

Case Study: Ariana Pharma



Biomarker Company Strategy Workshop

Discovering and testing new therapies for oncology, virology and home healthcare is becoming increasingly expensive and taking longer. Ariana, a spin-out from the world-famous Pasteur Institute in Paris, has developed and productised sophisticated analytical software that can reduce time and cost.

As part of its international growth, Ariana wanted to make sure it was focussing its commercial and economic resources in the right areas. To support this objective, Milner Strategic Marketing designed and ran a 2-day workshop and produced a draft corporate strategy document.

As a result of Ariana Pharma's strategy review, resources were reprioritised and the company has had its most successful commercial year since its foundation in 2003.



About Ariana

Ariana Pharma is a provider of advanced, clinical and biomarker data analytics technology that can trace its roots back to the world-famous Pasteur Institute in Paris. Ariana's technology exhaustively mines data, increasing the success of both clinical trials and multi-parametric diagnostic tools. Its team is made up of highly-qualified biostatisticians, software developers, clinical experts and business developers who combine their skills with software to save their customers a significant amount of time and money.

Ariana analyses multi-parametric data (biochemical, genomic, proteomic, genetic, metabolic, patient characteristics, etc.) to identify patient responders and reduce clinical and developmental risk in drug formulation. Ariana's biomarker data analysis service also helps its clients develop robust biomarker signatures and find the best combinations in their data.

Ariana Pharma is headquartered in Paris and has offices in Boston, MA and a partner in Tokyo. Ariana has strong collaboration with academic institutions (Institut Pasteur, CNRS), large enterprises (GSK, Novartis, Pfizer, etc.) and the FDA in the US to help accelerate the discovery and development process of new therapies and medicines.

Ariana's Requirement

Ariana wanted to review its strategy as part of its international growth planning. The company knew that its market experience and clinical and biomarker data analytics were excellent but needed reviewing from a strategic market perspective.

A number of important market-facing activities (web-site refresh, PR and other marketing communications) were scheduled, but needed the clarity of a corporate strategy review.

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Milner's Solution

Milner designed and ran a 2-day company strategy workshop for the CEO, Chairman, Non-executive directors and senior team and drafted the company's strategy.

Interview the leadership and analyse the market

All attendees were interviewed using a structured interview technique by phone. Additional individuals were interviewed including the head of the FDA pharmacogenomics department and a biotech investor. Their comments were analysed in conjunction with Milner market analysis to identify the key focus areas for the workshop.

Design a customised workshop

Following the initial interview calls, a draft agenda was discussed with the CEO. After several iterations the final agenda was agreed, including who on the leadership team should present each area to ensure the best data, maintain responsibility and ensure ownership of the final strategy. The workshop design was 100% customised to Ariana's requirements.

Run the workshop and collect actions

Milner produced the strategy workshop material with input from the presenters, syndicate exercises agreed with the CEO and analysis from the structured interviews. Milner facilitated the workshop, oversaw the exercises and collected the action points.

Draft Ariana's strategy

At the end of the workshop, Milner reviewed all the material produced before and during the workshop and produced a condensed strategy document. This allowed the management team to go back to their day job knowing that a draft strategy was being quickly and objectively produced. The document was delivered 2 days after workshop.



Ariana's Benefits

1. Focussing on the right deal size

Ariana reviewed its target customer segments, geographical focus and the question of deal size during the workshop. Amid all the day to day client work, "it took 6 months for the penny to drop" on optimum deal size, said the CEO. Now with the right focus the size and duration of contract, "Ariana will have its best financial year and the future company growth trajectory looks very, very strong."

2. Refocussing on who we are

As a company in the fast moving, international biotech market, Ariana's technology could be used in many areas. The workshop "helped us to refocus on who we are and what we were trying to do." This helped Ariana to assign resources to the right parts of the company and accelerated the decision-making process.

3. Clarity of message

The strategy work exercises on refocusing and agreeing the company's market position made the planned website refresh much easier, resulted in better presentations to potential customers, and got the entire leadership team 'singing from the same hymn sheet'.

4. Ceasing to fight the competition

Before the workshop, Ariana had always seen the competition as threat to be countered directly. As a result of the Milner champagne slide ("now famous in our company"), Ariana now sees competition as evidence of market growth and customer appetite for services in its area. By respecting its competitors and explaining what those businesses do, Ariana's customers see it as a larger and more mature player. "It's like Judo, we are now using our competitors' energy to help us achieve our objectives," said CEO Mohammad Afshar.

"As part of our company growth planning, I commissioned Milner Ltd to create and run a special strategy workshop for my board and management team in Paris. Before the workshop, Nick Milner interviewed all the attendees to understand their view on the opportunities and the threats. He also arranged for specific attendees to prepare presentations on key topics to present at the workshop. The two-day workshop agenda included presentations, syndicate exercises and discussion sessions. The day after the workshop, I received a copy of a draft strategy document and a copy of all the slides and material created at the workshop. The whole process was expertly run and my colleagues thought it was a great success. Following the workshop, I personally appreciated the practical input and recommendations about what needs to be done to deliver our strategy from sales, to our web and PR plans. I highly recommend the Milner strategy workshop."

Mohammad Afshar, MD, PhD
CEO
Ariana Pharma