

Levers for Launch: How Five Analog Brands Used Positioning, Advocacy, Evidence, and Access Levers for Launch and Beyond

CASE STUDY - VOL. 1 OF 5: ENTRESTO



OVERVIEW

This case study initiates a five-part series that distills the essence of what to do when launching a pharmaceutical product. We curated five analog products and analyzed how they deployed four launch levers: **Positioning Strategy, Advocacy and Guideline Inclusion, Evidence Generation, and Market Access**, to create traction and sustain growth. Each case is mapped to a launch archetype: **Paradigm Shaper, First Mover, Late Challenger, Opportunist** to clarify context and actions taken.

Who should read this: Commercial, medical, market access, and analytics leaders who are preparing to launch a brand or have recently launched one.

How to use this series: Identify your product archetype → review lever playbooks from the most relevant analogs → adapt actions for your product as appropriate.

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INTRODUCTION

Pharmaceutical product launches have never been more complex—or more critical to get right. In today’s environment, marked by heightened payer scrutiny, therapeutic crowding, and compressed timelines for demonstrating value, even promising therapies often face slow uptake and missed forecasts in their earliest months. Without early traction, even clinically strong therapies risk falling behind, making launch execution not just a starting point, but a make-or-break moment for long-term success.

Several high-profile assets that stumbled early have gone on to become commercial successes, often through the identification and activation of strategic beachheads (e.g.,

concentrating on a guideline-backed sub-population, removing a single high-friction access barrier, or generating real-world validation that resolves prescriber ambiguity). This series demonstrates how assets found their beachheads for launch and pulled the right levers to achieve commercial success.

We identified five examples of novel brands that shaped or reshaped their commercial trajectory through deliberate activation of key levers. Using a consistent framework, we examine each analog case through four strategic levers: Positioning Strategy, Advocacy & Guideline Inclusion, Evidence Generation, and Market Access.

FIGURE 1.

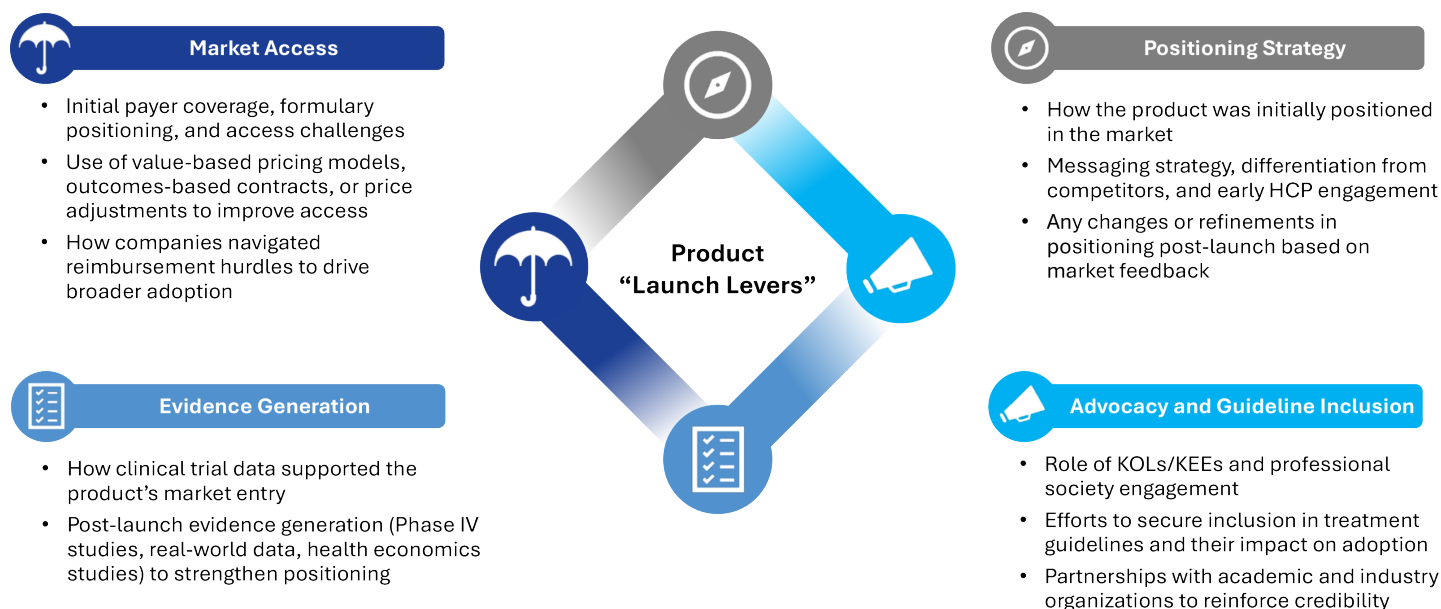


Figure 1. Overview of product “Launch Lever” categories in preparation for, at launch, and following launch.

The five analog case studies featured in this series are categorized into distinct launch archetypes based on market maturity and product differentiation, providing additional context for the strategic levers activated at each stage of commercial evolution. By first identifying where your own product sits among the four archetypes, you will have appropriate context for how each upcoming case study, based on the archetype, can be considered as an analog.

FIGURE 2.

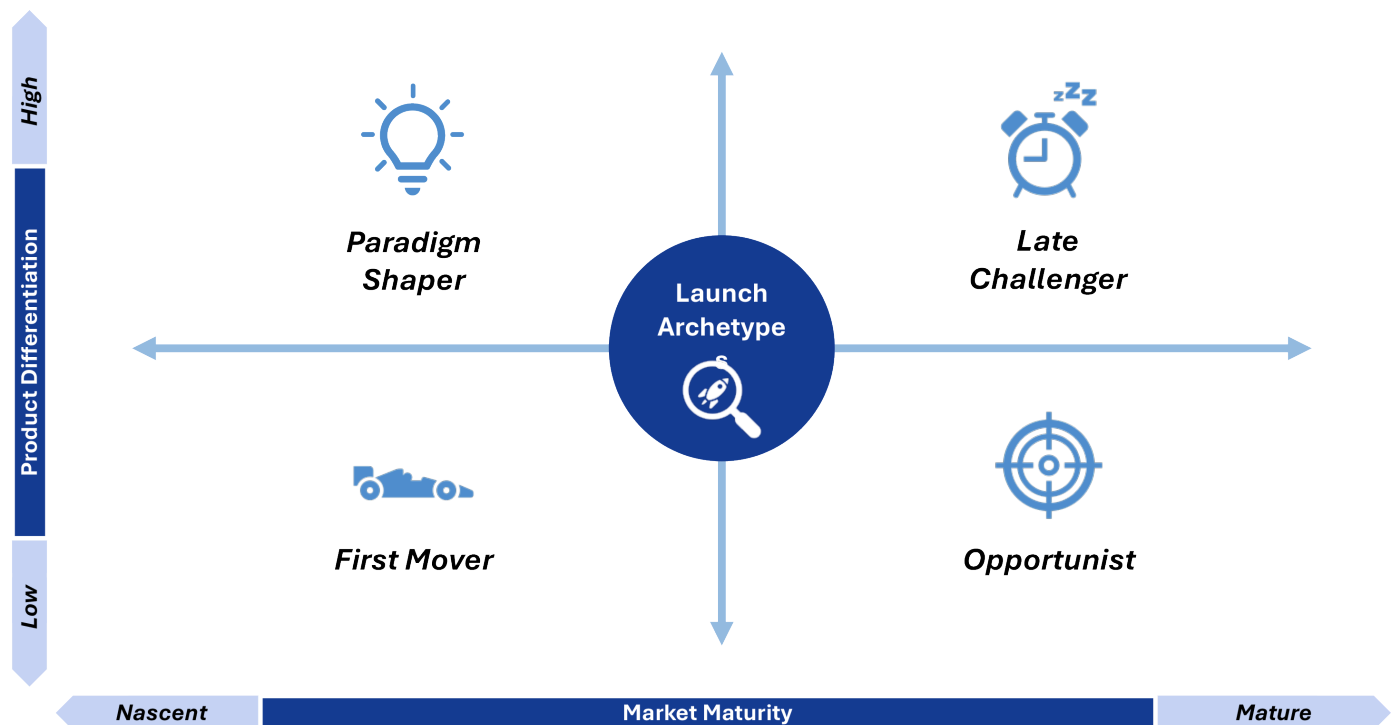


Figure 2. Illustrates four launch archetypes defined by the intersection of product differentiation and market maturity, highlighting the strategic contexts in which potential launch strategies may emerge

Note: Market maturity is defined by the degree of branded and generic competition within an indication

We selected brands that (1) faced meaningful early adoption barriers, (2) executed targeted beachhead strategies, and (3) left a visible trail of levers used (positioning, advocacy/guidelines, evidence, access) that launch teams can adapt. The set spans cardiovascular, oncology, CNS, and rare disease to ensure breadth across therapeutic areas.

FIGURE 3.






Product	Disease Area	Mechanism of Action	Launch Archetype	Product Launch Overview
 Entresto™ sacubitril/valsartan	HFrEF/HFpEF	ARNI	<i>Paradigm Shaper</i>	Entresto is a product in the cardiovascular space with a dual ARNI mechanism, representing a strong acceleration of market access and clinical uptake driven by extensive evidence generation, real-world validation, and targeted market-shaping initiatives
 NUPLAZID™ (pimavanserin) tablets	PD Psychosis	Selective 5-HT _{2A} inverse agonist	<i>First Mover</i>	Nuplazid is a therapy in the Parkinson's disease psychosis space with a selective 5-HT _{2A} inverse agonist mechanism, representing a differentiated CNS launch that overcame early resistance through focused clinical education and advocacy-driven market engagement
 Repatha™ (evolocumab)	LDL-C	PCSK9 inhibitor mAb	<i>Late Challenger</i>	Repatha is a therapy in the cardiovascular space with a PCSK9-inhibiting mechanism, representing a clinically differentiated but access-sensitive launch that was repositioned successfully through outcomes validation and strategic pricing realignment
 Vyndamax (tafamidis) Eli Lilly	ATTR-CM	TTR Stabilizer	<i>Paradigm Shaper</i>	Vyndaquel/Vyndamax is a therapy in the rare disease cardiovascular space with a transthyretin-stabilizing mechanism, representing a market-shaping breakthrough that turned a once-invisible disease into a defined, treatable condition through focused clinical education and advocacy-driven market engagement
 Kadcyla	HER2+ breast cancer	HER2+ ADC	<i>Late Challenger</i>	Kadcyla is a therapy in the breast cancer space with a HER2+ antibody-drug conjugate mechanism, representing a case of functional innovation that required post-launch evidence and strategic repositioning to unlock its full commercial potential

Figure 3. Provides an overview of the five analog products analyzed in this series, highlighting their therapeutic area, mechanism of action, launch archetype, and a brief launch overview

CASE STUDY 1: ENTRESTO

FIGURE 4.



Product Overview

- Entresto (sacubitril/valsartan), launched by Novartis in 2015, introducing a novel therapy for heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF)
 - It was hailed as a “game-changer” for chronic heart failure and intended to replace decades-old ACE inhibitors/ARBs as the new standard of care
- Despite industry enthusiasm, Entresto’s initial uptake fell short of expectations, and Novartis encountered significant commercial headwinds in the first two years
 - Through deliberate strategic repositioning, extensive advocacy efforts, evidence generation, and improved market access, Novartis transformed Entresto into a blockbuster therapy

Market Phases: Entresto’s performance in the market from launch in 2015 to 2024 can be segmented into four phases:

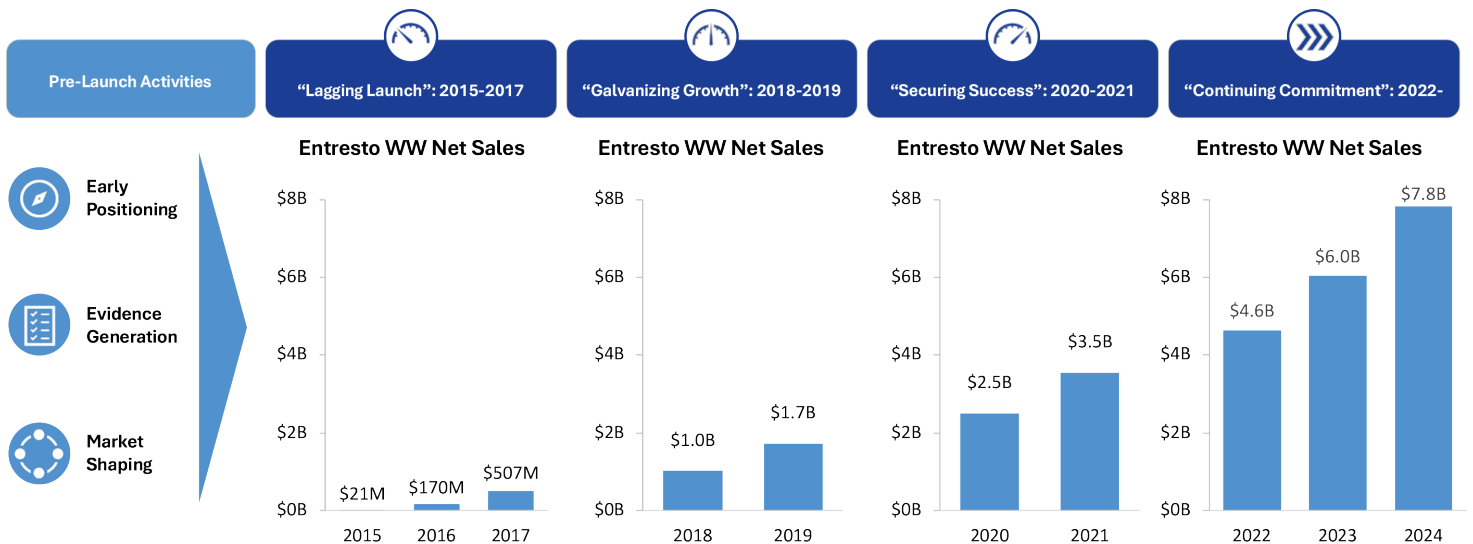
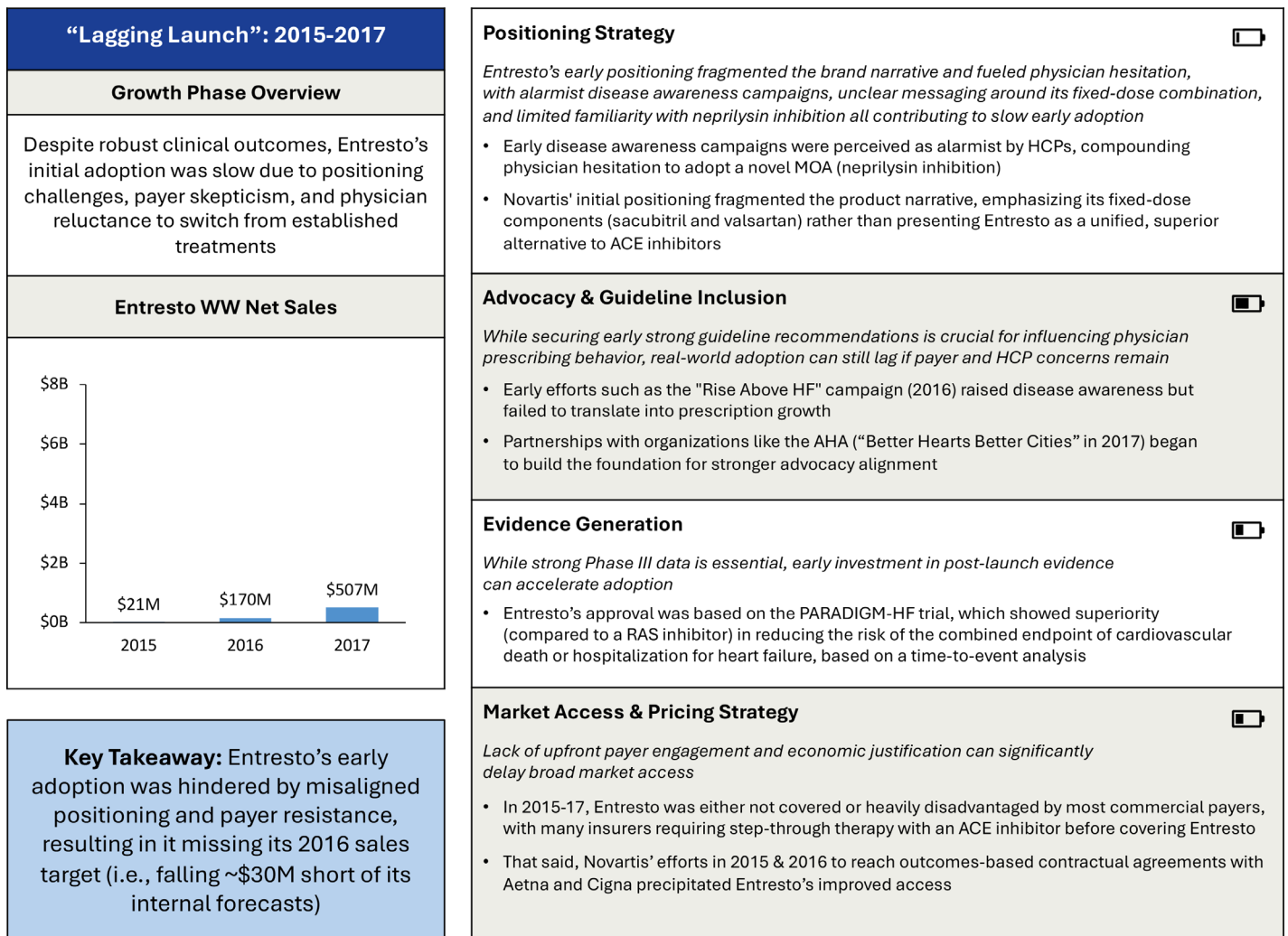


Figure 4. Overview of Entresto’s commercial performance, segmented by revenue growth phases

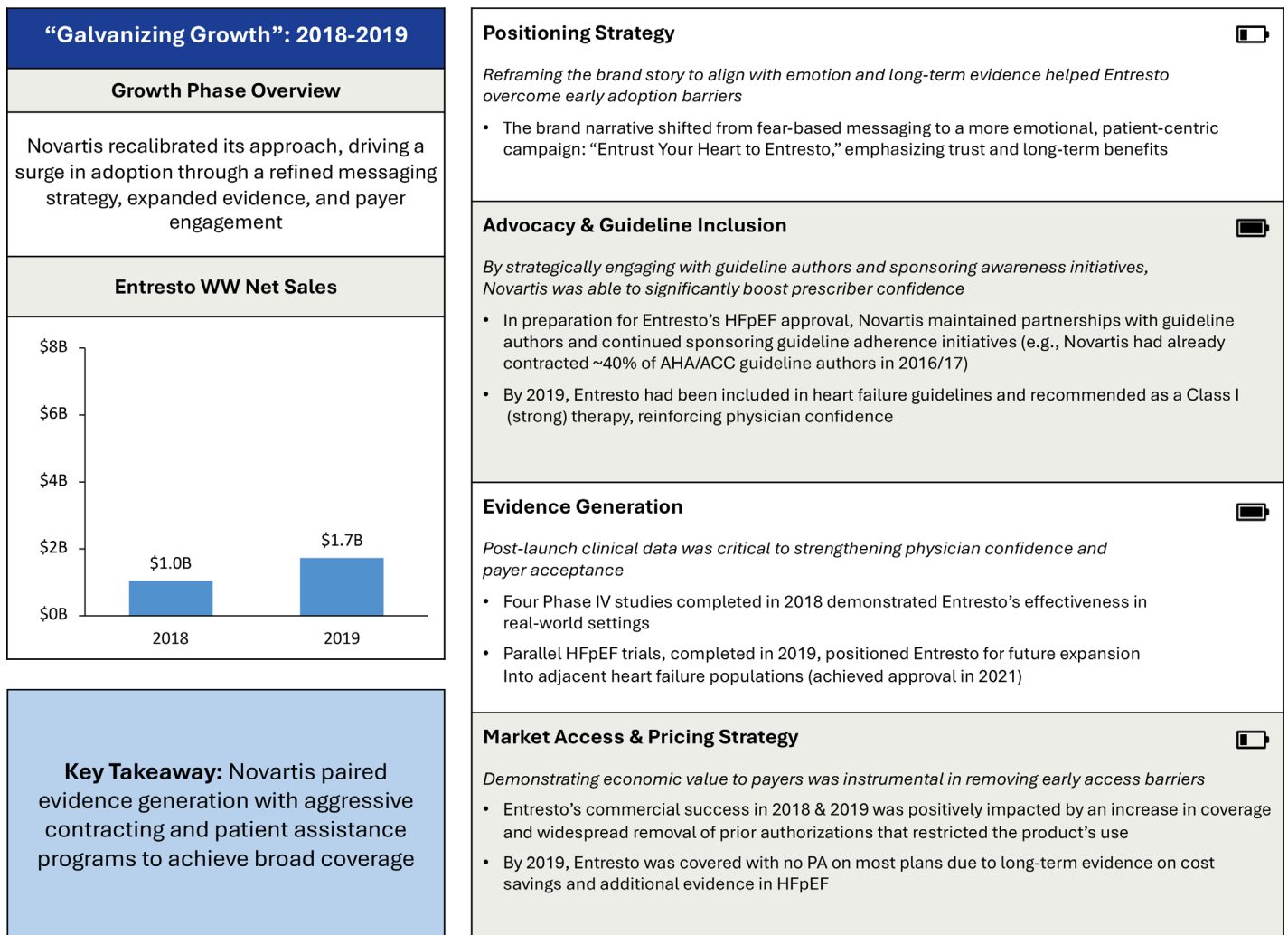
FIGURE 5.



Perceived Effort Level: High High-mod Mod-low Low

Figure 5. Overview of Entresto’s commercial performance “Lagging Launch” phase

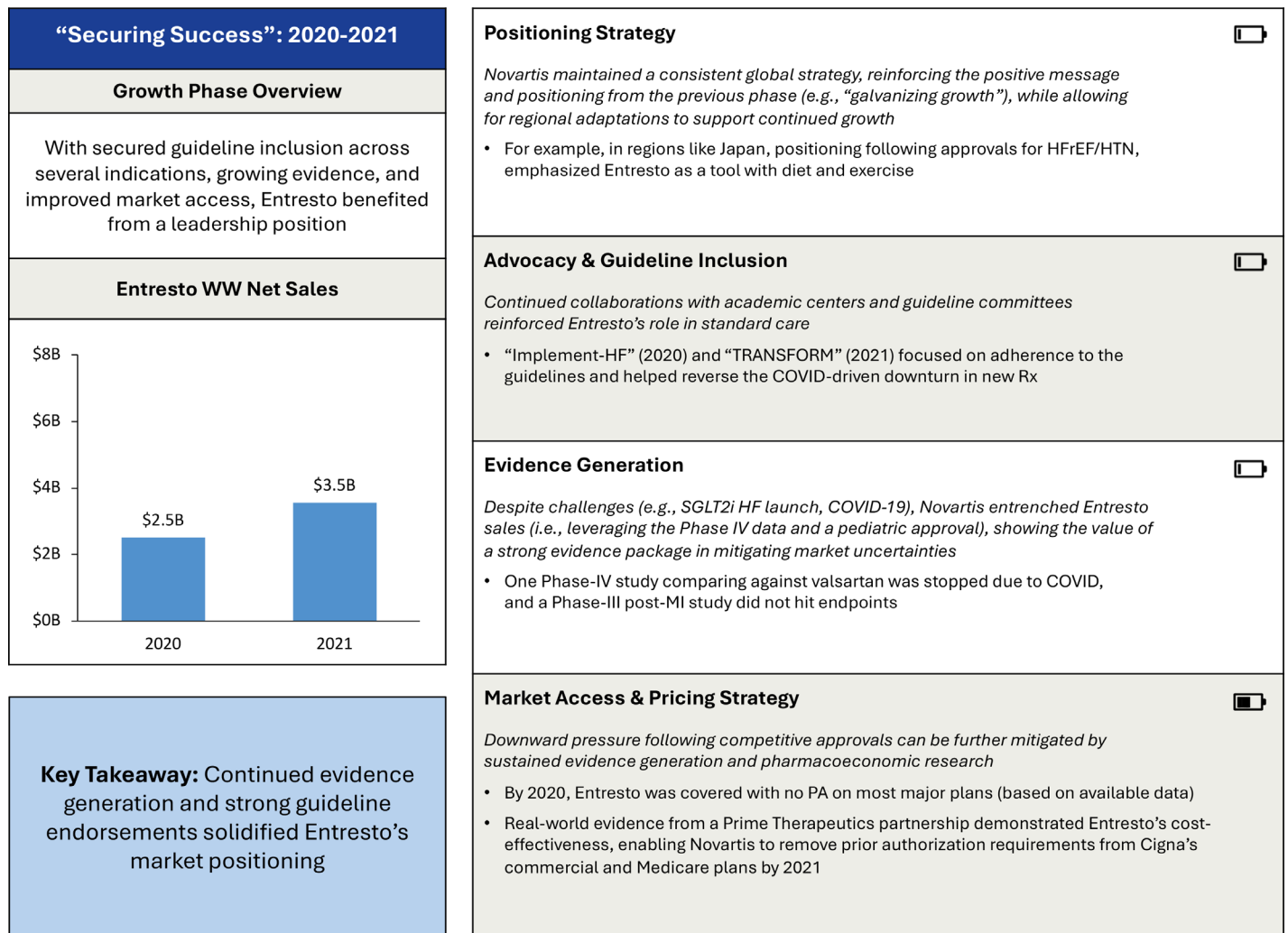
FIGURE 6.



Perceived Effort Level:  High  High-mod  Mod-low  Low

Figure 6. Overview of Entresto’s commercial performance “Galvanizing Growth” phase

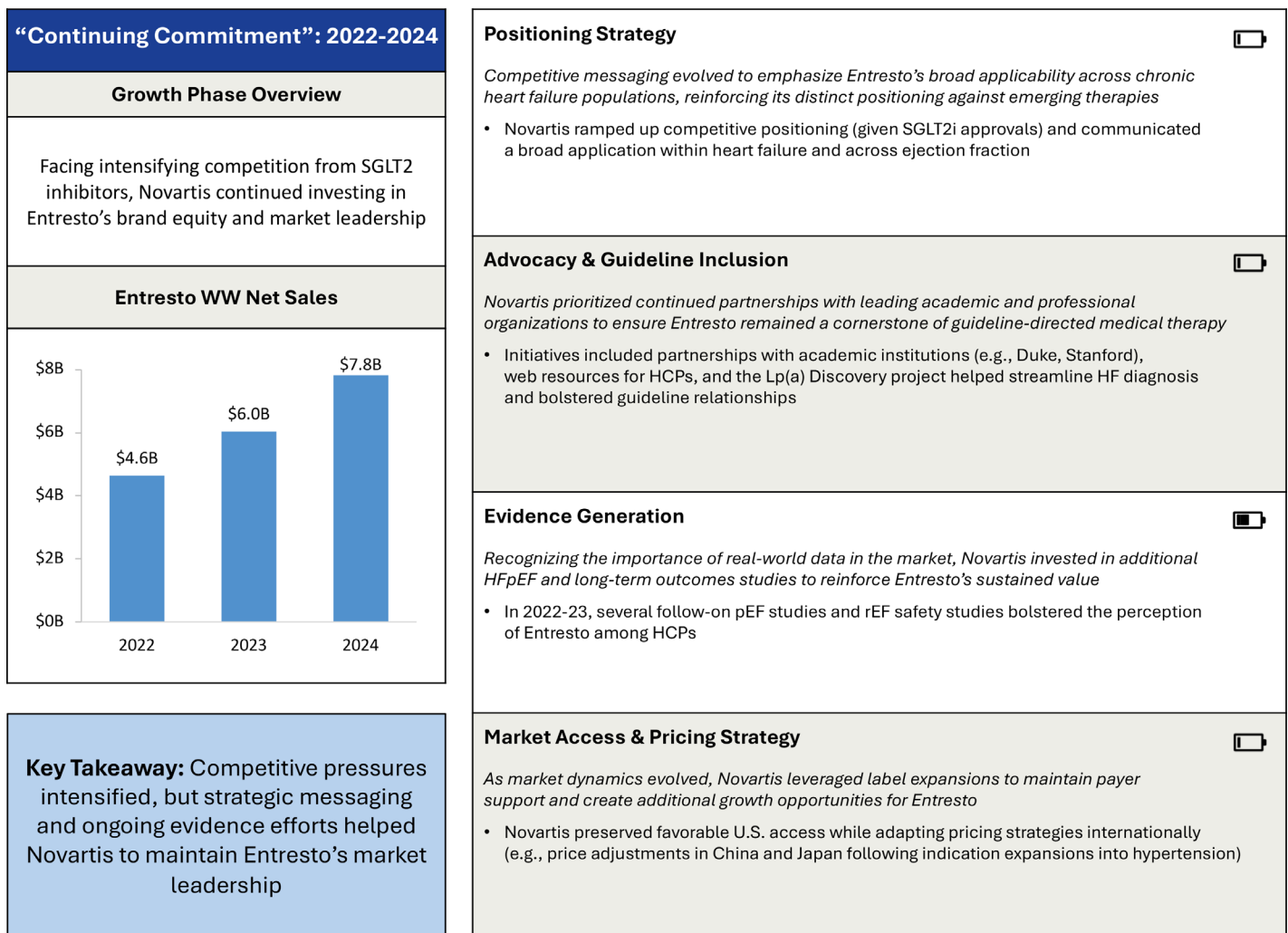
FIGURE 7.



Perceived Effort Level:  High  High-mod  Mod-low  Low

Figure 7. Overview of Entresto’s commercial performance “Securing Success” phase

FIGURE 8.



Perceived Effort Level: High High-mod Mod-low Low

Figure 8. Overview of Entresto’s commercial performance “Continuing Commitment” phase

CLOSING

What to consider for your product based on learnings from Entresto:

1. Characterize the “who and when” on day one.

Make the decision easy: spell out the exact patient profile, the setting of care, and the plan for a switch from existing standard of care.

2. Remove the top payer hurdles urgently.

Attack the most common prior authorization and step edit hurdles for HCPs early with targeted contracts and patient support programs. Give clinics prior authorization aids and benefits verification support to enable ease of prescribing.

3. Publish proof that answers key anticipated questions.

Prioritize studies and RWE data that clarifies questions raised by HCPs and other key stakeholders (initiation timing, safety/tolerability in typical patients, etc.). Share the proof of data to key adopters and market movers.

4. Turn proof into rules of care.

Convert new data into momentum for guideline language and clinical document updates so the new default includes use of the product. Leverage this product inclusion to drive widespread adoption.

5. Reframe when new classes enter.

When novel competitors surge, adjust positioning to retain your product as a core element of standard of care alongside new entrants. Update message maps, prescribing sequences, and access materials to show paths where products can be used together.

SERIES SEGUE

This wraps Case Study 1 of 5 (Entresto)—a case where initial hesitation gave way to broad adoption once the switch moment, payer friction, and guideline language were all identified and acted upon.

Case Study 2 (Nuplazid) looks at a new challenge: a differentiated CNS launch that overcame early resistance through focused clinical education and advocacy-driven market engagement. We look forward to presenting the next case study in our upcoming entry.
