

A new sales blueprint

Pharmaceutical sales reps need to change the way they interact with physicians if they are to increase market share and brand commitment. **Andrew Brana** provides a three-step plan to creating a 'physician-centric experience'

In spite of recent sales force cuts, physicians are still deluged with reps vying for their time and attention. In response, doctors are further limiting reps' access – and rep productivity continues to decline. A recent study for *Pharmaceutical Representative* found that, so far in 2007, the average primary care physician in the US has interacted with only 31 reps each week. Even when doctors do see reps, calls are increasingly brief, with drop-in details yielding product discussions that lasted fewer than five minutes at best. Lunch meetings fared only slightly better, the study found, with doctors allotting on average no more than 12 minutes of a meeting for product discussions.

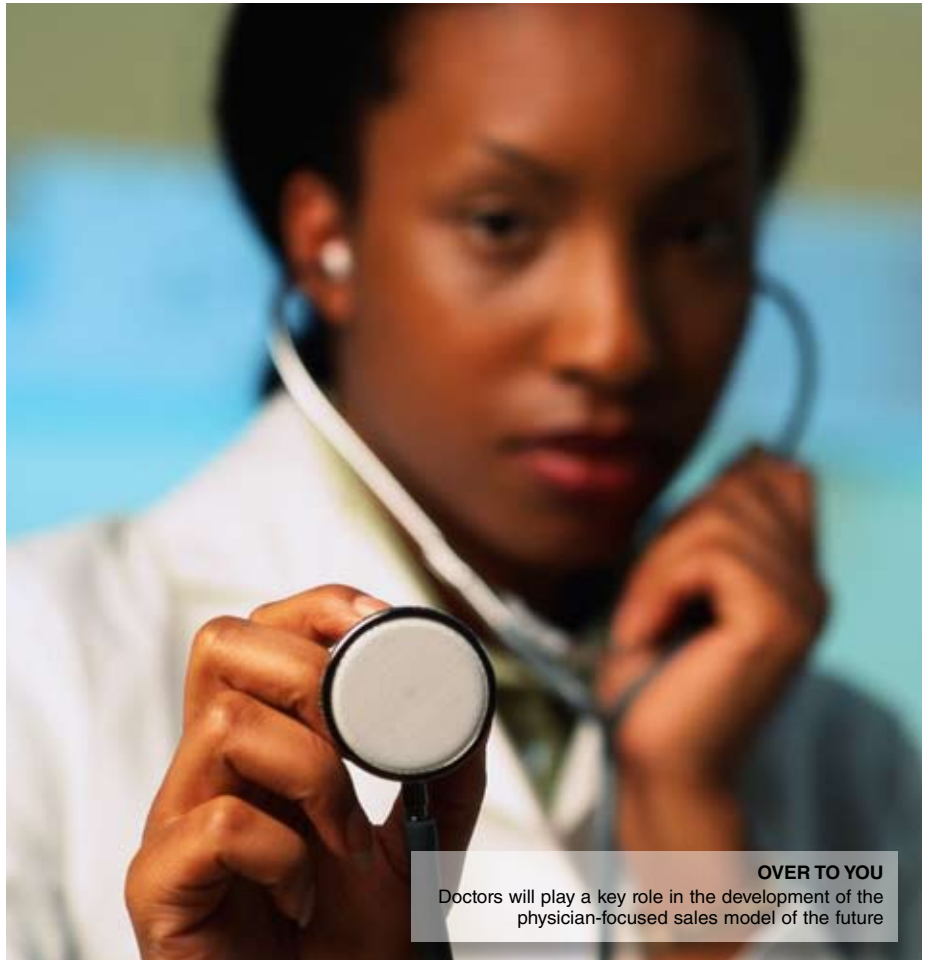
Clearly, doctors are not finding value in the time they spend with sales reps. TNS Healthcare research reveals a growing gap between what physicians want from pharmaceutical companies and what they experience – evidence that the current sales model cannot drive improvements in physician relationships or gains in brand share.

To reverse the current declines in access and productivity, companies must change the way they interact with doctors. Physicians today want integrated, customer-focused exchanges with reps that meet their changing needs and provide a full range of 'value-add' service options. For example, in addition to knowledgeable and professional reps, physicians now also count patient management support and education programmes among their most important requirements.

A new service model

The vast majority of pharmaceutical companies recognise the need to change to a 'physician-centric' service model. In fact, sales executives today list 'transitioning to a service model' among their highest priorities. TNS Healthcare research shows that more than 80% of companies in Europe and more than 90% in the US are either thinking about or already implementing a service model structure.

There is still, however, a hard road ahead. Though pharmaceutical executives understand the need to transition to a



OVER TO YOU

Doctors will play a key role in the development of the physician-focused sales model of the future

physician-centric model and are taking action to move forward, few can clearly define what the new model looks like or how to create it in their organisations.

The following blueprint guides pharmaceutical companies in building a new service model, detailing the three major steps they must take to develop a physician-centric management capability.

Step 1: Obtain and use 'outside-in' insights

Most companies today still focus on internal sales processes. To succeed, companies must switch to looking at their external sales drivers – the physicians writing prescriptions. There are three basic requirements for creating and managing

effective physician-centric experiences:

1. Integrate relationship and experience-quality KPIs (key performance indicators) into performance evaluation processes. Set goals and measure reps according to how effectively they create high-quality experiences that drive 'brand commitment' – the strong emotional bonds connecting physicians to a brand. Why is commitment important? Validations using actual prescribing data prove that highly committed doctors deliver more than double the patient share of their uncommitted colleagues. In addition, even after a year, they are up to five times less likely to switch from

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their preferred brand. Sales and service experiences that drive commitment create the long-term relationships that generate higher share and keep that high share constant over time.

2. Identify physicians' experience needs and expectations. In addition to effective rep interactions, pharmaceutical companies must provide a range of services to physicians – from practice-management support to web-based services to education programmes. To confer value through motivational experiences, companies must understand and then deliver what physicians want, through the channels they prefer.
3. Determine optimal resource allocation. It is critical for companies to have decision-support tools that help evaluate the full range of sales and service investment options, and quantify the commitment, share and monetary gains they can achieve by improving their performance in delivering each option. Sales and marketing executives need new tools to help them make wise investment trade-offs and re-deploy budget dollars to the activities that yield the greatest results.

Step 2: Prepare the sales force to provide physician-centric experiences

Providing a comprehensive experience means a new role for the sales rep. Companies need to recognise that reps are not just deliverers of sales messages but coordinators of value, helping physicians access the full range of services that companies offer (see Figure 1).

To help reps fulfil their new role, it's critical for companies to provide them with:

- Continued training and development on how to meet the new requirements;
- Access to all the information and resources pharmaceutical companies make available to physicians;
- Clear KPIs to which reps are held accountable. These KPIs need to extend beyond the traditional process metrics to include brand commitment, experience quality and market share; and
- Motivational workplaces that support and reward high performance levels.

In addition, it helps if reps and the pharmaceutical company as a whole understand that, when they provide physician-centric experiences, they become part of a 'linked system' with doctors (see Figure 2). To improve ROI, companies must identify the preferred physician experiences that drive commitment and prescribing gains, and

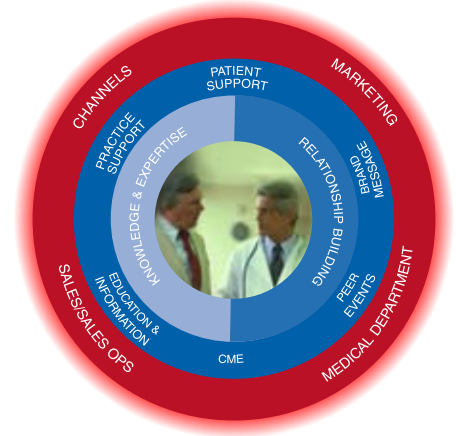
ensure reps have the skills to deliver results.

Step 3: Transition the organisation to experience management

In addition to identifying physicians' needs and developing reps' skills, pharmaceutical companies need to take specific steps to build a complete organisational capability around managing the physician experience. This capability requires:

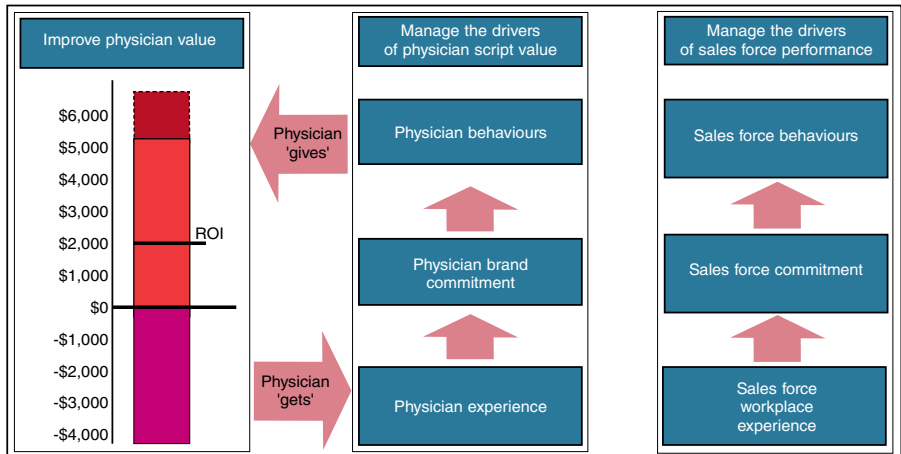
- Cross-functional planning and delivery. Companies need to break down the walls dividing their functional silos. Departments must work together to coordinate their planning, resource allocation and delivery, so the company can provide a

Figure 1: The new role of the sales rep



Source: TNS Healthcare

Figure 2: Sales reps and physicians are part of a linked system



Source: TNS Healthcare

comprehensive and integrated experience for physicians.

- KPIs that span the organisation and focus on strengthening physician relationships. From top management down to reps in the field, each member of the organisation must be focused on – and measured on – improving physician relationships and building commitment.

Getting started

A natural starting point for building a physician-centric management capability is with a pilot programme. Pilots provide focus, limit risk, and offer the chance to evaluate the impact of the approach. To plan a pilot, follow five steps:

1. Select the brand or therapeutic area and physician group of focus;
2. Determine the geographic scope;
3. Specify which experience elements and delivery channels to assess;
4. Prepare an implementation and measurement plan; and
5. Launch, measure and evaluate the pilot's results.

Clearly, there is a pressing need to move

more swiftly and effectively to a new physician-centric service model. Though most companies are starting down this path, physicians have yet to indicate that they see major changes. Our research shows that, in most major therapeutic classes, up to 50% of high prescribers remain uncommitted to the brand they are prescribing – and are ready to defect to a competitor. Companies are not yet generating the commitment they need to drive long-term gains.

Fortunately, there is a clear blueprint to follow to change this scenario and help companies create strong physician relationships that generate share and prescribing improvements. By identifying, creating and delivering optimal physician experiences – and training, measuring and rewarding reps and the full organisation on effective experience management – companies can build an effective physician-centric model. The result will be a new level of sales and marketing success.

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