

## What Do You Want to Be? P. Reed Maurer

How many times were you asked the title question when in high school or college? I admired those people who knew exactly what they wanted to be and planned their college courses and career path accordingly. Now at a later stage in life these same people know when they will retire, where they will live and what they will do.

What is wrong with those of us who didn't know what we wanted to be, and now hate the question, "When are you going to retire?" Are we doomed to live life like a metal ball in a pin ball machine? Do we not have dreams and goals and the pleasure that comes from making them come true?

A friend who was in Japan with Morgan Stanley once confided in me that he had a very specific plan to reach the highest level in the organization. Some years ago he left Japan for the home office and I assumed he was on his way up. But the Christmas card at the end of 2008 indicated he was no longer with the firm.

How many foreigners working in pharma companies in Japan requested to be here because they had a "plan?" My guess is most if not all were sent here because they were told it was a great opportunity. Whether they were wanted or needed in Japan is another question. Once here, few plan to stay, most are waiting for the next opportunity.

You might be wondering what this philosophical rambling has to do with the pharma industry. The subject came up because of a project I organized for my Roppongi Rotary Club as Chairman of the International Services Committee.

Nine months ago I felt we didn't need to look abroad for an international service project when we have an opportunity to do good in our own backyard. Thus was born an idea for Roppongi Rotarians to host ninth grade students from Nishimachi International School, and seniors from the International School of the Sacred Heart in their respective businesses for a few hours. These international students get a lot of exposure to Japanese culture, language, and history, but nothing about Japanese business.



Hey, Kyoto, Nara, and Nikko are great places to visit, but business makes Japan run today.

Our Rotary Club has men and women responsible for a variety of businesses. To name a few they include Hotel Management, Electronics, Architecture Design, Fashion/Beauty Training, Restaurant Management, Energy, Law, Medicine, and the

Mori Building. Certainly enough to give students some idea of what they may want to be in the future.

We finished the Nishimachi day and will do Sacred Heart on May 21. The students all had a great experience. In the words of their principal, "The students were genuinely excited and inspired by the visits. They felt an interest was taken in them and are suddenly giving real, informed consideration to their futures."

So, how would you inspire a young man or woman to pursue a career in the pharma industry? To make the decision this is where I want to be.

The first bit of advice is to get into college and beyond because people working in the pharma industry are well-educated, often in a profession. Think lawyer, doctor, biologist, pharmacist, chemist, engineer, or economist. No other industry employs such a wide variety of professional people under one roof.

Pharma needs well-educated people in human resources, public relations, sales, marketing, production, and the laboratory. Because the industry's products come out of leading edge science, the first objective of a college education should be to learn how to learn because your career will be a lifetime learning experience.

A second piece of advice is to appreciate the pharma industry is heavily regulated. Its products are approved by government agencies. Product prices are regulated, as are its manufacturing processes and promotional material. Recognize that regulations and the very nature of the drug discovery process require long-term versus short-term planning. This is not a flavor of the month business.

It is a paradox. Although heavily regulated the industry depends on innovation to succeed. New products are not discovered in government laboratories. Small companies based on new technologies emerge all the time. Collaboration with universities and research institutes is a dynamic process that involves individuals with new ideas and venture capitalists who want to make a return on money invested in these ideas.

A third piece of advice is to figure out where you are comfortable living and with whom. The pharma industry is international versus local. No country has a monopoly on brains or innovation. People everywhere on this globe need medicine when they are sick. Doctors, the industry's primary customers, are first taught how to diagnose an illness, and then how to treat it. Treatment options are plentiful in most cases. The country of origin of a drug is much less important than its effectiveness and safety. People of all races, religions, and cultures have hypertension, infections, and mental disorders.

Given these characteristics of the industry, what kind of people should be advised this is not where they want to be?

The first are those who are not the brightest bulbs on the tree, that is people who do not like to learn, do not like to be around intelligent people, or do not like anything new. Remember there are so-called well-educated people that fit into this category.

Second are those who never outgrew their child-

hood desire for instant gratification. They want everything now. Patience is not a virtue. Long-term planning is a bore. All that matters is short term.

Third are people who stay close to home and are suspicious of those with a different color, religion, or culture. They build walls instead of bridges. Money is the ultimate measure of success, and ethical behavior is OK as long as it does not prevent them taking advantage of the other guy.

I suspect that even with good intentions advice to help a young person decide on what he or she wants to be is like water off a duck's back. At the end of the day the best way to influence someone is to set a good example.

The kind of people the industry needs will be put off by examples of greed, poor quality control, falsification of data, and sales tactics akin to medicine men in a circus.

But they will be inspired by new drugs that cure intractable diseases, vaccines that prevent epidemics and remedies that alleviate the symptoms of asthma and allergies. They

will be enticed by the thrill of bringing innovations out of the laboratory and into clinical practice.

If a young person wants to help humans leave this earth and explore the universe, NASA is a good choice. If a young person wants to help sick humans get out of bed and lead a productive life the pharma industry is a good place to be.

*P. Reed Maurer still does not know what he wants to be.*

