

Gaining Power Through Evidence-Based Selling

Sales reps need an edge to get face time with the physicians these days.

The way to their schedule calendar is through evidence-based medicine, our experts say.

Studies show that not only does adding evidence-based medicine information to the sales call increase the value of the sales rep's role, evidence-based medicine data

can also help drive physician prescribing behavior.

According to Michelle O'Connor, senior VP, learning strategy and innovation, at CMR Institute, clinicians have reported that the most useful interaction is one with a highly educated representative who brings a broad understanding of the healthcare continuum to the table and who delivers information that benefits patient outcomes.

"Evidence-based medicine information gives sales reps the opportunity to provide data based on research that clinicians value as opposed to a marketing message," she says. "Physicians tell us again and again that this is what they value most."

Mark Sales, global practice leader, stakeholder management, at TNS Healthcare, says pharmaceutical companies have begun a dramatic transition from product-centric sales models to physician-centric service models.

"More than 90% of companies now say they are adopting service models, expanding their focus from measuring internal sales processes to motivating external sales drivers: the physicians writing prescriptions and the stakeholders influencing them," he says. "As service models evolve, the industry is moving toward patient-centric approaches, in which physicians and the industry partner to advance patient care and improve treatment outcomes. Evidence-based medicine will be an important tool in ensuring reps can form that kind of strong partnership with their physician customers in helping them optimize patient care." (For more information on creating successful service models, please turn to page 44.)

THE EVIDENCE FOR EVIDENCE-BASED SELLING

Recent studies reveal that physicians want and need to have more valuable clinical information coming from pharmaceutical companies. In a 2008

Sermo study sponsored by Publicis Selling Solutions Inc., with physicians from a wide variety of different specialties, 85% of respondents wanted "more" or "significantly more" higher-quality representatives, defined as more highly trained, "specialty type" representatives. Fully 87% of respondents wanted "more" or "significantly more" use of clinical studies and evidence-based medicine in their discussions with sales representatives. Surveyed physicians preferred clinical studies to "glossy brochures" and evidence-based medicine-oriented discussions versus promotional details.

Another study, conducted annually by the Health Strategies Group, shows that only 40% of physicians said they were satisfied with the information that reps shared during product discussions and only 30% were satisfied with the supporting materials that sales reps used.

"These figures are not positive indicators," says Rick Rosenthal, principal and practice leader, sales force effectiveness, Health Strategies Group. "Particularly since we know that visual aids and clinical reprints that support what sales reps say in the office are important predictors of prescribing changes."

Mr. Rosenthal says now, more than ever, sales reps should be able to speak more clinically to the doctors who desire this type of discussion.

Solvay recently studied the results of syndicated reports from physician focus groups to determine how its sales reps can better fill physicians' needs. The overriding conclusion was that doctors like the interchange with reps and appreciate the services they bring, but they have limited time for the interaction, says Kevin Guthrie, VP sales, Solvay Pharmaceuticals.

"Sales reps need to bring physicians relevant, up-to-date, good, sound clinical information," he says. "As a result, our reps have found that if they provide good information, they get more face time with the physician. But, if the information provided is just a repeat of the last five visits to the



Robert Norris

Complete Healthcare Communication

Sales reps and marketers must adapt to a new playing field —

one in which highly technical information is readily accessible to both physicians and savvy patient populations.

office, they won't get any of the physician's time."

Mr. Rosenthal says physicians report that they want to see reprints, professional journals, consensus statements from medical societies, and other information of this type.

"Physicians' underlying concern is around bias,"



Michelle O'Connor
CMR Institute



Don Hribek
EMD Serono

Clinicians tell us **the most useful interaction is one with a highly educated rep** who has a broad understanding of the healthcare continuum.

he says. "Physicians may hear from one rep that their drug is better than another and when that scenario is repeated over and over again, category by category, soon they start to wonder who is giving the most truthful and accurate information."

Richie Bavasso, president of Exploria SPS, says because of the advent of alternate channels for the physician to find and review unbiased and comparative data on therapies, the sales-rep chan-

nel has become less valued and important.

"If pharma companies want to improve the value of their reps and strengthen this channel in the eye of the physician, they must provide sales reps with the tools to participate in discussions that present the appropriate therapy for a patient population," he advises. "This means it is just as important for sales reps to inform physicians when not to use their brand as it is when to use the product."

Ms. O'Connor says building trust is key in a successful clinician and rep interaction.

"To maintain credibility with clinicians it is imperative that evidence-based medicine or any type of clinical-trial results are presented in an unbiased and factual way," she says. "Physicians don't want to hear a sales rep criticize a competitive product."

Craig Sponseller, M.D., executive VP and chief

Physicians need more information than ever before about the latest innovations and best courses of treatment and protocols, and they are looking to sales representatives to provide this information.

medical officer at Vox Medica, agrees that trust is paramount to rebuilding the value proposition between sales reps and physicians.

"We need to help re-establish the reps' value for this new era, as they are our industry's front line," Dr. Sponseller says. "It starts with rethinking the salesforce strategy, rebranding the reps, and training them to deliver on their brand promise, not just that of the products they sell."

Dr. Sponseller says there are three driving factors to making a sales rep essential in today's environment: access, credibility, and success. (To learn more about these interrelated factors to improve the value proposition, please turn to page 46.)

TRAINING REPS IN EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE

Integrating evidence-based medicine into a sales strategy requires reps to understand the impact of data on clinical decision-making, key research findings and evaluations, and the validity of trial results.

Training reps on evidence-based medicine is more important than ever in a downtrodden economy, says Paul Mignon, chief operating officer of

THOUGHT LEADERS

■ **RICHIE A. BAVASSO.** President, Exploria SPS, which offers sales performance solutions for tablet PCs and other mobile technology to the pharmaceutical and medical-device industries. For more information, visit exploriasps.com.

■ **KEVIN GUTHRIE.** VP, Sales, Solvay Pharmaceuticals Inc., a research-driven group of companies that constitute the global pharmaceutical business of the Solvay Group, which seeks to fulfill carefully selected, unmet medical needs in the therapeutic areas of neuroscience, cardiometabolic, influenza vaccines, gastroenterology, and men's and women's health. For more information, visit solvaypharmaceuticals.com.

■ **DON HRIBEK.** VP Sales, EMD Serono, which specializes in several therapeutic areas, including reproductive health, neurology, and metabolic endocrinology. For more information, visit emdserono.com.

■ **PAUL MIGNON.** Chief Operating Officer; inVentiv Commercial; President, inVentiv Selling Solutions, a segment of inVentiv Health that provides outsourced product commercialization programs, recruiting, professional development and training, and regulatory compliance services; and salesforce automation/data analysis, as well as planning and analytics, and other services. For more information, visit inventivhealth.com.

■ **CELESTE MOSBY.** VP, Life Sciences, Wilson Learning Worldwide, a provider of human performance improvement solutions for Global 2000,

Fortune 500, and emerging organizations worldwide. For more information, visit wilsonlearning.com.

■ **ROBERT A. NORRIS.** President and Founder, Complete Healthcare Communications Inc., which focuses solely on the art and discipline of strategic publication planning. For more information, visit chcinc.com.

■ **MICHELLE O'CONNOR.** Senior VP, Learning Strategy and Innovation, CMR Institute, a not-for-profit, 501(c)3, independent educational organization that provides advanced education and professional certification and sets national standards for pharmaceutical representatives and managers. For more information, visit cmrinstitute.org.

■ **RICK ROSENTHAL.** Principal and Practice Leader, Sales Force Effectiveness, Health Strategies Group, a leading consulting firm that provides market intelligence and research to pharmaceutical and biotechnology professionals. For more information, visit healthstrategies.com.

■ **MARK SALES.** Global Practice Leader, Stakeholder Management, TNS Healthcare, A Kantar Health Company, which provides globally consistent solutions and custom advisory services to support product introductions; brand, treatment, and sales-performance optimization; and professional and DTC promotional tracking. For more information, visit tnsglobal.com/healthcare.

■ **CRAIG SPONSELLER, M.D.** Executive VP and Chief Medical Officer, Vox Medica Inc., an independent healthcare communications company. For more information, visit voxmedica.com.



Richie Bavasso
Exploria SPS

Often there is a disconnect — reps believe they are using evidence-based data in their discussions with physicians, but physicians think the data are limited, controlled, and biased.

inVentiv Commercial and president of inVentiv Selling Solutions. Trained in how to best use evidence-based medicine, reps will bring more value to the physician and gain more access as a result.

"Because so many physicians are programmed to think that a rep is going to repeat a marketing message, they shut down," Mr. Mignon says. "Once



Paul Mignon
inVentiv

sales reps start using evidence-based medicine, there will be an evolution in how physicians think about reps; they will believe that reps can bring information that is worthwhile."

Mr. Mignon says there also needs to be an evolution in how sales reps are trained.

"Historically, companies trained their sales people to be experts in their own products; now, sales reps need to be experts in all products and the diseases," he says. "Doctors diagnose disease, but a well-trained rep is a better facilitator of the appropriate products for the physician to use."

Mr. Guthrie says his salesforce teams already have reaped the benefits from this change in focus.

"Anecdotally, we have witnessed that when sales reps bring new landmark data to physicians, they tend to get extended time with them," he says. "For many physicians who normally won't see us, when we tell them we have new and important data, they often make appointments with us."

Once sales reps start using evidence-based medicine data, **there will be an evolution in how physicians think of reps.**

Solvay began training its sales reps in evidence-based selling four years ago. The module used provides sales professionals with the foundation to fully understand clinical study data.

"We explain study design, we talk about report structure and background on statistical analysis and statistical significance, we help pinpoint key findings and establish the terminology to be used in the review of the articles we provide to them," Mr. Guthrie explains.

Mr. Guthrie says the training includes working in partnership with several other departments in the company.

"We have great relationships with the medical services group, the regulatory and marketing groups, and the sales and training departments," he says. "This helps us to be proactive in identifying therapeutically relevant information as it comes to market and we can discern if it fits promotional opportunities, or if it should be used strictly for educational purposes for sales reps, or if it fits better with medical affairs."

Don Hribek, VP of sales at EMD Serono, rec-

Insights From the Insiders

PHARMAVOICE ASKED EXPERTS IN THE SALES REP TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ARENA TO IDENTIFY TO WHAT DEGREE WILL KNOWLEDGE OF EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE (EBM) BECOME A NECESSARY TOOL FOR THE SALES REP OF THE FUTURE AND WHY.



The Evidence is Clear

Evidence-based medicine will be an extremely important tool for reps. A TNS study of more than 1,500 primary-care physicians found that doctors rated "strong scientific/clinical evidence to support the product" as the second-most important criterion for assessing the value of a meeting with a rep. This ties with the related attributes of "communicating product information clearly and comprehensively" and "acknowledging weakness and limitations of the product." It is clear that doctors are looking for reps who can credibly deliver evidence-based information to demonstrate a product's treatment value.

Mark Sales
Global Practice Leader,
Stakeholder Management
TNS Healthcare

For more information, please turn to page 44.



A Foundation of Trust

EBM will be a critical tool, a tape measure of sorts, to mark off the distance sales reps can travel with each respective HCP on the path of individual practice challenges and community nuances. At the core lies the understanding and appropriate implementation of EBM and how it can help guide clinical judgments and decisions directed to our most paramount customer; the patient. Therefore, future reps will need to be rooted in the essentials of EBM, while masterful of the balance between the science of medicine and the art of medicine. From this, a foundation of trust can be built by credibly assimilating the very fabric of EBM into the services they provide to ensure success through the eyes of the HCP.

Craig Sponseller, M.D.
Executive VP/Chief Medical Officer
Vox Medica Inc.

For more information, please turn to page 46.



A New Type of Training

Training sales representatives to deliver a fluent yet powerful message will enable more effective connections with targeted customers and trigger responses that warrant more engaging reactions from physicians.

Ultimately, physicians want to be able to make clinically relevant treatment decisions based on trusted clinical data. Therefore, they want to consider sales representatives as trusted advisors and valued resources who can partner with them in getting this important information.

Celeste Mosby
VP, Life Sciences
Wilson Learning Worldwide

For more information, please turn to page 48.

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REQUIRED EXPERIENCE FOR HEALTHY CAREERS

ommends that evidence-based medicine information is best communicated in a face-to-face environment, which means special training.

"Just sending out an article with a fact sheet is not enough to verify that all of the sales representatives will deliver the message effectively and in-line with the label," he says. "Training workshops need to be conducted to effectively roll out this type of information."

Mr. Rosenthal adds that evidence-based training needs to be an ongoing endeavor and not a one-time shot.

An overlooked opportunity is listening and learning from the physicians' feedback regarding the data presented, he says.

"Many times, reps lock into the idea that customers are only there to be persuaded, but physicians have years of training and experience and they can be a great source of information and can provide feedback to help sales reps do their jobs better," Mr. Rosenthal says.

One of the critical steps in training is to teach sales representatives how to pull pertinent information out of clinical papers and to help them communicate this information in the best way to the physician, says Celeste Mosby, VP, Life Sciences, of Wilson Learning Worldwide.

"It is important to align the technical skills of understanding evidence-based medicine to the skills of communicating this information," she says.

Ms. Mosby says the conversations that sales representatives will now need to have will be more complicated than writing one prescription for success; it will take a shift in go-to-market strategy.

"Sales representatives will serve as captains of a very integrated service team," she says. "The way this service team is rewarded should not just be individual; incentives, rewards, and recognition of the team's productivity and success must also be the focus of sustaining this new service model." (For more information on the value proposition of a new sales model, please turn to page 48.)

While vitally important in this new environment, arming sales reps with evidence-based medicine could increase the probability of compliance risk in discussions between reps and physicians.

"Risk is a challenge," Mr. Guthrie says. "More information doesn't mean better information. In today's Internet world, at the click of a button sales reps have a lot of information at their fingertips, but with this access comes a greater burden to understand the data."

Mr. Guthrie says it is important that pharma companies ensure that their reps are getting balanced information and that the interpretation of that information is appropriate.

"We must hold evidence-based medical mate-



Kevin Guthrie
Solvay Pharmaceuticals

We get what we earn: if we become less clinical and bring less value to physicians, we get less of their time.

rial to the same standards of promotional materials and make sure we are meeting regulatory and compliance guidelines," he says.

To facilitate adherence to the standards, companies need to stay on top of scientific information and review and interpret information for sales reps.

"Sales reps may be tempted to use unvetted information in promotional selling, but we are training our reps to wait until the data have gone through the appropriate process," Mr. Guthrie says. "When a breaking new study comes out, the sooner the company makes the appropriate evaluations and trains them on the appropriate use of the data, the fewer compliance issues there will be."

Research and innovation can actually increase the risk for the sales representative. Even the most innocent conversations around any research can have serious implications for pharmaceutical companies, Mr. Hribek says.

"The industry must ensure that all information disseminated to physicians is on-label," he says. "This becomes challenging when new studies are published that discuss off-label use of an existing drug or a compound currently in research. Sales representatives might be asked by the physician to weigh in on the data; however, they need to ensure they are discussing on-label use only."

However, the benefit of providing relevant study information to the physician far outweighs the compliance risk, as long as pharmaceutical companies develop sales materials that are approved by their regulatory department and



Rick Rosenthal
Health Strategies Group

The rising need for more evidence in sales coincides with the need for clarifying risk to benefit, justifying price, and explaining the health economics of a treatment.

adhere to the standards outlined by the FDA when discussing disease state and product information.

In general, presenting data that are based on results of a randomized controlled trial or other research study doesn't present a compliance risk if the presentation is offered in an unbiased framework and follows FDA guidelines, Ms. O'Connor says.

"Reps have very strict parameters about what they can and cannot speak to even when using reprint materials," she says. "For example, when using clinical reprints, the guidelines state that the document cannot be altered in any way. In other words, a rep cannot highlight a portion of reprint."

Clinicians are taking a more objective look at scientific evidence than ever before, especially when written clearly and logically, says Robert Norris, president and founder, Complete Healthcare Communications.

"The credibility of promotional vehicles and messages, as they have been presented in the past, are vulnerable in light of validated peer-reviewed scientific evidence," Mr. Norris says.

Sales reps and pharmaceutical marketers must adapt to a playing field in which highly technical information is readily accessible to all clinicians as well as savvy patient populations, he says.

"Being able to provide hard medical evidence should make carrying the bag easier in the long run, but the challenge is adapting to the change," Mr. Norris says. ♦

PharmaVOICE welcomes comments about this article. E-mail us at feedback@pharmavoices.com.

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by Robin Robinson

Driving Evidence-Based Selling

There has always been a real need for clinical selling and understanding of clinical data and communications. The highest performing sales reps always had this as a key skill.

TODAY, MORE THAN EVER, THERE IS A GREATER NEED FOR MEDICALLY RELEVANT DATA, AND SEVERAL FACTORS ARE DRIVING AN INCREASED FOCUS AND UPTAKE OF THE PRACTICE.

“It has always been paramount that we provide healthcare professionals with the most up-to-date, fair-balanced efficacy and safety data, but today’s market is demanding more data for several reasons,” says Kevin Guthrie, VP of sales, at Solvay Pharmaceuticals.

The demand for evidence-based data is coming from payers as well as traditional providers of healthcare and a more savvy patient. Evidence-based medicine is used to clarify the risk-benefit

decision and justify the price for treatment and to evaluate and compare treatment options to see if one product is more efficacious than another in a particular patient population.

“The industry is working feverishly to try to answer this burden-of-proof question,” he says. “These are three key stakeholder segments that are demanding greater proof of worth of a pharmaceutical treatment.”

Another factor is the push for clinicians to base treatment decisions on widely accepted clinical practice guidelines to provide optimum patient care, says Michelle O’Connor, senior VP, learning strategy and innovation, CMR Institute.

“The need for improved patient outcomes is definitely fueling the use of evidence-based medicine,” she says. “Our research shows that a vast majority of clinicians prefer to get the latest and most applicable information from reps because it’s targeted and gives them the information they want quickly without going through all of the literature, which busy doctors don’t have time for.”

Additionally, more healthcare systems and more insurance companies are basing reimbursement decisions on evidence-based medicine and whether or not clinicians are following these guidelines, Ms. O’Connor says.

Time is of the essence in the physician’s mind, says Don Hribek, VP of sales at EMD Serono. In today’s healthcare system, the demands on a physician’s time are increasing. The time they have to see their patients, review the latest research, and attend conferences is lessening, and physicians are looking to the healthcare industry to become more of a resource on the best treatment options.

“Therefore, physicians need more information than ever before on the latest innovations and best courses of treatment and protocols, and they are looking to sales representatives to provide them with these data,” Mr. Hribek says.

And more importantly, all our experts say, evi-

dence-based information is what physicians want.

Rick Rosenthal, principal and practice leader, sales force effectiveness, Health Strategies Group, says physicians, whether they are office-based, hospital-based, or pharmacists in hospitals, want to see more evidence-based reprints, journal articles, consensus statements from medical societies, etc.

SHAPING THE SALESFORCE OF THE FUTURE

The application of evidence-based medicine will change a rep’s focus from delivering mugs, pens, and totally promotionally focused messages to delivering the next life-changing clinical message

Physicians report sales rep traits and actions predict prescribing change

A SURVEY OF MORE THAN 1,000 PHYSICIANS REVEALS THE TRAITS OF SALES REPS THAT ARE MOST LIKELY TO IMPACT PRESCRIBING BEHAVIOR:

- Understands appropriate use and role of product relative to other treatment options
- Understands physician practice and the kinds of patients treated
- Respects office staff
- Tailors presentations to physician needs and interests
- Consistently uses visual aids or clinical studies to support discussion

Source: Health Strategies Group.
For more information, visit healthstrategies.com.



Celeste Mosby
Wilson Learning Worldwide

The application of evidence-based medicine will change a rep’s focus from delivering mugs and pens to delivering the next life-changing messages to physicians.

to physicians who are looking to better serve their patients by positively impacting treatment outcomes, says Celeste Mosby, VP, life sciences, Wilson Learning Worldwide.

The current and future healthcare environment is going to force sales reps to be highly knowledgeable with respect to disease states and evidence-based medicine if they are to be successful.

"Reps will need to understand the critical role of pharmaceuticals in the healthcare continuum," Ms. O'Connor says. "The key point is that an educated rep who can summarize results and relay

Survey says: Physicians value highly educated reps

THE CMR INSTITUTE SURVEYED PHYSICIANS, INDUSTRY LEADERS, AND SALES REPRESENTATIVES IN FOCUS GROUPS, QUANTITATIVE SURVEYS, AND ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS, AND FOUND:

- Physicians place a high value on a well-educated, knowledgeable, ethical, and unbiased sales representative.
- Physicians overwhelmingly want sales representatives who have knowledge beyond information about the products they sell, including disease management, drug classes and indications, effectiveness, and quality-of-life issues.
- Sales representatives who have completed the in-depth requirements for certification by the nonprofit CMR Institute — a process that typically takes two or more years — report that their enhanced education contributes to:
 - Their ability to have a substantive, in-depth conversation with physicians (86%)
 - Their ability to better explain their products (80%)
 - Their credibility with physicians (77%)
 - The amount of time they spend with physicians/other providers (53%)

Source: CMR Institute.
For more information, visit cmrinstitute.org.

the validity of applicable trials can save the physician time and money while contributing to improved patient outcomes, and this is the type of service that physicians want and need — they need a resource that aids in the decision-making of care for their patients."

Experts believe that the salesforce of the future will need to be educated in the pharmacology of the drugs as well as business and ethics of healthcare in general.

Sales representatives will also need to be more efficient on every call and be able to conduct in-depth conversations with the healthcare providers in a timely manner; Mr. Hribek says.

"With each sales call, representatives need to bring physicians updated information on how to effectively use drug therapies in the approved manner to treat the indicated disease state; sales reps also need to know how patients can access therapies based on a cost perspective," Mr. Hribek says.

More application of evidence-based medicine from clinically sound resources and delivered by credible, medically educated sales professionals will impact the way the industry is viewed by the medical community.

Solvay conducted some research regarding what the best profile is for hiring successful sales representatives. Mr. Guthrie says the results were inconclusive.

"Sometimes the best sales representative is a nurse, a former school teacher, or a car rental manager," Mr. Guthrie says.

With the need for more clinical expertise on the horizon, however, the company is exploring more professional-based reps, such as nurses or physician assistants who can engage with key accounts who are desiring a more peer-to-peer exchange. The company is looking to discover if physicians will respond more readily to someone with a clinical background.

"Physicians who will not see reps under the current call model may be open to a more peer-to-peer interaction," says Mr. Guthrie. "The position would be in addition to the current sales rep model and might be called a clinical associate. This is a profile we are evaluating, and in 2009 we will be taking on those positions with hope of initiating a pilot program in the coming year."

The rep of tomorrow will have to be able to guide physicians in the proper use of products.

"The feedback we hear from physicians is that they are disappointed in the knowledge they get when they ask about such things as adverse events," Mr. Rosenthal says. "Reps need to be able to steer physicians to optimal patients where they'll see the best result, and they are not always doing that now."

According to Ms. Mosby, representatives of the future will have to manage a different type of relationship with physicians, where they continu-



Don Hribek
EMD Serono

Physicians need more information than ever before on the latest innovations and best courses of treatment and protocols, and they are looking to sales representatives to provide them with these data.

ously inform the organization of the types of clinical information needed by physicians.

"Traditionally medical, legal, R&D, and regulatory departments have played more of a support role for sales reps; in the future, representatives might need to rely more heavily on expertise in these important areas," she says. "Going forward, even primary-care reps will begin to closely emulate the role of specialty reps, prompting evidence-based medicine to become the basis of most sales interactions."

"The value of this approach is that there will now be an increased opportunity to continuously share and disseminate clinical information with physicians, using many different touch points," Ms. Mosby says. ♦