



Salesforce Technologies

The key to closing the divide between what has always been a personal exchange between sales representatives and physicians, ironically, might just lie in digitally based communications.

There is ever-increasing pressure to maximize the return on sales-force effectiveness throughout the global pharmaceutical industry. Year after year, sales-forces represent the largest promotional spend for companies, and year after year studies reveal the returns from this spend are not yielding the desired results.

According to IMS Health, in 2011, companies spent more than \$6.4 billion on sales rep detail activities.

As in all industries, the measure of success is increased sales, whether this is measured as growth in total prescriptions, new prescriptions, or market share. And vital to this success is the sales rep's connection with prescribing physicians and other office-based staff members.

It's this connection that has come under fire as of late. There are many more no-see physicians than ever before. PhRMA code guidelines have eliminated some of the most popular, effectiveness aside, tactics. And an increased focus on patient outcomes has many companies re-evaluating their sales strategies.

There are a slate of new technologies that are helping to re-engage physicians and provide sales representatives with the tools and information they need to make the interaction not only memorable but powerful.

Technology: Key to Bridging the Rep to Doc Chasm

The growing numbers of doctors limiting their access to sales representatives over the past few years, as well as the recent reduction in overall salesforce numbers, has created an information gap. Many in the industry say not to worry, there are plenty of technologies avail-

able that can help bridge any educational gaps in this crucial relationship.

"The next generation of technologies will center around tools that enable life-sciences sales reps to get drug information to physicians when, where, and how they want it," says Paul Shawah, VP of CRM strategy at Veeva Systems. "The tool that started it all was closed loop marketing (CLM), which has helped dramatically improve face-to-face interactions. But today we are extending beyond CLM with tools such as real-time video conferencing to enable immediate conversations with remote specialists. Also, email tools such as Veeva's new Approved Email application allow reps to send emails to physicians with approved drug information that they can access when they want. Combined, these tools plus the growing number of additional innovations emerging every day are transforming rep to doctor communications as well as customer relationships."

Nature and technology abhors a vacuum, which is why the industry continues to innovate to drive value creation in customer interactions.

Vyom Bhuta, global partner sales and marketing practice - life sciences, Cognizant, says these innovations are tailored to increase physician engagement, expand reach, and enhance physician-patient interactions.

"Next-gen interactive detailing is one example to increase physician engagement; by leveraging interactive technology beyond traditional CLM presentations reps can engage physicians in creating a visual patient profile on the fly and then having a dialogue on a personalized care plan or solution for that patient that includes drug therapy and value-added patient services offered by the various pharmaceutical companies," he says. "Multichannel CRM and digital marketing are other examples that reach across

Salesforce Effectiveness

According to Vyom Bhuta, global partner sales and marketing practice - life sciences, Cognizant, there are three things that pharmaceutical companies can do to improve the effectiveness of their salesforces.

- 1. Create a scientifically focused salesforce** to enable a deep technical dialogue with physicians.
- 2. Develop and train a patient-centered solutions-focused salesforce** that understands physician and patient types and helps physicians communicate the value of their recommended care-therapy to patients.
- 3. Provide support materials/tools for physicians** to use with the patient that are focused on improving patient outcomes. And monitor the progress of physician-patient interactions to improve the relevance of sales efforts to patient outcomes.

channels. Pharma sales reps can now increase the number and quality of customer interactions, reach low-access and no-see healthcare practitioners, and deliver drug information to customers across channels and extend the sales call without losing the control of the message leveraging approved and registered email enabling reps to quickly and compliantly email approved content directly to customers and see the interaction data through their CRM."

Mr. Bhuta also identifies point-of-care (POC) solutions as a way to enhance physician-patient interactions.

"By leveraging digital — Web/mobile — tools at the POC for physicians and offices to have easy access to drug information, sales reps



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VYOM BHUTA / Cognizant

or MSLS can provide patient services, coupons, samples, and an option for click-to-connect via phone, text, or video call at anytime.”

Neeraj Singhal, VP, product management and innovation, at Cegedim Relationship Management agrees that new technologies that will help bridge the rep to HCP gap will be more and more focused around digital interaction.

“This will start with a CLM solution that allows the rep to present customer-focused content, with the ability to switch presentations within the viewer, based on the customer’s needs,” he explains. “The next wave of technologies will support remote detailing, where the rep or his or her peers are able to engage with the HCP remotely, at a date and time of HCP’s choosing, thereby enabling longer and more effective conversations.”

As digital interactions increase and become more prominent, it will become imperative for sales reps to understand the digital preferences and proclivities of the HCP.

“This will enable companies to engage with the HCP based on his or her digital preferences, and in a forum or location that matches with the digital preferences,” Mr. Singhal says. “Multichannel marketing will enable this transition, and power the next wave of interactions.”

Beyond the Bag

Sales reps will need new skills to effectively communicate with prescribers and other office-based practitioners.

Mr. Singhal says sales reps will need to be experts in assessing the needs of the customers before the visit and be masters at communicating effectively.

“Having the tools to research and assess customers’ digital interactions will go a long way in enabling more effective interactions with customers,” he says.

More than the typical detailing skills or business planning skills, one of the most important skills reps need today, Mr. Bhuta says, is the ability for the sale representatives to connect with prescribers and healthcare practitioners across three dimensions: clinical knowledge, managed care and reimbursement, and patient engagement and outcomes.

“Sales reps must continue to provide a valuable service to physicians and healthcare practitioner communities by being experts in the science behind their brands,” he explains. “Being able to have a clinical dialogue by leveraging digital interactive technology is essential to increasing physician engagement,” Mr. Bhuta says.

Furthermore, Mr. Bhuta says when sales reps can inform physicians of managed care and market access changes affecting their company’s brands they have the opportunity to teach office staff protocol to ensure patients receive reimbursement.

In this era of outcomes-focused everything, both physicians and sales reps need to have a thorough understanding of what this means to the healthcare journey for patients.

“Physicians need to do a better job communicating the value of healthcare solution options to patient outcomes, and pharmaceutical sales representatives need to have the skills to prepare the physician for a meaningful dialogue with the patients about how their product, services, and solutions generate outcomes,” Mr. Bhuta says.

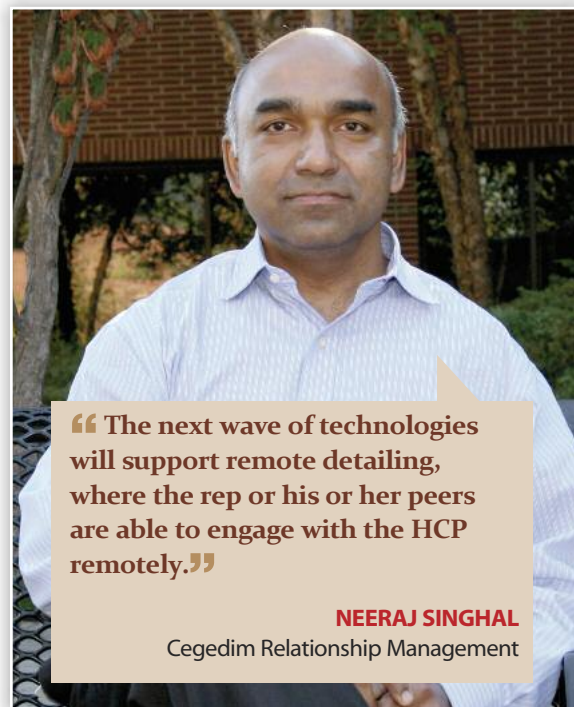
Veeva’s Mr. Shawah says with the growing number of new technology tools and communications channels, sales reps will need to become skilled at leveraging each one strategically.

“Reps will need to focus more on using these new tools to improve the quality of the physician interaction rather than just the quantity,” he says. “For example, just because reps may now have a convenient email tool this does not mean that they should spam their physicians; obviously, this can have the opposite of its intended effect. Reps will need to spend more time understanding individual physician preferences and then apply tools in a way that leverages that information so that they can create meaningful physician interactions that add greater value to the rep-physician relationship.”

Facing a Digital Future

Given the current ecosystem, the future for sales reps, our experts say, lies in the digital world.

“More and more interactions will be digital in nature, so in addition to face-to-face



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Cegedim Relationship Management



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PAUL SHAWAH / Veeva Systems

conversations, reps will have to be comfortable communicating with their customers digitally via email, text, remote digital communication, etc.,” Mr. Singhal says. “Reps will need to be more technologically savvy, and be able to add value to conversations using information that they gather through digital channels.”

Cognizant’s Mr. Bhuta elaborates further that the future of pharmaceutical selling will involve combining the medical/scientific merits of products with compelling patient-focused solutions that enable better physician-patient interactions, leading to better support throughout the point-of-care continuum and creating better health outcomes for patients.

“Sales reps need to play a critical role in helping physicians communicate key messages more effectively to patients,” he says. **PV**

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