BY LISA DRESS

The PC Approach to Improving the Detail

THE TABLET PC IS STARTING TO GAIN MORE TRACTION **IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY, PARTICULARLY AS A TOOL FOR SALES REPS DURING A DETAIL.** WHILE CONCERNS OVER PRICE, SIZE, AND USER-FRIENDLINESS REMAIN, **INDUSTRY EXPERTS PREDICT THEIR USE WILL CONTINUE TO INCREASE.**

ENRICO DEPAOLIS

PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES ARE BEING VERY CAUTIOUS AND METICULOUS IN DETERMINING WHAT THE BEST TECHNOLOGY IS FOR THEIR FIELD FORCES. I do not see the demand increasing unless price and form factors are readdressed by vendors.

Time is not on their side. Pharmaceutical sales representatives have mere seconds when meeting with physicians. Information has to be provided, documentation has to be created, and signatures need to be captured. And all the time, the clock is ticking.

Pharma companies and their reps are hoping improved technology will give them the advantage they need during a detail. The view among many technology vendors and some pharmaceutical companies is that a much-touted technology, the tablet PC, can improve rep/physician interaction.

The tablet PC essentially comes in two formats: a slate tablet or a convertible unit. The slate version has no keyboard; instead there is a pen to input information. The convertible version has add-ons such as a keyboard.

According to researchers from Forrester, the slate tablet is developing into a viable platform for mobile workers in the healthcare market and might be more effective than a PDA or laptop.

Indications are that some leading companies are responding positively to the tablet PC. Pfizer Inc., for example, is providing its cardiovascular healthcare representatives with tablet PCs, powered by Proscape software and Microsoft technology, and replacing laptops and PDAs for this salesforce unit.

"The tablet PC presents the first real opportunity to explore a new vehicle to provide better value to prescribers, help the sales representative become more efficient and productive, and provide insight into the physician/sales representative interaction," says Richie A. Bavasso, executive VP and chief marketing officer of Pharmedica Communications LLC and president of Influent.

BENEFITS AND ADVANTAGES

Experts say tablet PCs offer several advantages compared with other technology solutions, such as laptops and PDAs, including increasing the sales rep's effectiveness through the delivery of segmented, targeted messages to the physician; providing insights into sales and productivity trends through Web-based reporting for sales management, thus enabling the rep to bring more relevant information to the physician; capturing physician signatures during sample drops; and more options, in terms of applications, as well as ease of use.

The tablet PC is catching on as the platform of choice for the pharmaceutical sales representative, says Joseph Krummenacker, director of strategic solutions at Dendrite International Inc.

JOSEPH KRUMMENACKER

USING TABLET PCS, REPRESENTATIVES CAN CAPTURE ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES, MAKING IT MORE LIKELY THAT THE SYSTEM WILL BE USED UP UNTIL THE POINT OF SALE.

Another benefit may be including multimedia presentations to physicians. Marketing executives also can review the presentation sequence and analyze what presentations are effective for specific doctors.

"It provides a single solution for the mobile salesforce," he says. "Added computing power makes use of multimedia presentations, stores necessary data for analytics, provides usable screen real estate, and makes navigation easier. The power of the device provides sales representatives in the field with a workflow advantage for real-time data entry and account planning, which increases productivity and data sharing."

The power of tablet PCs allows representatives to detail physicians more effectively with multimedia electronic detail aids and presentations.

"In the early tablet PC deployment phases, the content a sales representative used to educate physicians was just another form of the materials the product management team had already produced in paper or CD ROM format," Mr. Bavasso says. "But reps have learned that to be effective, content must be created specifically for the tablet PC. Putting a paper

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT VALUE TABLET PCS BRING TO THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY IS

the power of the PC combined with the functional requirements of on-screen electronic signature capture.

KEN ARBADJI

detail aid on a tablet PC is not the most effective use of the technology."

"Representatives use hard-copy brochures to discuss product advantages with physicians," says Ken Arbadji, VP of North American sales at StayinFront. "Now there is an option for electronic detailing that enables pharmaceutical companies and representatives to tailor the presentation to fit the specific profile of the physician. Marketing also can track the presentation sequence and analyze what presentations are effective for specific doctors."

Tablet PCs offer a real-life mobile solution for the pharmaceutical sales representative, says Sam Barclay, VP of business development at StayinFront.

"The ability to access and update relevant data is central to the customer relationship," Mr. Barclay says. "Significant credibility is gained when sales representatives can respond to a busy physician's questions during their brief face-to-face interaction. In today's competitive landscape, it's managing these interactions that maximizes results so that every contact strengthens the long-term profitability of the relationship."

As e-detailing continues to mature, pharmaceutical marketers are more effectively linking the experience with the in-field expe-

rience of the sales representative's tablet PC interaction.

"In the 1990s, companies tried to do more on the detailing front with laptops," Mr. Bavasso says. "They produced interactive educational experiences that worked well in the lunch-and-learn setting but were awkward in the stand-up detail setting."

By using the tablet PC as a detail aid, reps also can capture a physician's response to key messages at the point of activity, making the information current and accurate, says Rajan Krishnan, director of product marketing for Siebel Systems Inc.'s life-sciences vertical unit.

"These responses provide key insights and allow a company to build and act upon proprietary customer intelligence," he says. "The tablet PC provides the ability to drive consistency across marketing and sales business processes and deliver the right message to the right customer at the right frequency. The tablet PC is a powerful medium to deliver customized product detailing based on physician segmentation."

Some say the most significant value of tablet PCs in the pharmaceutical industry is the ability to provide the power of a personal computer with the functional requirement of on-screen electronic signature capture.

"The tablet PC helps this highly regulated industry eliminate data errors that occur when sales representatives use handwritten paper-based forms for sample data and signature capture," Mr. Krummenacker says.

According to Mr. Krummenacker, pharmaceutical companies had looked to leverage the technological advantages of electronic signature capture through PDA devices.

"Though PDA devices are small, portable, and economical, and have a stand-alone configuration, they ultimately posed a greater disadvantage when organizations and individuals needed more power for applications that were more robust, or needed more data storage or usable screen real estate," he says.

The PDA device required a PC companion to fulfill the varying needs of a field-based representative working from his or her home office.

"This led to multitiered configurations, which in turn increased the support costs of

BREAKING DOWN THE TABLET PC MARKET

FEWER THAN 500,000 TABLET PCS WERE SHIPPED IN 2003, THEIR FIRST FULL YEAR ON THE MARKET, ACCORDING TO FORRESTER RESEARCH. THIS WAS JUST A FRACTION OF THE 40 MILLION LAPTOPS SHIPPED IN 2003. A NEW GENERATION OF PRODUCTS IS NOW ON THE MARKET AND WHILE THE HARDWARE HAS IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY, TABLET PCS WILL REMAIN A NICHE PRODUCT UNTIL AT LEAST 2006, ACCORDING TO FORRESTER.

There are two types of tablet PCs, convertible and the "pure tablet" or slate-style. Convertible tablet PCs, in which the LCD display pivots and locks down on top of the keyboard, can be used as a traditional notebook computer with an integrated keyboard. Slate-style computers are built to be highly mobile, and some are optimized for rugged weather and tough treatment, according to information provided by Microsoft.

The tablet PC is built on a Microsoft operating system, called the Windows XP Tablet PC Edition, a superset of Windows XP Professional. The tablet PC platform has the same high level of functionality as other computers running Windows XP Professional. It also supports all legacy Windows applications and provides a powerful foundation, including the .NET Framework, for developing new Windows-based applications that support tablet PC digital pen and ink capabilities, according to Microsoft.

The Windows XP Tablet PC Edition 2005 operating system has the full functionality of Windows XP Professional, expanded with enhancements specifically for the tablet PC platform. Windows XP Service Pack 2 (SP2) is included with the Windows XP Tablet PC Edition 2005, offering advanced security tools and technologies in addition to the latest updates from Microsoft. Users can take advantage of a full-size monitor and keyboard, a mouse, and printers to use tablet PC as a primary notebook PC.

Tablet PCs are built with an electromagnetic screen that allows users to write with a digital pen. This "notebook plus" technology allows users to enjoy all of the benefits of a standard mobile PC, plus the added benefit of pen and ink functionality.

The tablet PC also features an accurate handwriting-recognition engine. Handwritten text on the tablet PC can be sent and received — as handwriting — in e-mail, while documents with handwritten notes can be saved as Word files.

The screen digitizes the pen movements and displays them as handwritten or drawn "ink" and makes the hand-scripted text available to a handwriting recognizer, which translates the handwritten words into standard text in typeface. This text can then be pasted into Microsoft Outlook e-mails, Excel spreadsheets, or Word documents and sent to other Windows-based platforms and devices.

Source: Forrester Research Inc., Cambridge, Mass. For more information, visit forrester.com.

TECHNOLOGY IS IMPROVING

- Tablet PCs have a battery life of about five hours. First-generation products didn't come close and needed a recharge for an eight-hour shift.
- They have standard wireless Ethernet connectivity.
- New processors have improved performance. First-generation tablets forced users to trade performance for longer battery life.
- They have more usable displays. First-generation tablets suffered from color shifts that made the screen unreadable when viewed from the side. New products now provide improved viewing angles.

what initially were inexpensive devices," Mr. Krummenacker says. "Perhaps more problematic has been the unreliability of manufacturers' operating systems and the availability of commercial PDA devices. Inconsistencies in the marketplace caught PDA users off guard when models ceased to exist within the first year of their deployment. This left companies with little option but to delay the double expense of re-implementing new technology by shopping for replacement parts at online auction sites such as eBay. Today, more pharmaceutical companies are deploying the tablet PC as initial or replacement systems for field-based sales representatives."

Additionally, tablet PCs feature high-resolution displays and a touch-sensitive screen.

"Physicians can 'sign' the touch screen to acknowledge receipt of drug samples," Mr. Barclay adds.

Mr. Krummenacker says salesforce automation tools designed using MS Tablet Optimization can help pharmaceutical sales representatives avoid mistakes that potentially could violate federal regulations, ultimately causing the incorrect products to be dropped or inaccurate quantities to be recorded.

"Since representatives are capturing signatures with tablet PCs, they are used right up to the point of sale; standard laptops are often left in the car or at home because there is no incentive to bring them into the office," Mr. Arbadji says. "Just before seeing the physician, representatives can view their last few calls, sales data, and other information about the physician. Hopefully, having this information at the point of contact makes the representative better prepared for the call and allows him or her to discuss value-added topics with the physician. There are several different manufacturers and models of the tablet PCs, but for the most part, users will find them very similar to laptops, so the learning curve is not drastic. One of the big differences is that users must get used to working with a pen to navigate rather than a mouse."

A tablet PC offers a number of advantages for the pharmaceutical sales representative, says John P. Jason, VP of marketing at Target Software Inc. From a software perspective, it runs full Microsoft Office applications such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Microsoft Outlook also is fully supported on a tablet PC, and a full Web browser is built in.

From a hardware perspective, for certain field forces, it can function as a single device both on the road and at home. The screen size is more than suitable for viewing videos, presentations, Websites, reports, and spreadsheets.

Because tablet PCs are easier to learn to use, sales reps are more apt to use the technology, according to Enrico DePaolis, VP and global practice leader at Dendrite International Inc.

Another advantage of the tablet PC is voice-recognition software. Through the use of voice commands, users can control applications, as well as input text, according to Microsoft executives.

This voice command feature is beneficial for pharmaceutical sales representatives since it allows them to easily convert notes into files, Mr. Barclay says.

"With the right applications, the tablet PC is very easy to use," Mr. DePaolis says. "When using digital ink to take notes, the technology is inherently intuitive and makes the process as easy as writing on paper."

If a company wants to go paperless for its call reporting and sample management, there are several computer-based technologies that pharmaceutical companies can chose from, such as tablet PCs, subnotebooks, and pocket PCs, Mr. Jason says.

ADOPTION CONSIDERATIONS

According to some industry analysts, tablet PCs have some disadvantages, including a 30% price premium compared with notebook PCs. The cost of a tablet PC can be $1,500 or more, depending on many different factors. And, according to Forrester researchers, the value of digital ink is still unclear. While the ability to handwrite messages and take notes without typing is a convenience, it is not a necessity. Additionally, IT departments won't want to introduce tablet PCs into the enterprise if the technology can't be integrated into existing client-management processes, according to Forrester.

"In addition to the cost of the tablet PC, the cost of peripheral devices, such as CD-ROM drives, port replicators, and so on have to be factored in," Mr. DePaolis says. "The price for just the equipment can be as much as $3,000. When application upgrades are included, the cost per representative for a tablet PC could be a much as $5,000. Ongoing costs for repairs and support are additional expenses. This technology can be very costly for the smaller pharmaceutical company that can't leverage bulk purchasing with vendors."

As with all technologies, pharmaceutical companies have to consider the return on their investments.

RICHIE BAVASSO

IN THE SALES REPRESENTATIVES' ON GOING EFFORTS TO EDUCATE PHYSICIANS ON DISEASE STATES AND AVAILABLE THERAPIES, we have evidence that the use of tablet PCs in the detail setting allows the rep to get right to the information of interest to the doctor very quickly.

Mr. Jason says in terms of the technology, cost reduction is relatively easy to calculate, especially if a company is switching from paper to electronic call reporting and/or sample management.

"The rest is dependent upon what is being done with the timely, more accurate data to determine if a desirable impact upon revenue is occurring," Mr. Jason.

The cost of the hardware is not the only

LIKE ANY MOBILE FIELD TECHNOLOGY FOR REPRESENTATIVES, PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES NEED TO MAKE SURE THE TABLET PC FITS EASILY INTO THE REPRESENTATIVE'S WORKFLOW IN THE PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE; this ensures that every second counts when the rep is in front of the physician.

SAM BARCLAY

consideration. According to some experts, among the largest investments a company needs to make is training marketers and reps to shift their thinking when they have access to a tablet PC.

"Most pharmaceutical companies participate in a plan of action (POA) schedule for disseminating new marketing and educational materials to the field force on a quarterly basis," Mr. Bavasso says. "POAs offer marketing the opportunity to disseminate new materials to the field that are designed in response to new data and/or marketplace reaction to news and events. The tablet PC allows for ongoing POAs, whereby new data can be synchronized to the tablet on demand. Very often in the paper world, sales materials are a one-size-fits-all. The tablet PC allows sales materials to be customized for each prescriber. The complexity and sophistication of that customization is directly proportional to the investment the pharmaceutical company makes in building its infrastructure to optimize the technology."

The ROI for any educational or marketing activity is difficult to measure given all the competing noise in the marketplace, Mr. Bavasso adds.

"Among our clients that are in a pilot stage or demonstration project mode of deployment with tablet PCs, it is generally accepted that not enough time has transpired to measure the impact in terms of new prescriptions," he says. "2005 will be an enlightening year in this regard."

One drawback to the tablet PC noted by experts is its size, especially when compared with a pocket PC or PDA.

"The pocket PC, unlike the tablet PC, can easily slip into a pocket and can go anywhere the sales representative goes," Mr. Jason says. "And because of the tablet PC's hard drive and weight, if the rep drops it, you might as well kiss it goodbye."

Mr. DePaolis says user fatigue while detailing or getting signatures from physicians is something to consider.

"If the representatives won't carry it then the company's investment is wasted," he says.

Other issues, Mr. DePaolis notes, are the longevity of battery life and screen displays in direct sunlight are sometimes difficult to view.

"Also, there are durability issues, although manufacturers are addressing this area," he says. "Another area that is being addressed by manufacturers, but still not resolved by many, is the lack of an integrated CD-ROM drive. Peripheral management is a real issue with large field forces, not to mention support and asset tracking."

Mr. Jason adds that tablet PCs are not always instantly accessible when needed.

"When it is time for the representative to capture the physician's signature, tablet PCs are often not ready when the doctor is ready to sign," Mr. Jason says. "Doctors do not have the time or the patience for a tablet PC to wake up. The other day I was in a doctor's office and I watched a pharmaceutical sales representative as she constantly tapped on her tablet PC's screen to keep it awake so it would be ready when she was."

Mr. Bavasso says regardless of what technology pharmaceutical sales representatives currently use, the tablet PC is here to stay and will prove beneficial for pharmaceutical companies that use them to effectively differentiate their field force and streamline their activity.

"The paradigm shift focuses on the ability to micro market," Mr. Bavasso says. "If the

TABLET PCS AND THE DETAIL ENCOUNTER

- By about a **2-to-1** margin, specialty physicians who were detailed with tablet PCs preferred this technology to the paper-based approach.
- **71%** of specialty physicians surveyed viewed the tablet PC as adding value to the sales representative's presentation.
- **94%** of specialty physicians surveyed said they would allow representatives to continue to detail them with an electronic visual aid.
- The average time spent on a specialty physician call using the tablet PC electronic visual aid (visual aid only portion of the call) was **27** minutes, **59** seconds. This represents a **52%** increase in call duration from the surveyed company's average of **18.4** minutes per call with paper-based visual aids.
- Specialty physicians liked the ability to view opinion leader videos during tablet PC presentations.
- Time with primary-care doctors has increased to **5** minutes from **96** seconds.
- More than **90%** of the physician respondents say tablet PC solutions add value to the detail.

Source: Proscape Technologies, Horsham, Pa. For more information, visit proscape.com.

RAJAN KRISHNAN

LEADERS IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY ARE INCREASINGLY ADOPTING the power of the tablet PC and interactive, differential detailing.

sales representative can bring new materials to the physician interaction that meet the needs of the prescriber on a continuous basis and if the tablet PC can enhance the perceived value of the representative, then both parties win."

Tablet PCs may be an optimal solution for field forces that rely heavily on detail aids or for specialty units that currently carry laptops, Mr. DePaolis says.

"Pharmaceutical executives should carefully evaluate user requirements to determine if and how tablet PC technology fits in with their business processes," he says.

"Business value comes from the right mix and that includes much more than the piece of hardware selected," Mr. Jason says. "Tablet

PCs can provide significant value if they are running the right software from the right software vendor and are provided to the field force for the right reasons. But that also is true of other devices that are equipped with the right mix of components."◆

PharmaVoice welcomes comments about this article. E-mail us at feedback@pharmavoice.com.
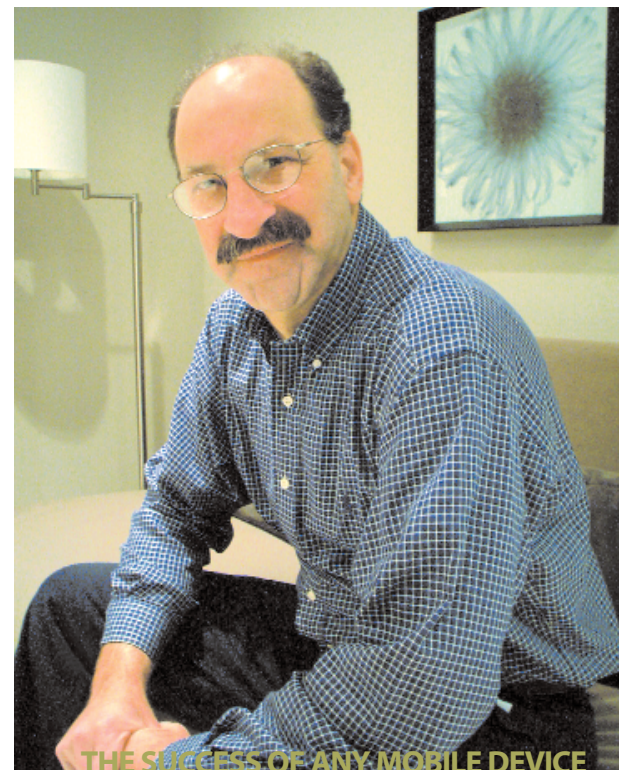
JOHN JASON

THE SUCCESS OF ANY MOBILE DEVICE USED FOR PHARMACEUTICAL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT OR SALESFORCE AUTOMATION is highly dependent on the software in the field, during synchronization, and in the back office.

Experts on this topic

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