

Eli Lilly: the elvista project essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

1. What is a “heavyweight project team” and how does it differ from the traditional approach used for organizing projects at Eli Lilly? Their traditional approach was much less organized and personal. Heavy weight teams at Eli Lilly were setup so that specialized individuals would work on one project (as opposed to several) led by a project manager. The project manager would then designate individual jobs and make sure that they were completed. Five key characteristics made up a heavy weight project team. The first characteristic was that the team was to “focus on the development of a single compound”. Second the teams were co-located and cross functional. Third each team was led by a “heavyweight project manager”. Fourth, each team took responsibility for the results, actions, and substance of their work. Fifth each team had two executive sponsors, one from Lilly Research Labs and one from a business group.

2. What is your assessment of the two heavyweight project teams described in the case? What factors contributed most to these performance results? In the pharmaceutical context, how far back in the development process should heavyweight teams be deployed (e. g., just for Phase III, Phase II-B, Phase II-A, Phase I)? Why? Both Heavyweight project teams were extremely successful. Evista and Zyprexa cut back on development time and development costs while also improving the quality of their work. During the Evista project you can see how well the “heavyweight project team” dealt with mishaps. Evista handled a problem, which should have delayed them 4 weeks, in a weeks’ time. For both the Zyprexa and Evista team, the project managers played a pivotal role because they were in charge of all ongoing aspects of the project.

This led to the development of a “ system solution”, rather than functional groups focusing on a certain end state. Heavyweight Teams should be deployed in Phase III through the FDA approval process. These phases include many complicated and critical tasks. In order to complete these tasks in a timely manner with high quality, it would be very wise to implement a Heavy Weight team here. Any mistakes can then be fixed quickly and all tasks can be completed on time. Phase III takes 3 years and involves 1000-3000 patient volunteers to monitor adverse reactions to long term use. FDA Review takes 2-3 years and involves hundreds of thousands of pages of applications and write ups that are included in the New Drug Application.

3. Is the “ heavyweight” project teams an approach that you would recommend to Lilly for commercialization of the Evista product? What additional recommendations would you make to Lilly management concerning the use of heavyweight teams going forward? At this time I don't think Evista should look into expanding heavyweight project teams across commercialization. As of right now, there is turmoil within the company because they believe the heavyweight project teams have access to an excessive amount of resources. Bringing in another heavyweight project team for commercialization will possibly escalate that turmoil.

At the same time, the use of heavyweight project teams for commercialization will bring more product expertise towards the end of line where the sale is made. If Evista integrated its sales team within its development team, they could reduce the amount of time it takes to transfer information. My suggestion to Evista would be to start small if they were thinking about implementing a heavyweight project team for

commercialization. Possibly start by bringing some of the marketing team down into development, and then they can relay the message to the rest of marketing. As of right now Lilly has very limited man power, so this will put pressure on their labor force and continue to hurt their other ongoing projects. If Lilly were to implement a heavyweight project team, their R&D and marketing spending would have to increase to compensate for the allocation of labor.