

Launching a D2C Consumer Line to Generate 9.9M in Revenue and Supporters While Conducting Clinical Trials for Topical Biotherapeutics

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Strategic business development is one of the most critical aspects of succeeding in the biotechnology industry.

A company's executive team will often consider multiple paths to increase market share. As each member has different expertise, each may have varying perspectives on what should be prioritized first.

Should you start with licensing I.P.? Pitching to investors for pipeline funding? Hiring additional team members to accelerate growth? Focus on growing R&D?

The potential options are seemingly endless.

However, one aspect is clear. All team members must be aligned toward one specific goal to determine the best action. Depending on what stage your company is in and how you stack up to preexisting market players, your primary goal will vary.

To help you form the best direction forward, we've analyzed emerging topical biotherapeutic market leader AOBiome Therapeutics and early business development strategies.

Introduction to AOBiome Therapeutics - Recent Achievements

Founded in 2013, AOBiome Therapeutics develops Therapeutics that restore ammonia-oxidizing bacteria (AOBs) within the human microbiome. Their pipeline features therapeutic indications in pruritus/atopic dermatitis, acne, and rosacea. AOBiome's lead product candidate, B244 for pruritus/atopic dermatitis, is currently in phase 2b.

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In November of 2021, AOBiome Therapeutics launched the largest clinical trial ever run using a live topical biotherapeutic. Consisting of 547 test subjects participating at **56** clinical sites across 25 states, AOBiome generated positive results for the treatment of pruritus and the appearance of atopic dermatitis. The patient's symptoms were reduced by 34.3%, demonstrating a high potential for the developer to continue gaining traction in the microbiome industry.

Despite having a pipeline with indications years away from clinical therapeutic commercialization, AOBiome has indirectly generated \$9.9M in revenue.

How? By entering adjacent markets.

Launching a Consumer Line to Generate Earnings and Early Market Demand - All While Starting Clinical Trials

In 2014, AOBiome was looking to start clinical trials. Concededly, the developer made the strategic decision to enter an adjacent market - the cosmeceutical industry. The choice ultimately allowed AOBiome to introduce its technology to the market at a more rapid pace.

While launching clinical trials, AOBiome supported its research goals by founding a cosmeceutical subsidiary, Mother Dirt, to drive initial U.S. demand.

The U.S. cosmeceutical industry is known for its early adoption rates of new technologies. New Therapeutics often must overcome barriers to adoption, including awareness and informational gaps. Bacteria-based care is not a familiar concept that U.S. consumer groups understand.

Launching a direct-to-consumer line far before clinical trial completion enabled the developer to generate early brand advocates. AOBiome was able to build a brand around their bacteria to effectively educate the market on the actual value of their solutions - years before they would have been able to if they only existed within the biotechnology sphere.

By increasing early adoption rates of their technology within consumer groups, AOBiome formed a direct connection with the eventual end-users of their therapeutics.

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Generating brand loyalty and actual use cases effectively enabled AOBiome to project the level of demand that their clinical indications would receive in the long term.

Often, patients are the first to give providers a new indication. Patients self-educate via Google to find potential solutions for their medical problems. They turn to professionals, such as dermatologists, to confirm whether or not the treatments they've uncovered are an excellent option. Landing on the end-users radars can create a domino effect that enables you to connect with your priority, B2B targets.

However, target end-user connections can only be formed by leveraging market-driven business development approaches.

Market-Driven Approaches to Accelerate Acceptance in Adjacent Markets

Mother Dirt launched with science at the forefront of its products, not its branding. AOBiome's business expansion was focused on the concept of customer-centricity. Leveraging truly human, accessible themes, Mother Dirt's brand sought to reduce barriers that may alienate end users.

Technical and scientific jargon was removed from the equation. The subsidiary opted for consumer-oriented messaging that related bacteria to themes of reconnecting with childhood, exploring nature, and redefining the meaning of cleanliness. Leveraging the right messaging points for the right audience members, AOBiome communicated the actual value of the Mother Dirt brand to U.S. customers.

In an interview with Fast Company, Mother Dirt CEO Jasmina Aganovic revealed that "[their] goal was to make sure that they were universally human, that literally, every single person on this planet could connect with these values." Creating accessible themes is not only crucial for building relationships amongst consumer groups, but it is also vital for life science developers to connect with stakeholders, including investors and partners.

Scientific concepts can often be complex for outsiders to understand. Biotechnology companies must form differing narratives catering to specific targets' interests and values. Doing so allows potential stakeholders to rapidly understand your indications' importance to the market.

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Strategic positioning helped curb potential barriers. The idea of replacing showers with a microbiome skincare spray was positioned to save time while getting ready in the morning. Mother Dirt compared the ingredients of commonly used consumer products to their line. Potentially toxic side effects of household brands were exposed, educating consumers on the dangers of using traditional market offerings. Doing so enabled the company to position Mother Dirt as the optimal solution for health and wellness.

Beyond having strong positioning, Mother Dirt also needed effective communication channels to connect its messages to target audiences. Using a mix of high-touch outreach and customer service programs, Mother Dirt relayed its messaging to potential customers at multiple touchpoints. Customer-centric offerings included 1:1 phone calls and surveys to guide early adopters in using their solutions and collect a mass amount of initial market feedback.

Collecting early market feedback is critical in informing a solid business development strategy. Data points can effectively showcase the demand your offering is already receiving, providing an outlook into the potentially positive future of clinical indications.

Incorporate Demand-Building Strategies into Your Business Development Pipeline

AOBiomeTherapeutics is just one life science company that has generated immediate results by tapping into the cosmetics industry.

Now a \$9.9M brand, Mother Dirt has reached significant success since 2014, including their recent collaboration with luxury retailer Harvey Nichols, and features in top industry publications (including [The New York Times](#), [Allure](#), [Women's Health](#)). Biotechnology developers looking to expand their technologies into adjacent markets as a part of their business strategy can learn from the success of AOBiome Therapeutics' consumer division.

Overall, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to business development. Find the approaches that will best support your own organization's long-term goals.

- Content by the BDMT Global Team

If you are interested in potential partnerships and long-term relationships with the companies mentioned in this article or others in the U.S. and/or S. Korea, contact Suzy at sim@bdmtglobal.com.

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As the head of BDMT Global in Boston, Im focuses on accelerating the innovative transformation of global companies. She is a Professor of Marketing and a member of the Advisory Board at Emerson College. Im is also co-founder of Sponsors of the Future, a non-profit organization that leads corporate social responsibility, promoting neurodiversity and inclusion. As a well-known business developer and marketing strategist in the global field for over 20 years, Im merged the two critical global business functions of Business Development (BD) and Marketing Transformation (MT) for the first time. She was recognized for her innovative business model and contribution and received five consecutive awards in the U.S. including the North American Business Awards and TITAN Business Award 2022 in Biotechnology.

