bgbx BUILT FOR BREAKTHROUGH

# 10 Weeks to Build Something That Lasts a Year

By
Kat Mallanda, EVP,
Management Supervisor

*Surplus turns up every fourth quarter, freed by a delayed program, a slipped launch or a line item that went unspent. The goal isn't only to leverage your surplus this year but to ensure your spend provides the value that moves your brand forward.*

# Thirteen calendar weeks.
# Ten working ones.

The earlier you scope, the more room you have.

# Three common obstacles, and how to get around them

These are the obstacles that most often slow Q4 work, and each can be planned around with a little foresight. Together they explain why the six plays below look the way they do.

PROCUREMENT

## Build on a contract you already hold

**3–6 months**

is how long an RFP and negotiation can take, well beyond a 10-week window.[1]

Adding a defined scope, with clear metrics, to an existing agreement usually avoids a new RFP, and smaller scopes may not require one at all.

REGULATORY REVIEW

## Prioritize work that stays internal

**2x**

as many FDA letters on drug promotion were issued in the first quarter of 2026 as in all of 2024.[2]

Reviewers may be more cautious as a result. Research, audits and models typically face lighter review than promotional materials, so they tend to move faster.

INTERNAL SIGN-OFF

## Give one team ownership

**83%**

of brand teams have yet to fully integrate their channels, and silos are the top reason why.[3]

Work that crosses silos crosses approval chains too. Scopes one team can own from brief to delivery avoid extra rounds of sign-off.

Following each of these approaches helps focus your Q4 plans on the work that matters most: projects you can complete before year-end and continue to benefit from well into next year.

# Payer Communications

## Refresh the value story for the 2027 cycle

6-8 weeks

Best started in October

Cost sharing is moving fast. The share of Medicare Advantage drug plan enrollees paying coinsurance rather than a flat copay for preferred brands doubled in a single year, from 27% in 2025 to 56% in 2026.[4] When patients carry more of the cost, access and adherence move into the payer conversation, and your value story will need to address both. Meanwhile, each of the three largest PBMs excluded more than 600 drugs from their 2026 national preferred formulary.[5] **Many future formulary decisions are being shaped now,** so having a refreshed story in place before the new year puts you in a stronger position. Because it will go through review, it's the one play here worth starting in October.

**Long-term value:** A value story that carries you through the full 2027 contracting cycle.

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## Identify evidence gaps ahead of payer conversations

4 weeks

Fits comfortably

Take stock of what your dossier can answer against the questions payers are likely to ask. Because this requires **no new studies and no new claims,** it fits well within the window. The output is a prioritized list of evidence gaps to address in Q1.

**Long-term value:** The starting point for next year's evidence-generation plan.

# Advertising

## Invest in a measurement plan before more media

6 weeks Fits comfortably

Pharma budgets are moving steadily from linear TV into digital. MM+M's read is that moving the budget is the easy part, but making those dollars accountable is considerably harder.[6] New tracking technology and data partners bring privacy and legal review of their own, so a full build may not fit in 10 weeks. **A measurement plan** can define what success looks like, audit what you already track and design the model to build in Q1.

**Long-term value:** A framework for measuring every 2027 campaign.

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## Model the channel shift before you commit to it

4 weeks Fits comfortably

Through early December 2025, pharma and over-the-counter brands put more than $7 billion into linear TV, up about 16%, while household impressions rose only about 7%.[7] In effect, brands are paying more for each impression. **Modeling the reallocation costs a fraction of making it,** and it gives your team a clear basis for Q1 decisions.

**Long-term value:** A planning baseline for 2027 channel decisions.

# Medical Communications

## Run a publication and congress gap analysis

5 weeks Fits comfortably

Q4 is the time to identify what is planned, what is missing and where the product story has gaps, **before abstract deadlines start landing in Q1.** This analysis draws on the publications, data releases and plans you already have, so it moves at your team's pace.

**Long-term value:** A roadmap for what to publish and present in 2027, where and when.

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## Pressure-test your 2027 medical plan against this year's insights

5 weeks Fits comfortably

By Q4, medical affairs teams are sitting on a year's worth of MSL conversations, advisory board discussions and congress engagements, often more than made it into the plan. Pulling them into one synthesis shows which questions HCPs keep asking and where they want more evidence. **The output is a set of specific recommendations for refining 2027 plans** while they can still be adjusted, including how MSL resources should evolve. It draws entirely on insights you already have and serves as an internal-facing document.

**Long-term value:** Sharper 2027 medical priorities, evidence planning and MSL strategy.

# Q4 investments that keep delivering into next year

Every play above shares one property: it produces an asset the team is still using two, three and four quarters from now. That is what turns a year-end surplus into a lasting investment. It is also what makes the spend defensible when procurement reviews it, which we explored in procurement's expanding role in pharma marketing. We've also looked at why brand teams are struggling to close the gap between plan and execution.

If your surplus is substantial, you may notice that none of these plays is a full campaign. That is by design. Larger programs are difficult to launch well in 10 weeks, and many finance teams require spend to be tied to work delivered within the fiscal year. Investing in the groundwork now means that when January's budget arrives, the campaign it funds already has a plan, a measurement model and an evidence base waiting for it.

We'd welcome a conversation about what you're considering. Together, we can identify the work you can start now that will keep paying off long after Q4.

Please reach out to:

**Sean Mahoney**
SVP, Business Strategy, BGBx
smahoney@bgbgroup.com

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