
ESSAY

Why the world wants marketing experts

Philip Carrigan
Partner, Optia Partners

Demand for internationally minded Japanese marketing experts is booming as foreign companies continue to dominate the pharmaceutical industry. People with 5-10 years work experience who have strong contacts among key opinion leaders, who are experienced in launching new products and are specialists in a specific therapeutic area are in high demand.

As an executive search consultant for the pharmaceutical industry, I have seen a dramatic shift in the balance between domestic and foreign companies over the past 10 years. Demand for marketing talent has grown as foreign companies keep launching more 'blockbuster' products that need strong sales support and strategic alliances. A common belief in Japan exists that many of the foreign companies have the strongest pipelines but not always the best people. On the other hand, Japanese companies have been forced to merge or have been acquired and this has led to a paradigm shift in the psyche of Japanese professionals.

Employees at Japanese firms who were once lifetime employment system loyalists are now considering options at competitor companies despite in some

cases being the third generation of family members to be hired by the same firm.

In one instance, a candidate who was offered redundancy, quickly took the package and moved to one of the top foreign companies with both a promotion and a salary increase.

Pharmaceutical companies are not the only businesses in the market for high caliber talent. Consulting agencies are also seeking top people to fill senior positions. As Japanese companies strive to compete they are looking to consulting companies to maximize returns on marketed products and to develop strategic marketing plans to launch new products.

The big Pharma and consulting companies are not the only players demanding marketing candidates. Smaller Pharma and Bio Pharma and Medical device companies are all trying to regain control of their sales and marketing plans. As local operations in Japan are pressured by HQ to implement a global strategy for the local market, demand for bilingual Japanese marketing professionals will continue to grow.