Vaccines have become an important business for many large pharmaceutical companies, and the vaccine market is likely to expand as demand for new vaccines grows. This growth is being driven by a variety of factors, ranging from efforts to reduce health care spending to increasing demand for new vaccines to treat and potentially cure cancer worldwide. Vaccine development is good social policy, as preventing disease increases lifespan, enabling more people to be productive for a longer period. It is also good business strategy, as several marketed vaccines have attained blockbuster status. Industry’s growing interest in vaccine development is borne out by the fact that vaccines now account for 28% of all products in the biotechnology R&D pipeline.

While vaccine developers face challenges similar to those confronted by developers of other pharmaceutical products—the need to shorten development times, increase success rates, and contain R&D costs—they must also deal with pockets of public resistance to vaccination in industrialized countries, often based on irrational fears of vaccination side effects. This suggests that, at least in the near term, sales and marketing campaigns may need to include public education programs.