



# Multi-Channel Sales Solutions: THE EVOLVING SALES MODEL

A multi-channel option offers live interaction while bringing real expertise and informational and educational support to the conversation with multiple stakeholders.

**A**s the old saying goes: out of adversity comes opportunity. Perhaps this is nowhere more evident than in biopharmaceutical sales. In an industry undergoing rapid change, sales teams in biopharmaceutical companies face both great challenges and opportunities, each with the potential to significantly affect a company's bottom line.

At the same time, the industry is also encountering a simple truth: the old model for biopharmaceutical sales must be transformed. In the face of diminished product pipelines, tougher regulatory and promotional standards, impending patent cliffs, increasing specialization and the need to maximize shareholder value, the pressure on companies to optimally place their resources has never been greater. As a result, companies are seeking new and better ways to get their message out to key decision makers that will help them place the products appropriately into existing treatment regimens.

Unfortunately, as more and more companies are discovering, the path forward is not obvious. For some, technology seems to be the answer, with a new and potentially groundbreaking technology-based strategy being offered every few months. However, in an age of rapid technological advance, what looks promising today can prove unworkable tomorrow, leaving companies scrambling to find the next new toy.

Pharmaceutical companies looking to get ahead of the sales strategy curve need a framework that effectively balances the challenges sales professionals experience daily in the field with the need to get the right information to multiple stakeholders. Additionally, companies must build on rather than replace the personal interactions that have been the hallmark of successful sales efforts in the past.

Contributed by



**DR. MICHAEL ACKERMANN**, Senior VP,  
Global Commercial Solutions  
Quintiles

In short, no “one-size-fits-all” strategy can effectively address both the challenges and opportunities pharmaceutical sales teams face. In its place, a multi-channel approach that balances the right technology to deliver critical information to physicians and face-to-face selling via the same sales professional may help achieve most of the sales objectives.

## A Changing Sales Model

A quick look at the numbers tells the story of the challenges biopharmaceutical sales efforts face in today's environment. In 2010 alone, many firms reduced their sales and marketing organization, with AstraZeneca cutting 4,450 positions, Roche eliminating 2,650 jobs, and Novartis downsizing by

1,400 people, all in response to various competitive pressures the industry is facing.

More important, however, are the obstacles sales reps find as they seek an audience for their message. Until recently, the biopharmaceutical sales model was relatively simple: face-to-face meetings with physicians were paramount, and a personal relationship was important. Now that model seems to be vanishing quickly around the world, eliminated in large part by factors outside of the industry's control. For example, most primary care physicians need to treat significantly more patients per day to make the same margins as five years ago, leaving little to no time to meet with sales reps. As a result, many doctors are refusing to see reps, or severely restricting interactions.

At the same time, physicians are interested in receiving objective information from biopharmaceutical companies and their representatives. As a result, alternative marketing methods have evolved from call centers staffed with sales professionals to sophisticated “e-detailing” strategies designed to deliver information online or electronically to physicians on their own time, with reduced or no sales rep support.

## Finding the Right Audience Approach

As an example, while e-detailing undoubtedly solves one problem — how to get information to time-pressured physicians — it often falls short of the gold standard of pharmaceutical marketing: interaction with a well-trained, knowledgeable sales rep, ready and able to answer a physician's questions or find answers within his or her organization, and foster an ongoing, personal relationship.

The demands of a successful biopharma-

ceutical sales strategy, particularly with regard to the need to deliver complex risk/benefit information to physicians, requires an approach that maximizes every opportunity to engage in true interaction. The question then becomes: how to best marry the advantages of multiple channels with the need to put a face with a name and an identity with a product.

To engage in an effective multi-channel strategy, sales managers must recognize and build on four key pillars:

- Approach the right audience at the right time
- Deliver a tailored message across platforms
- Bring real expertise to the table
- Stay within the labeling guidelines

Doing more with less in response to competitive pressures means resisting the urge to treat every potential audience the same with a standardized, uniform message. Instead, understanding the differing needs of the diverse, global stakeholder groups is critical, including payers, prescribers, and patients.

Here, the channel plays a secondary role to

and others through product information on a remote live basis providing approved information on a web-based platform directly into a doctor's office or home.

In a hybrid model, the benefits are clear: It builds on an existing, trusted relationship between a sales rep and physician while addressing key obstacles to traditional sales calls. During a web-based detailing session, reps can manage the flow of the information, and, because the interaction is based on a physician's schedule, can be 15 to 20 minutes or more instead of two or three minutes in a waiting room. Pilots also have shown that a sales conversation in this model is likely to be much more comprehensive. Further, calls can be recorded for the purposes of training or regulatory compliance, increasing the ability of a rep to bring value to the interaction. Finally, there is no risk of unapproved materials being used as pharmaceutical companies control which detail aids are being uploaded on a server for sharing with a target audience.

aging chronic conditions or complex medicines.

- Medical Science Liaisons (MSLs) who can bring clinical expertise to the physician and answer medically related questions.
- Market Access Teams to communicate with payers prior to product launch to build and maintain relationship with key payer stakeholders to help accelerate the appropriate positioning of the product and gain reimbursement.
- Patient-centric teams that can help patients understand their medication and use it appropriately.

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### The Benefit of Multiple Worlds

With competitive pressures such as cost, access, and the need to better demonstrate value challenging biopharmaceutical sales teams, new and better strategies are needed to

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the audience. Identifying what's important to a potential message recipient can play as great a role as the product offering. For payers, comparative effectiveness research findings or how a product compares with another already on formulary may be required. For patients, a product's risk profile or adherence regimen may be most important. And for physicians, the need to drive adherence may require education about the role of a product in the overall treatment paradigm.

### The Medium is the Message

As a result, in a successful multi-channel strategy, the approach selected to deliver the message must be tailored to the audience. Here, the marriage of technology and human interaction can drive results. In place of an either/or solution, a hybrid e-detailing model allows sales reps the ability to walk physicians

### Leveraging Expertise to Demonstrate Value

In many ways, demonstrating value means finding the right mix of medical and scientific expertise to support and enhance the value propositions for a given product. Here, the maxim to "bring real expertise to the table" can be the greatest advantage in a multi-channel strategy.

Using this strategy, pharmaceutical companies can deploy a wealth of support to key stakeholders, including:

- Outsourced sales teams, including primary or specialty medical representatives to keep fixed costs down and to increase the ability to respond to changing requirements.
- Nurse advisors or clinical educators, to educate physicians and office staff and provide support on different therapies, while supporting physicians and patients in man-

navigate the landscape of physician, payer, and patient specific challenges. To best identify and maximize these opportunities, the right mix of communication tools and methods to deliver product information in a challenging access environment must be found.

The right technology combined with the right message delivered by an experienced professional via live and remote live experiences through multiple channels will offer pharma sales professionals the benefits of maintaining a professional relationship while taking advantage of the emerging multi-channel world. **PV**

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