

5 Tips for a constructive budget conversation



#5 Be Inclusive

Don't be a martyr, include everyone.

Go back to #1 in this series where **Adam Fraser** talked about emotions and how you show up. If you are entering into the process showing up focused on self, the likelihood is your aspirations of the outcome are a positive view of you by the audience. You could be coming into this from two different angles, self-preservation, meaning you just want to survive, or self-promotion, which speaks for itself. Either way the outcome is all about you. You are off to a bad start.

We observe this frequently in the industry, which drives silos, people out for themselves or their function not the brand, team, or company, let alone the customer. Silos are evident in most organisations. Even when we are regularly in communication across functions, silos prevail as does a general lack of understanding and empathy for one another. It used to be the classic sales vs marketing. Now we see more marketing vs medical vs sales. The pandemic created Omnichannel vs medical vs sales vs marketing etc. Accept it, they are there, and you play your part in maintaining silos, consciously and unconsciously.

When it comes to the planning process, the presentation part relies on a team, be it at brand, country, region, or global level. A well prepared and aligned team, all believing in a 'What is possible' story is powerful. However, to get there you need to involve everyone early into your thinking, and importantly listen to theirs. Basically, invest time in getting out of your silo and into someone else's, it is the easiest way to break down silos and broaden your perspective. If they have a different one to you, better to know and understand earlier, rather than 1 week out or in the actual presentation.

Go back to #4 in the series on 'Be Prepared', where **Okan Comelek** explained, *"A good team never lets any member get boiled under pressure alone, we should always chip in, take ownership of the mistakes or errors in our collective story. This can only happen if you have included everyone."*

So, if how you intend to show up is about self, you may need to start preparing yourself for feeling isolated, anxious, defensive, and frustrated. You may also want to ask why you don't fully trust anyone. Why waste the energy and subject yourself to that level of stress? Asking for help, sharing, listening, all build trust. Lead by example and others will follow. You will grow and so will they.

Dr Andrew McMahon
Regional Medical Advisor –
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Having completed his PhD and a postdoctoral fellowship, Andrew started his career in the Pharma industry as a sales representative. His career has diversified since, growing into hospital sales and then to an MSL. His career has continued to develop in medical where he now leads the Bayer Ophthalmology region APAC medical affairs team.



Rock8 Science
Uncomplicated Success

For this series we will hear from Andrew McMahon who has a diverse background starting with carrying the bag as a rep, through to being an MSL to the regional medical lead for Ophthalmology.

How would you summarise the importance of being inclusive during the planning process?

Andrew – There can be a tendency for different functions to look ‘down their nose’ at one another. We are all guilty of it at times, medical, commercial, sales, market access etc. can often focus on the perceived shortcomings of other functions and overlook the strengths. A basic example for instance would be the salespeople, they are the practical implimenters of strategy and tactics at the coal face, a marketing team disconnected from their sales experts can inevitably end up championing ineffective messaging and initiatives. Not consulting with medical can mean campaigns and initiatives may be developed with endemic code compliance issues. Early inclusive involvement of medical can almost always allow the desired message to be conveyed effectively and compliantly. On the flip side Medical affairs may get very excited about a particular piece of basic science, neglecting to consult with their field teams to gauge its actual clinical relevance and also with the commerical teams to asses if that particular dataset aligns with the goals of the broader business.

From each team’s individual perspective, an idea can be seen as brilliant, but if you neglect to align with all relevant stakeholders things can arrive dead in the water. The worst place for that to happen is mid business plan pitch.

How has a lack of inclusion impacted you and your team? What would you recommend for others?

Andrew – Usually for me it’s a sense of frustration that a lack of collaboration has resulted in quite a bit of wasted time for all involved. A good idea may fail at the starting blocks as it has been poorly pitched. Obviously one of the worst places for a lack of collaboration to be evident is at a yearly business plan presentation.

Quick cross functional alignments at the beginning or end of the process can be just as disruptive. Checking in every now and again with your cross functional partners isn’t really teamwork, all functions need to feel a sense of ownership of the plan not just that they are helping marketing with a bit of information here or there. Highly effective teams work together throughout, leveraging one another’s strengths constantly. Ideally integrate the plans with one another, what’s useful about all the different functions writing their own discrete story, when you can instead write a compelling overarching narrative?



As a key stakeholder, what 4 pieces of advice would you give to those going into their planning cycles?

Andrew –

1. Involve relevant teams early and constantly, give them a sense of ownership and accountability for the entire plan not just a discrete section.
2. Listen and recognise the value of the other teams perspectives.
3. Integrate your plans as much as possible, bringing everything together into a clear and cohesive story.
4. Write the story together, no one wants to hear a story written by a bunch of authors that have not aligned on the plot.

What would you do differently for yourself and your team?

Andrew - Thinking back, being more proactive about establishing the above culture would have been beneficial. The commercial arm of the business tends to 'own' the brand planning process but that's not to say that they are the only function that can drive change in how it is put together. The ball is in everyone's court here, if you see things as not working as well as they could, don't wait for someone else to fix it. I am sure the belaboured marketer who is putting the plan together would welcome the extra involvement.

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