



Sales Operations

Strengthen Amid Tighter Budgeting

In the midst of a changing commercial landscape, pharma sales operations leaders are striving to produce vibrant organizations that develop and reward team members.

The total spend on sales analytics has declined 55% compared with 2008 levels, according to the TGaS Advisors 2012 Sales Operations Career Guide.

“Leaders want to build a vibrant organization that develops and rewards team members and contributes to the business in visible ways,” says Curt Staab, executive director of TGaS Advisors’ sales operations practice and co-author of the guide. “But as demands for higher-level analytics and actionable insights increase, leaders acknowledge they may not be adequately staffed, budgeted, or trained to meet these demands.”

TGaS’ research for the Career Guide brought to light a complex, and sometimes conflicting, set of facts, according to an advisory brief on the publication. For example, 78% of respondents said there had been no lateral moves in their department over the past 12 months, and 50% indicated there had been no promotions.

Yet despite these statistics, almost 70% said they want to stay in operations, with some citing the challenge of analytics and the team approach and others saying they prefer operations to the field.

Although movement in sales operations has been limited over the past 12 months, roughly 60% of respondents view their current role as a promotion.

In addition, more than 75% are optimistic about their own opportunities, expecting their next position to include a promotion.

Source: TGaS Advisors, 2012 Sales Operations Career Guide

Key Elements Required for Sales Operations Change

1. Planning

- » Develop a business plan for sales operations. Many sales operations leaders recognize the importance of a strategic business plan, with 44% of those surveyed already having them in place and a quarter stating intentions to develop a plan.
- » Make sure individual objectives are linked to the plan.

2. Training

- » Acquire the skills ranked most important by sales operations leaders. Leaders interviewed clearly recognize the value of strategic planning for advancement, ranking it at the top of skill sets of relative importance for leaders (1.8 out of 7).
- » Train the sales operations team in people management and analytics. These skill sets closely followed strategic planning for advancement as top considerations, with people management scoring 2.3 out of 7 and analytics 2.7 out of 7.
- » Define what good analytics looks like. An understanding of the skills involved in analytics and its value to the business helps define hiring and training needs.

3. Communications

- » Share the business plan with stakeholders and solicit feedback on a



Curt Staab

regular basis. Formal business plans, voice-of-customer surveys, and consensus on key strategic imperatives are starting points, followed by the essentials of feedback and buy-in from stakeholders.

- » Reinforce and recognize value internally. The sales operations team will benefit from understanding the importance of their role as part of the big picture.
- » Communicate the department’s value externally. Clear and regular two-way communications with stakeholders on the value of business planning, actionable insights, and sales operations’ contributions to the success of the larger business will help establish the department as a true business partner.



MICHELLE KEEFFE
Chief Operating Officer
Publicis Touchpoint
Solutions

Integrating virtual learning into the standard training curriculum is rapidly becoming

the new normal in pharma field sales training. The legacy training model of home study with two or more weeks of in-house initial product training (IPT) is gradually giving way to significantly greater use of virtual training with shorter, more select use of face-to-face training. Successful virtual training programs require three critical factors: a robust LMS eLearning platform to execute training and

track content execution and test scores; a strategic learning roadmap to assure proper sequencing and development of the training journey; and the integration of the human touch through routine one-on-one check-ins with each trainee to assure training is on track and any learning issues are managed on a regular basis.

Finally, all training — virtual and face-to-face —

needs to include real-world learning scenarios that provide trainees with clear guidelines and practice on “what they can do and say” not just “what they can’t do and say” in today’s highly regulated environment. One of the biggest disservices to representatives in training is to focus on regulatory “don’ts” without providing counterbalancing training and practice on what can, and should, be done and said that is fully within regulatory guidelines. And of course today’s training must instill in representatives how they and their brands can bring real value to physicians and their patients.



PHILIP MCCREA
CEO
ClearPoint

Global pharmaceutical companies looking to increase efficiency and reduce costs have implemented centers of excellence and global structures to support many commercial opera-

tions. Sales training has, until recently, been left to execute on a local level with local funding. With sales training spending more than \$15 million on a global basis in many organizations, and much higher during periods that include the launch of new products, there is a growing interest in finding more effective and higher quality models that also reduce cost.

While there are regulatory and marketplace differences from region to region and country to country, there is a common platform that can be developed to support these needs with less local investment in time and money. Reduced development cycle times, increased consistency, and a higher value training program are a few of the key benefits cited by organizations that are making the effort to streamline their global commercial training function.

However, these benefits do not come without a committed focus and a willingness to change the status quo. Budgets and internal sales training teams need to be reorganized. Learning technology infrastructure and support must be developed and tested with a global audience in mind.

External vendors must be vetted for global capability, scale, and proven experience. Processes and curriculum development models must be created to support common and core global needs.

Launch-related training must be developed with a global launch plan and sequence in mind. Sounds challenging but the good news is there are many other commercial functions that have already travelled these roads and there are some bold early adopters who are validating the potential and the impact with exciting results.



DENNIS MCGLOUGHLIN
President
The Remedy Group

There are many challenges and problems in the world of sales training today. Correctly identifying the core of these challenges and problems is what creates the greatest opportunity for sales training effec-



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tiveness. If I had to summarize the biggest challenge for effective sales training it would be relevance. The relevance of sales training to real-life situations and real market conditions has been variable at best due to the dynamically changing environments and challenges that face not only the sales representative, but the entire organization.

From precommercialization all the way through the launch and life-cycle phases of a product, there are external challenges with access, compliance, healthcare decision-making models, requirements for outcomes data, providing value-based medicine, therapeutic models, and how all these are being applied geographically, by specialty, by healthcare systems, etc.

Internal challenges range from completely changing strategic positions, territory alignments, compliance programs, trade, distribution, educational resources, potential salesforce layoffs, uncertainty within an organization, to the need to have specific resources for markets that companies have not focused on before. All these factors have combined to make sales training relevance a critical success factor.

Sales training needs to be involved in every area of the commercial process to provide proactive strategies and solutions that they can educate the entire company on and in an ongoing manner. In many cases this needs to be done on the fly with constant updates and reminders in an adult educational process that requires ongoing two-way interaction.

In today's pharmaceutical market channels, all the necessary resources for product success need to be effectively, strategically, and quickly implemented by the sales representative or consultant. In short this has become a completely integrated sale in which any area that is lacking prevents the successful education or use of the product by the HCP. This has made the relevance of sales training a critical success factor. Sales training needs to correctly identify and address real-life challenges with customized solutions with incredible speed and consistency.

Training also has to be cost-effective and show a return on investment. That is why it has to be relevant to the particular challenges in the whole commercial process. Providing online training modules and workshops at POAs are valuable resources, but online training modules can often be stagnant or address overall concepts or skills.

While waiting several months for a POA, to have everyone travel to cram in as much as possible into an agenda that everyone worked on for weeks to put together without any immediate or consistent follow up is a waste of time and re-

sources. How much information can someone possibly absorb and implement immediately. There needs to be follow-up mechanisms and interactions to build on these skills and behaviors.

Training needs to take place every day; that is the opportunity for sales training. Having that relevant interaction on a daily basis with sales representatives so they can use it immediately and effectively is where the focus should be.



CELESTE MOSBY

*Regional VP, Life Sciences
Wilson Learning Corp.*

There is a new model transcending in healthcare and how sales professionals handle the shift when

interacting with healthcare providers who are working in a more complex environment and treating increasingly well-informed patients will affect all facets of the healthcare continuum. There will soon be millions of new patients entering the healthcare environment.

Sales training professionals' most important challenge is figuring out how to train salespeople to become trusted advisors to healthcare providers and other influencers within their account base.

Professional trainers have followed adult learning principles for decades, designing with the various learning styles in mind to keep information relevant, practical, and engaging. For learning professionals in this ever-changing dynamic environment, it can be challenging to know which approach, content, and design will be most effective.

The opportunity is to now create a training environment focusing on skill-based content that complements the technical knowledge sales professionals receive on reform, managed Medicaid, Medicare, exchanges, and a host of other current healthcare topics.

It is critical that salespeople discover the varied needs of customers and align their products and services with value-based solutions. Doing this in a way that feels like a true partnership is a skill that can be developed, but the way learners experience training now must change. Practical project-based learning that is relevant, experiential, and cross-functional creates an environment of mini think tanks that can help learners creatively face the challenges of selling in the new healthcare-reform environment.

There is now a need to drive innovation in thought by including cross-functional colleagues

in sales training. This shift can create a new paradigm in sales training. In today's fast-moving environment, the focus must be on continuous learning environments that include live application-based learning, live or on-demand virtual learning, and social networks. In sales, work-related breakthroughs often happen after the training occurs. With the right tools and techniques, trainers can actively implement integrated learning designs that encourage continuous discussion and deepen learning and sharing of best practices.

Through more creative design and pull-through, learning professionals can help salespeople manage customer needs, create strategic opportunities, and make sound decisions, all of which will positively impact sales results.



PETER SHAW, M.D.

*President
MD Mindset*

The biggest challenge in the sales training field today is adapting from paper presentations to interactive visual aids (IVA), such as

the iPad. There are a new set of skills required to use IVAs effectively during clinical conversations, which are vastly different from traditional selling skills and can impact sales professional's effectiveness and credibility.

In addition, the sales professionals must understand the mindset of their target customer when using these devices. The approach in selling to different specialists is necessarily very different. The varying personalities of the individual customer and specialty needs require unique selling skills, especially when incorporating new technology.

These factors among others contribute to the relevance and credibility of the sales professional. Unfortunately, companies are putting less and less emphasis on training and the time available at training events.

The opportunity is in benchmarking and tracking skills and knowledge with the integration of the iPad and other mobile devices into their sales calls. There is a specific opportunity to track, measure, and train on these mobile device skills and how they vary based on the customer's specialty.

By pinpointing strengths and opportunities through continuous measurement of the field, sales trainers, and managers can work together to empower the salesforce and increase access to HCPs and market share. 