addition, the playbook functions as a buffer to organizational change, as there will always be new initiatives, new priorities, or new co-workers who need something from the NPP team, and having a defined playbook ensures that the right resources get to the right people at the right time, regardless of the latest organizational initiative.

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2. The Playbook Mindset

CULTIVATING the right mindset for playbook development is critical for success (Figure 1). It's important to think about why you want a team playbook, whether you're prepared to hear candid feedback from colleagues, and whether your team is committed to the change.

The potential payoffs are great – improved effectiveness and efficiency, more organizational visibility, a recognition of your unique commercial value – but to reap these rewards, the process requires an honest assessment of current challenges and shortcomings.

In general, superficial efforts to change and improve processes or behaviors fail, whereas transparent, authentic efforts gain the respect and honesty needed to obtain feedback that can support lasting, sustainable change.

FIGURE 1

The Mindset for Playbook Development



Keep an open mind.

Begin the process with a transparent willingness to improve. Individuals can see through superficial efforts to change.



Cast a wide net for feedback.

Engage functional stakeholders who directly interact with the NPP on a regular basis, as well as those who interact on a more limited basis. Include stakeholders from across the organization, stakeholders you like and especially those you don't like, and include Senior Management.



Be honest and transparent.

Lay out the facts, and identify areas that need to improve or change. Honest, transparent communication fosters respect from colleagues, as well as better input.



Communicate early and often.

Build out communication check-ins across development. Begin building buy-in before development, continue to engage stakeholders during development with updates, and once development wraps, present and distribute the final playbook.



Commit to the change.

Demonstrate an intent to follow through with the findings.

3. Playbook Approach

THE development of an effective, actionable, and lasting playbook hinges on gaining buy-in and capturing candid feedback from a diverse, but inclusive, mix of internal stakeholders. Stakeholder interviews function as the primary data source for playbook creation, so the quality of the final playbook is dependent upon the

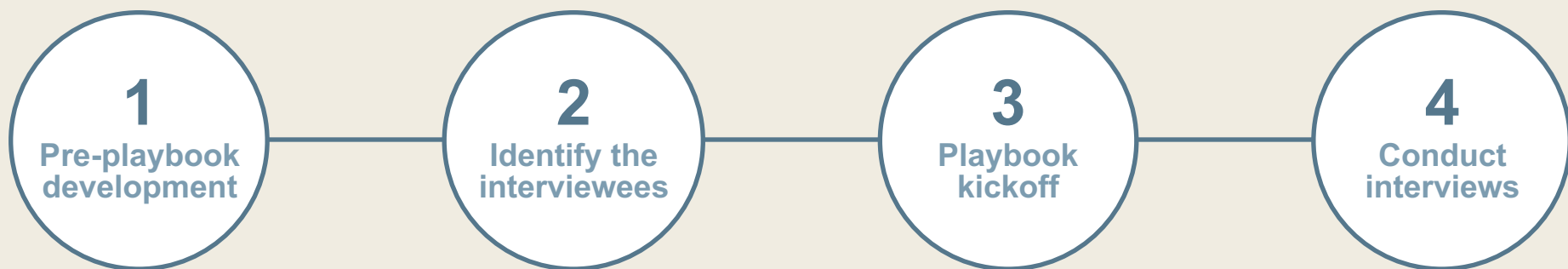
quality, diversity, and candidness of interviewee feedback.

Playbook development simply cannot succeed without the input of others. Thus, the process begins by gaining support from senior management across functions, and identifying and recruiting a diverse sample of colleagues to

interview (see Section 4. for a detailed *Roadmap for Playbook Development*). Ideally, interviews capture feedback around historical NPP interactions, pain points, key inputs and outputs shared between the NPP and other teams, top areas of NPP value, and NPP best practices or critical success factors.

FIGURE 2

Roadmap for Playbook Development

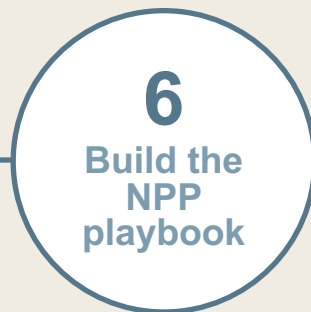


Once the interviews are complete, the NPP playbook is developed and then distributed. The playbook should include information around NPP team definition, activities, and deliverables by stage of development. The playbook also outlines areas where NPP cross-functional interactions will change from historical precedents, and

defines how to best leverage the NPP team across functions moving forward.

Given the document outlines expectations and deliverables, and may also include templates for deliverables, it is important that the NPP team members are onboard with the proposed changes before sharing the playbook more

broadly, as the playbook will raise both the visibility of the NPP team and the level of expectation for the NPP team within the organization.



4. Playbook Development Process

1 Pre-playbook development

GAIN BUY-IN FROM SENIOR MANAGEMENT. Include senior members of clinical development, market access, regulatory, translational medicine, early R&D, and other applicable functions. Being able to point to these senior members as champions of the process will provide traction as you solicit cooperation from colleagues.

2 Identify the interviewees

INSTRUCT THE CORE NPP TEAM TO DEVELOP A MASTER LIST OF INDIVIDUALS WHO THEY DIRECTLY INTERACT WITH, AS WELL AS A LIST OF INDIVIDUALS WHO FUNCTION ON THE PERIPHERY. The list should include representatives from each function, and include people who historically work well with the NPP team as well as those who do not—in fact, especially those who do not work well with the NPP team.

3 Playbook kickoff

ENGAGE THE PROSPECTIVE INTERVIEWEES ONE-ON-ONE. In our experience, when an NPP team member lets their colleagues know that they would like their input into the process, interview engagement rates are higher. This is especially effective if a third party conducts the interviews.

4 Conduct interviews

CANDID FEEDBACK IS CRITICAL, AND CONFIDENTIALITY IS REQUIRED FOR CANDID FEEDBACK. Consider whether an internal representative can capture candid feedback or whether a third party is required. Many of our clients have found that the respondents are more honest when a third party conducts the interviews. Interviewers should ask straightforward, candid questions with the objective of listening and learning, not justifying or retaliating. Consider the following discussion topics for interviews:

- Understand historical interactions with the NPP team as different compounds have moved through clinical development.
- Discuss key outputs the interviewee receives from NPP and key inputs the interviewee provides to NPP.
- Discuss where the NPP team can add the most value.
- Identify NPP best practices and critical success factors based on the interviewee's experience working with the NPP.

5

Development
check-ins

SCHEDULE REGULAR CHECK-INS WITH THE ENTIRE NPP TEAM AND SHARE FEEDBACK FROM THE ONGOING INTERVIEWS. Consider sharing top-line findings up the ladder when you have a sense of the changes that need to be made.

6

Build the
NPP
playbook

THE NPP PLAYBOOK IS A COMPREHENSIVE DOCUMENT THAT OUTLINES THE FUNCTIONAL ROLE OF THE NPP TEAM, THEIR ACTIVITIES, KEY COLLABORATORS, AND DELIVERABLES ACROSS THE DEVELOPMENT CYCLE.

Given the organization will turn to this document to understand NPP functions and expectations, the NPP team needs to be onboard with the included requirements. Such definition may fundamentally shift the way in which the NPP team functions within the organization, and part of the playbook process must address any current shortcomings in processes, team knowledge and skills, and support tools. Consider incorporating the following in the final playbook:

- ☑ **Introduction:** Outline why the playbook was developed. Provide a high level summary of NPP activities, deliverables, and key changes from current practice. Also outline the decision-making bodies the NPP function sits on, and include the type of input they will be expected to provide.
- ☑ **NPP Function by Phase:** Summarize key NPP activities by phase of development. Include the inputs the NPP needs from other teams and the NPP outputs/deliverables. The playbook will be referenced by functions across the

organization, so ensure the NPP team is onboard with committing to the deliverables outlined at each stage. Include best practices for both the NPP function as well as other functions.

- ☑ **Templates:** Ideally, the final playbook includes templates of what other functional team members can expect from the NPP team for assets at each stage of development. Templates help cross-functional colleagues concretely envision the type of insight the NPP can provide.
- ☑ **Time Management:** Include an outline of how to most effectively leverage the NPP team member's time. For example, consider categorizing key topics to be discussed at an upcoming meeting. If the topic is to discuss potential follow-on indications for a late-stage asset, outline the information an NPP team member should be prepared to bring/present (e.g., short summaries of the indications being considered including data for market size, unmet need, sub-populations or biomarker populations, etc.).

7

Share and
distribute the
playbook

SCHEDULE TIME TO PRESENT THE FINDINGS AT SENIOR-LEVEL MEETINGS. Include the honest and candid feedback shared during interviews, the changes that will be made, and the expected gains in cross-functional collaboration. In addition, plan to present a summary of the findings at product team meetings so all team members can have the same understanding of the NPP team member role and how to best utilize their skills.

5. Team Benefits beyond the Playbook Itself

The goal for building out a playbook is, first and foremost, to create a document that clearly defines the NPP function and responsibilities in order to improve NPP effectiveness. For NPP team members, the primary benefit is improved clarity around team and individual expectations and actions. As one NPP team member noted, *“Overwhelmed is the feeling I had when I first reviewed all the responsibilities and deliverables [as an NPP team member]. The good news is that I was able to stop doing some things that were outside my role. I had been helping our Global Product Lead with questions that should have been directed to someone in CMC [Chemistry, Manufacturing, and Controls]. After channeling the questions to him, I freed up a lot of time to focus on other things.”* The candid, transparent nature of the process also provides NPP team members the opportunity to strengthen their relationships with colleagues.

Another NPP team member noted,

“It was hard to hear the feedback from the other functions at first, but when I was able to sit down with folks one-on-one and explain how we planned to improve, [the] relationship got a lot better.”

In our work with clients, we’ve found that the process of NPP playbook development can also have meaningful secondary benefits for the interviewees and teams who provide feedback. One interviewee noted, *“I knew there was frustration on the clinical team with NPP but I didn’t think they cared. This interview has been the perfect forum for me to provide candid feedback.”* This interviewee’s comments underscore how colleagues value and appreciate the opportunity to express long-standing concerns.

Another interviewee appreciated the process because it helped him understand the breadth of NPP activities and contextualize the team’s historical behavior, noting, “I thought I knew what NPP did and thought they were just distracted from helping me on the Global Product Team; I didn’t realize that Business Development and other efforts were real drains on their time.”

Finally, interviewee comments highlight how important it is to share the final findings in a transparent way across the organization. This final step is an opportunity to not only disseminate the information, but acts as a vehicle to improve cross-functional relationships.

As one interviewee noted,

“When we sat down to review the final playbook, I was impressed that not only had my input been considered, but the team highlighted where changes had been made on what I had shared, and they also discussed where they had considered my comments but other factors resulted in them choosing a different direction.”

6. Conclusion

NPP teams face a number of challenges, from the struggle to define their function to the need for standardized templates, tools, and processes that both showcase their unique commercial value and facilitate effective cross-functional collaboration. Naturally, many NPP teams are searching for ways to improve their effectiveness. The process of developing a NPP playbook becomes an opportunity to improve cross-functional relationships, whereas the final playbook is a tangible tool that gives NPP teams a way to define their team's function and value, heightened visibility within the organization, and a roadmap to enhance their contributions across the drug development lifecycle.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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BRAD is a Vice President for Artisan Healthcare Consulting, and advises clients on how to optimize commercial outcomes for their own pipeline. This includes new product planning, compound differentiation, reimbursement and market access strategies, and go-to-launch planning. He has lead and delivered >100 consulting engagements with established and emerging pharmaceutical, biotech, and medical device companies, with projects spanning multiple therapeutic areas, including oncology, rare diseases, cardio-vascular, and vaccines.

Brad's areas of expertise include:

- Building cross-functional alignment in new product development, allowing teams to identify key imperatives and move forward quickly and decisively
- Providing up-to-date insights to key questions that drive development decisions, many times by supporting surveillance activities
- Helping teams outline the development pathway needed to ensure their product is effectively differentiated at launch

Prior to joining Artisan, Brad worked as a consultant at Trinity Partners, a healthcare advisory firm. He holds a BA (cum laude) in Economics from Harvard University and an MBA from Arizona State University.



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