

cynergy

# perspective



talent news for the asia-pacific  
pharmaceutical industry

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As a search firm specialising in the pharmaceutical industry we spend our days listening to your employees. We hear from those who are satisfied by their work and others who are not.

*cynergy perspective* shares our view of the talent market and highlights some key issues concerning your people. We'd welcome your rejoinder, please email: [gc15@cynergysearch.com.au](mailto:gc15@cynergysearch.com.au)

Yours sincerely,  
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## talent market overview

*"when the united states sneezes the rest of the world catches a cold"*

Right now, this adage holds very true for the pharmaceutical industry. The current economic downturn has caused many US-based global companies to further tighten their belts. And as gaps appear, the workload is being re-distributed within a team, rather than finding a replacement. No new phenomenon, but we have reached a point whereas a result of unrelenting pressure, your remaining staff are exploring employment options as never before.

At the senior end of the spectrum we have rarely had so many business leaders actively searching for a career move — it's a great time to upgrade your talent pool!

In middle management there is still a critical shortage, particularly in marketing, regulatory affairs and clinical research.

Over the past 12 months we have seen a significant jump in demand for candidates with OTC or generic experience. The relatively small size of this market in Australia has made these people extremely difficult to source. Those who previously ignored this industry sector are now actively pursuing it as part of their career development.

Keen to explore their options, people have become increasingly selective about the companies they will work for. Key issues most often raised at interview are: company culture; work-life balance; product pipeline; and location.

## culture matters

### *“why didn't someone tell me?”*

As search consultants we often find ourselves asking questions which, if asked by their employer, would end with staff retention rather than a search brief. A senior industry HR practitioner was remarking on the lack of honest feedback received from their executive team. An issue developed which, if caught earlier, could have been resolved by counselling, rather than by the person being managed out of the business.

Recently, we achieved a milestone when we registered every single Product Manager from a major pharmaceutical company. All professed to be happy in their current job, but they felt that the company was under-resourced and indicated a strong desire to move in the short term.

When interviewed they expressed dissatisfaction with lack of recognition for: 10 hour days; time spent away from home; and concerns that they were falling behind peers in other companies. Those with more than two years experience, the majority, were looking for promotion to Senior Product Manager but did not believe that their current employer could provide that opportunity in the short, or medium, term. No candidates indicated remuneration as a determining factor in their desire to move, and those we have placed have not received significant salary increases.

Although this company champions a culture of continuous improvement, the experience of all their Product Managers indicates otherwise. Failure to ask, or answer, the difficult questions has resulted in a company blissfully unaware that their marketing team is on the move.

## work-life balance

### *the gorilla in the room*

Everybody wants it but nobody really knows what it is.

The more senior you are the more you want it, and the less you can have.

Few have it, and even fewer know they have it.

Work-life balance continues to be the hot topic at interview. The best definition came from a client of mine: *‘Work-life balance is the ability to achieve both work and personal goals in harmony’.*

Many companies have a less holistic and more simplistic view and see it as ‘more life less work’. They have tried to redress the imbalance by trying to give back some time to their executives. Such initiatives include offering flexible start and finish times and having an early ‘knock off’ on Friday. However, the work doesn’t go away and getting your staff to take advantage of such schemes is a lot harder than devising them.

...so what about the gorilla in the room?

We believe that few companies acknowledge the existence of the gorilla in the room—travel. Time spent away from home has a double impact on family/social life: the time away when you’re travelling, and the additional time spent catching up on work when you get back. After culture and their boss, excess travel is the most common reason given when looking to move. Where companies have made a concerted effort to increase the use of web-based meeting technology, executive travel has been reduced by 20–30%. (see: Time Management: Increase Your Personal Productivity and Effectiveness - Harvard Business School Press 2005). Yet many pharmaceutical companies persist with the belief that face-to-face meetings are the only way to achieve results—we recently received a brief for a senior manager which stipulated over 50% of their time would be spent travelling.

In our own business we moved to web and telephone interviewing many years ago and have placed a significant number of candidates from overseas and interstate without ever meeting. We consider such investment in meeting technology, and the cultural change that goes with it, brings significant positive impact to the bottom line: improving retention rates and reducing overheads.

## regional co-operation?

Over the past 12 months we have noticed an increasing trend for pharmaceutical companies to move away from appointing 'expats' to senior roles in their Asia-Pacific operations. The ideal profile generally describes someone with close cultural links to the host country and formal training in one of the major global markets.

The 'silo' mentality continues to dominate when it comes to Asia-Pacific employee development. As an example: an executive from the Malaysian subsidiary of a global company recently approached us looking for a role in Australia; we placed them with the Australian operation of the same company!

This strategy shift falters because, as yet, global organisations are not committed to developing employees within their own subsidiaries.

## top talent

### Shortage of top talent...what shortage?

Top talent is out there but just happens to be working for someone else! In an environment where the very best people only respond to a personal approach, we are able to present the right opportunity to the right person and make a compelling argument for change.

current/past position	location	salary AUD	overview
CEO	Australia	\$neg	A PhD qualified executive with a strong R&D and commercial background looking to move to Australia.
Director, Global Business Development	Australia, US, Asia Pacific	\$500k+	US-based senior executive with significant global experience.
Sales Director	Sydney	\$350k+	Strong leader with exceptional FMCG and liquor background.
Human Resources Director	Sydney	\$300k+	Top flight HRD with blue-chip professional services and FMCG experience.
Director OTC Business	Sydney, Melbourne	\$300k+	Experienced senior sales executive with excellent business acumen and people skills.
Regional Marketing Director	Sydney, Singapore	\$200k+	Strong people manager with eclectic experience across pharma and biotech.
Regional Marketing Manager	Sydney	\$200k+	Regarded by her previous CEO as one of the best marketers he has ever worked with.
Group Marketing Manager	Sydney, India, Singapore	\$200k+	Ambitious and energetic marketing manager with track record of delivering exceptional results.
Marketing Manager	Sydney, overseas	\$200k+	Exceptional marketing manager.
Group Product Manager	Sydney	\$200k	An intelligent and commercially astute marketer.
National Sales Manager	Sydney	\$200k	Experienced and dynamic sales manager capable of working in any health care discipline.

current/past position	location	salary AUD	overview
National Sales Manager	Sydney	\$180k	Ambitious, highly motivate sales manager looking for a career opportunity with a mainstream pharmaceutical company.
Sales Manager	Sydney	\$150k	Excellent team leader and motivator looking for a hands-on role.
Senior Brand Manager	Sydney	\$150k	A highly intelligent, personable candidate with sales and marketing experience in ethical and consumer pharmaceuticals.
Senior Brand Manager	Sydney	\$150k	A really smart marketer with good experience in grocery and pharmacy channels across a range of products.
Senior Brand Manager	Sydney	\$150k	A master's qualified marketer who has worked on some of the largest brands in Australia. A dynamic candidate with real passion.
Senior Brand Manager	Sydney	\$150k	Experienced and innovative marketer looking to take the next career step.
Senior Product Manager	Sydney, Asia Pacific	\$180k	Over eight years experience as an SPM working in a niche therapeutic area.
Senior Product Manager	Sydney	\$180k	A bright and dynamic marketer with an exceptional passion for his products.
Product Manager	Sydney	\$140k	Great intellect, great people skills, great personality and two years experience at this level.
Product Manager	Sydney	\$140k	A mature and experienced individual with a great academic background.