

The power of
'brand' for
long-term growth
in life sciences.

This playbook delves into the key misunderstandings surrounding brand and gives CMOs the tools they need to prove that a strong brand is a company's most powerful lever in securing long-term growth in the sector.



“To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.”

- Albert Einstein

In the health and life science industries, capturing the value of good branding often gets lost amongst the noise when it comes to business priorities. An industry rooted in complex and nuanced research is, by nature, sceptical of dedicating time and resources to compelling and creative brand storytelling.

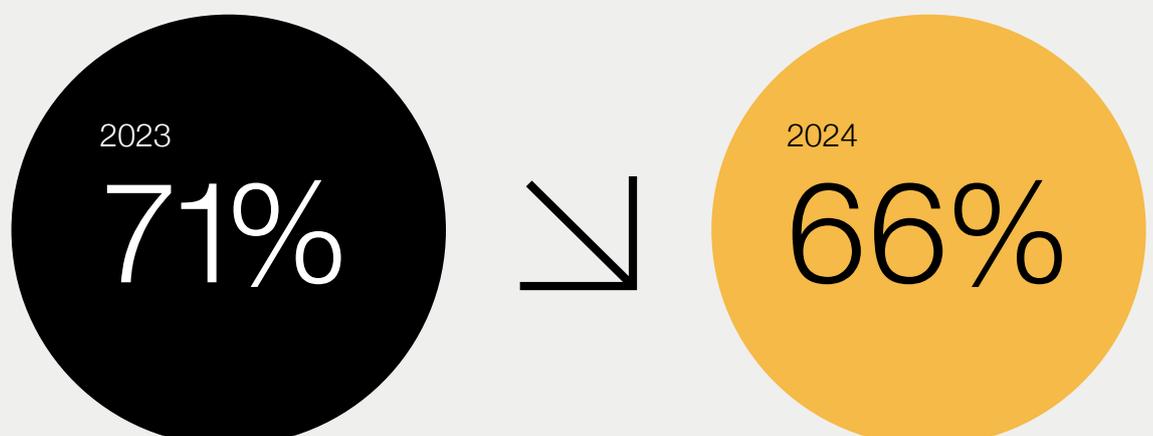
For this reason, CMOs often face an uphill battle when it comes to communicating the value of brand strategy to the board, and crucially, its power as a growth engine. Beyond this, organisations that are growing rapidly or need to prove value to investors can leverage brand to achieve this.

From working with major organisations through exit plans or investment rounds, we've seen that the reason a company is bought is often simply because the buyer likes what the brand stands for.

This in itself is a clear indicator of a link between the financial value of an organisation and its brand.

The challenge is also evident when we look at the decline of CMOs with a seat at the decision-making table, which continues to drop year-on-year, from 71% in 2023 to 66% in 2024.¹

But this is changing rapidly.



¹ Bettati, A., Jacobs, J., Robinson, K. & Tas, R., 2025. The CMO's comeback: Aligning the C-suite to drive customer-centric growth. McKinsey. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/the-cmos-comeback-aligning-the-c-suite-to-drive-customer-centric-growth>

Digital innovation has been named the top priority for boardroom execs in 2025², with two key implications for CMOs:

1. ■

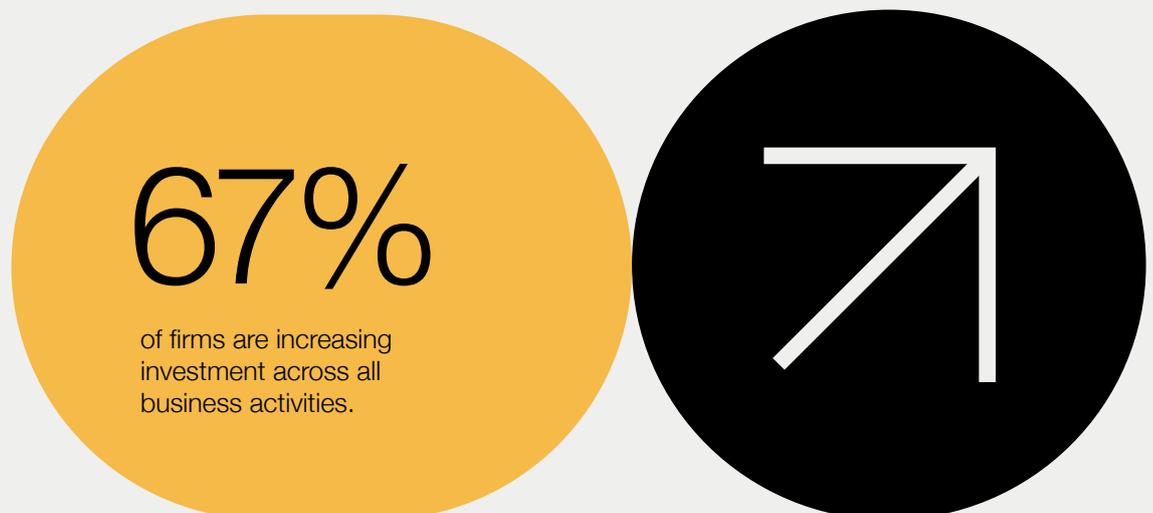
Marketing was named as one of the most significant functions in achieving business objectives, ranking above sales.

2. ■

C-suite executives are increasingly citing improved brand profile and reputation as a top priority (up 9% in the last 12 months).³

Crucially, in the UK life sciences sector, 67% of firms are increasing investment across all business activities, with the top priorities being digital transformation and product and service delivery.⁴

So we know there is an appetite for forward-thinking growth and innovation, as well as an opportunity to position branding as a key driver of transformation within the sector.



² Thomson Reuters Institute (2025) 2025 C-Suite Survey: Benefits and AI and digital transformation. Available at: <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2025/05/2025-C-Suite-Report.pdf>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Forvis Mazars (2025) C-Suite Barometer: Life Sciences & Pharmaceuticals [online]. Available at: <https://www.forvismazars.com/uk/en/insights/healthcare-and-pharma-insights/pharma-and-life-sciences-insights/c-suite-barometer-life-sciences-pharmaceuticals>

This guide offers CMOs a data-led approach to understand brand as one of the most powerful tools for innovation, cultural transformation, and long-term competitiveness.

We have combined stakeholder interviews, client insights, sector reports, and market research to uncover the most common misconceptions about brand within life sciences.

By the end of this guide,
you will have:

1.

Several **measurable examples** of how brand strategy increased business growth in the sector.

2.

A bank of **case studies and anecdotes** from leading companies in the industry to back this up.

3.

Three ways a brand strategy can **solve business challenges** in life sciences.

Short on time?

Skip to **page 23** for the key takeaways to show your C-suite right now.

Six misunderstandings we hear time and time again.



“Science
speaks
for itself”

1.

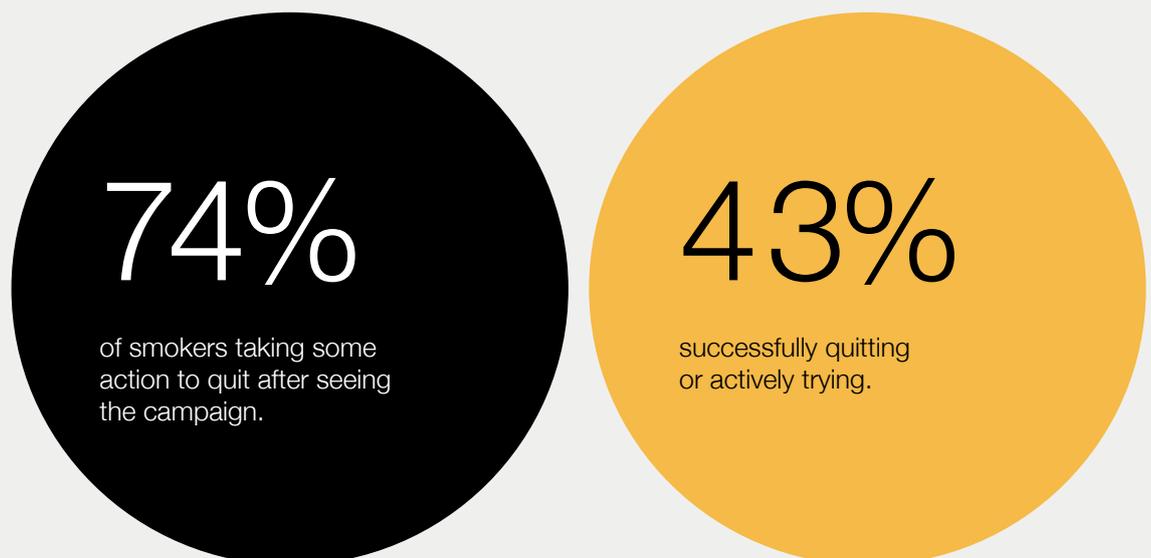
Particularly in life sciences, a brand strategy is often misunderstood as a nicely packaged way to communicate what has already been achieved, rather than a way to drive life-changing outcomes.

A prime example of the real-world impact of a good brand strategy (and no, we don't just mean the visual identity) is Greater Manchester's anti-smoking campaign.

Through interviews to understand the audience for the campaign, we found that quitting smoking is rarely a one-time decision. We found that it takes on average 30 attempts for a smoker to quit. Looking beyond the stats and data, the campaign transforms this into a branding strategy to create cultural change.

The initiative 'Make Smoking History' was created, centring around supportive messaging rather than a traditional public health campaign.

It celebrated the determination of those trying to quit, reframing past attempts as progress rather than failure.



This is a clear example of how reframing scientific research through emotive messaging drove real-world health outcomes.

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“Branding
is more
relevant for a
B2C strategy”

2.

This misconception is deeply rooted in the outdated idea that a brand is merely a creative campaign to encourage buy-in from consumers, rather than something that will drive growth and achieve business goals long-term.

For example, when our team was tasked to create a pivotal rebrand strategy for Springer Health+, it was clear this was a strategic move to convey a more connected business offering.

The brand purpose was transformed. From a trusted publisher in medical science to bridging the gap between science education and real-life impact for organisations across pharmaceuticals, biotech, and medical devices.

When talking about its new B2B strategy, Fabien Kaufmann, CEO of Springer Health+ explained:

“The rebrand has sharpened our focus and unified our teams around a clear purpose - to be a trusted, outcome-focused partner for healthcare professionals.

We’ve moved from being seen as a publisher to being recognised as a strategic ally, combining global reach with local expertise to better support our community and improve patient outcomes.”

- Fabien Kaufmann

The bottom line

When a brand strategy is developed with business goals in mind, it goes beyond creating buzz and attention, and can transform reputation across all stakeholder groups: driving culture, value, and behaviour both internally and externally.

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“The impact
of branding
can’t be
measured”

3.

We know real-world data resonates, and when the brief is just to ‘raise brand awareness’, a health initiative suddenly feels diluted and loses meaning.

Measuring success is not about your brand name or even your company’s mission. It’s about a transformative shift in attitude, where your brand becomes synonymous with the solution.

When 67% of us won’t share health data with our loved ones, how do you inspire people to share it with a nation?

Our Future Health, a flagship initiative in the UK Government’s life sciences strategy, is on a mission to shift public thinking from reactive to proactive health care, focusing on the early detection of disease.

Through a carefully designed branding strategy backed by data-driven insight, the results were groundbreaking. In just two years, 2.5 million volunteers, more than one every minute, signed up to take part, making Our Future Health the world’s largest health research programme.

Our Future Health is on a mission to shift public thinking from reactive to proactive health care, focusing on the early detection of disease.

When 67% of us won't share health data with our loved ones, how do you inspire people to share it with a nation?



[Learn how we did it](#)

“Brand only
matters
externally”

4.

A company's most important stakeholder is its employees, with People Insight reporting 21% higher profitability in organisations with highly engaged employees.

Branding starts with a strong internal culture and unified understanding, where staff not only identify with your brand mission but are motivated to embody it. As CMOs, it is imperative to lead the charge in delivering this mission, ensuring the brand is understood, embraced, and consistently reflected across the organisation.

In the private sector, our recent work with an education platform reflects the power of crafting a sophisticated brand strategy for an internal mindshift.

Through brand workshops, staff consultations, and an internal film, we were able to reinvent and streamline its internal decision-making processes. We transformed its sporadic approach to trying out new ideas into a clear brand strategy so staff know exactly what to prioritise by ironing out inconsistencies across its sub-brands for a more considered and robust decision-making process.



A GOV.UK report found that NHS staff advocacy (willingness to recommend their trust for treatment) was associated with **better service quality, higher patient satisfaction, lower absenteeism, and better financial performance.**

“Brand can’t
influence
regulatory
outcomes”

5.

Brand doesn't just use storytelling to change perceptions, but can influence long-term regulatory outcomes in life sciences.

For example, poor brand strategy, design, and messaging risks damaging credibility, leading to greater scrutiny by regulators, especially when materials are used in product information, claims, or clinical communications.

The key here is understanding that brand isn't a superficial means of communication, and regulators will often examine company materials to ensure they are accessible, avoiding language that can exclude, confuse, or alienate stakeholders as part of their review process.

“Brand is
only needed
when there’s
something
to advertise”

6.

Although it may seem that branding will be most valuable after launching a new product or initiative, what actually generates the most valuable results is consistently drip-feeding brand messaging.

It's not a case of flashy branding for the sake of it, but rather understanding the role of brand in communicating the science, to make the product, initiative, programme, or findings as impactful as possible.

We know companies that implement a long-term brand strategy lead to growth time and time again, protecting and building reputation so your stakeholders know where you are when they need you. Arguably, it's this investment into the company vision and mission that can actually set how ambitious the science becomes.

A prime example of this is when a national wholesaler TIMCO was acquired by Bufab, a Swedish-based supply chain partner in March 2022. Bufab cited the enhanced market perception as a key driver behind the purchase, showcasing the value of consistent messaging to drive value proposition, market position and overall competitiveness.

The key ways brand strategy is solving business problems every day.

From speaking with key players in life sciences, drawing on sector-wide insight, and identifying the pain points for stakeholders, here are the key problems we are seeing businesses face and how brands can help tackle these head-on.

Building trust

With the rise of AI, trust is dropping rapidly. The spread of misinformation means that unless you are communicating consistently, accessibly, and in the right way, you risk being disregarded. Maintaining trust requires clear brand storytelling to break through the noise.

Complex messaging

The nature of the industry means complex terms and language can isolate your stakeholders, but similarly, communicating in overly simple terms risks credibility. Working with a branding and communications specialist with sector experience means getting this balance right to gain and maintain trust with your audience.

Internal barriers

As with external communications, complexity within life sciences can leave your internal staff feeling disconnected from your organisation's purpose. Implementing a robust brand strategy that addresses your employees will encourage advocacy, strengthening your reputation.

What you need to know



If you take away five things from this guide, here's what you need:

1.

Branding is intrinsically linked to the success of an organisation, whether it be long-term growth, an acquisition, or an exit plan.

2.

A strong brand strategy drives real-world impact and cultural transformation - not just for external audiences, but for employee advocacy, too.

3.

Internal brand alignment is just as critical as external messaging.

4.

Branding is measurable, and its influence is long lasting - turning complex data into national movements and behaviour shifts.

5.

The role of brand in building trust is more important than ever. Clear, value-driven brand communication improves share of voice among healthcare professionals and regulators.

Our experience

True North has 25 years of experience in building successful cases for brand strategy to the board, with our strategies, we help communicate the value of pioneering work in the life sciences industry.

“Working with True North really changed my perspective on what brand means, and how important it is to the strategic planning of any scientific institute or enterprise.

Rather than being all ‘fluff’ (the ill-informed preconception among many scientists), True North helped us identify why we do the science we do, what makes it so exciting, and how to communicate that to other people.

- Dr. Jeff Barrett, Director,
Wellcome Trust, Sanger Institute

If you want to find out how we can help,
or are interested in seeing more of our
strategic approach to brand, get in
touch today.

[Find out more](#)