Former Amgen CEO and President Kevin Sharer, a senior lecturer at HBS, led a discussion of HBS alumni who have graduated in the past five years and now work in life sciences. All four panelists worked in life sciences pre-HBS and three had scientific backgrounds.

**Typical POST-HBS**

**Functions:** At large pharma companies and smaller biotech firms:

- Business Development
- Strategy
- Marketing

**Career aspirations:**

- Become the CEO of an entrepreneurial pharma company
- Be in the C-suite (CEO, COO, CFO) or a general manager at large pharma company

**Business OBJECTIVES**

- **Create and launch more products.** Replenishing the pipeline of products in the marketplace is critical to the future success of large companies.

- **Grow the current business.** Finding new segments or markets for existing products is essential for growth.

- **Increase speed.** Building internal capabilities is necessary to quickly identify promising opportunities or to shut down unsuccessful projects.

- **Keep costs down.** Streamlining operations and improving efficiency is important to drive profitability.

- **Do more deals.** In conjunction with in-house development, many organizations are looking to acquire new technologies.
Figure out how to get things done. This requires understanding a company’s unique ecosystem and culture. It requires understanding how decisions get made, knowing how to navigate the organization, communicating effectively, and building consensus.

Find mentors. Mentors provide valuable insights on how to navigate the culture and get things done.

Think long term. Envision where you want to be in 5–8 years and work backwards. Take jobs in roles, functions, and companies as stepping stones that lead where you want to go.

Build a toolkit. Define the skills you want/need and take jobs that help fill out your toolkit.

Understand all of the functional areas. This includes understanding the nuances of business development, the commercialization team, the legal department, and more.

Create options. Work in roles that create options to go in different directions and pursue different opportunities as they arise.


“At HBS, you think if your answer is right, that is 90% of the way to making something happen. Of course, that’s laughable. It’s maybe 10%. To make something happen, you have to understand the ecosystem.”

Getting things done requires:

- Understanding the power ecosystem.
- Having allies at different levels.
- Knowing how people talk.
- Understanding how decisions are made.

“There is a kaleidoscope of ecosystems in a company that are hard to teach in school. When you get to a job, understand these ecosystems.”