

MBA Alumni Career Profile

Toni Bothwell – Animal Health Regulatory Affairs at Pfizer Canada Inc.



Tell your own story. Where were you in terms of your professional career, before you started the program. Where has the MBA taken you professionally?

I am a scientist, who has found a passion for business excellence. Prior to the Laurier MBA program my career had several transitions, from medical research to pharmaceutical product quality oversight to manufacturing site management. The Laurier MBA allowed me to take my manufacturing background and inter-connect strategically with international commercial and business development teams as we build a long-term transition plan for the commercial business.

Please tell us about your organization, your current role and your motivation for getting involved.

I work for Pfizer Canada Inc., on the Animal Health Regulatory Affairs Team. This is a heavily-regulated industry and I work closely with Health Canada as we work towards introducing new products and manage changes to existing product lines and managing environmental aspects of pharmaceutical products. My role is very strategic in nature, as I work closely with the commercial business, business development, research and product development teams and quality colleagues. My role is key to pulling together key internal and external players and ensuring projects move forward. I enjoy the flexibility, complexity and ever changing aspects of the role. Each product and project is unique and offers both challenge and reward. Every project team has unique players – much alike the unique team members experienced with each MBA project.

What Career Development did you engage in at Laurier during your studies?

While at Laurier, I participated in the scheduled Career Development sessions, such as speaker sessions, surveys to profile personality type and career suitability and worked with Laurier colleagues to polish my resumé. At this later stage of my career these may have seemed redundant, but each session offered a point of reflection that continues to prove valuable as I continue to map out my career. There is always room for improvement and growth, and the Laurier Career Development sessions offer this for students.

How was networking a part of your career success and how does it continue to be important in the work you do?

Networking is key for career success. While at Laurier, I prepared a business development plan to launch a consulting business. While the market in 2009 did not support my proposed venture, the networking during the market evaluation stage did net me my current position.

Provide information about the types of skills, education and experience required to move into your career.

A Regulatory Affairs role requires strengths in strategy, ethics, team management negotiation and patience and persistence. The education required for a career in Regulatory Affairs includes a scientific background, usually a graduate degree in a medical field such as Pathology, Veterinary Medicine or a related PhD, or MSc with relevant experience. To support the technical transfers and business development projects, a career background in continuous improvement, production or manufacturing product quality is valuable. My MBA with a strategy focus and finance options has proved useful in negotiations for business projects and evaluations of return.

Please discuss any future trends or future needs that you are aware of in your career area.

Pharmaceutical companies continue to merge, divest and strategically manage product manufacture. These changes require continuous regulatory support to ensure product supply is not interrupted and that patient medical needs are met. This is a business need that will continue. Some outsourcing of this role is anticipated going forward, with consulting companies seeing growth.

Any final advice for students interested in a career in your area?

If one is interested in Pharmaceutical Regulatory Affairs, network with colleagues in the industry and with the regulators at Health Canada. Regulators are in several directorates, TPD or Therapeutic Products Directorate for human drugs, VDD or Vet Drugs Directorate for Animal Drugs, or HPFBI or Health Branch & Foods Branch Inspectorate, managing post-market compliance of both human and animal drugs.