

## **"Understanding Pharma: A Primer on How Pharmaceutical Companies Really Work"**

**John J. Campbell, 2005, 257 pages, Pharmaceutical Institute, \$89.95**

**Review by Norman M. Goldfarb**

"Understanding Pharma: A Primer on How Pharmaceutical Companies Really Work" is an excellent overview of the operations of pharmaceutical companies. It is a good resource for anyone employed by a pharmaceutical company, CRO or research site who wants to understand how their small cog fits into the big machine.

The core of the book is devoted to a department-by-department review, including the mission, operations, challenges and organization of each department.

Mr. Campbell clearly knows a lot about pharmaceutical companies, and he is willing to share it with his readers.

This book has been selected for  
[The First Clinical Research Bookshelf](#)  
Essential reading for clinical research professionals

If you are looking for an expose' of the pharmaceutical industry, you've come to the wrong place. In Mr. Campbell's world, "the pharmaceutical industry now seems poised to make a more significant leap forward than ever before;" "all [company] functions are backed by a highly skilled corporate and administrative infrastructure;" "research-based companies that develop innovative products charge higher prices to recoup their investment;" and "the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) issues patents on breakthrough drugs."

The book has 11 chapters and an appendix that looks a lot like the preceding chapters:

- Introduction to the Industry
- What is a Drug?
- Pharma Customers
- Discovery
- Drug Development
- Business Development
- Marketing and Brand Management
- Sales
- Managed Markets
- Manufacturing Operations
- Distribution
- Administrative Departments

The book is beautifully produced, on shiny white paper with lots of graphics, color-coded for each chapter. However, a bit more attention could have been devoted to checking for typos. For example, on page 211, there are both 9,500 and 10,000 hospital pharmacies. A few factual errors are bit unnerving. For example, "most biologics" do not work by "triggering an immune response," but by interacting with a broad variety of metabolic, hormonal, immune and other systems. "Data scrubbing" is not the process of making data anonymous – it

arrives anonymously– but removing errors and omissions, and is often referred to as “data cleaning.”

The book is available at <http://www.pharmainstitute.com>.

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