

Implementing a Successful Product Launch

Relevant Evidence of Bottom-line Impact

By Chad Ketcher

The Issue

Biotech A was dependent on two blockbuster products, and both products were late in their product life cycles. The company needed its next product launch, ExcelDrug, to succeed. Success was pinned to early acceptance from a large number of formularies. ExcelDrug's indicated market was dominated by an entrenched competitor whose product was reimbursed. Biotech A's new drug was essentially a "me-too" drug, with few competitive advantages and neither immediate reimbursement approval nor codes.

To ensure a successful product launch, Biotech A needed to establish a strategic approach to managing accounts from the physician level all the way up to the national account level in order to:

- Quickly replicate sales successes with line extensions and/or new products; and,
- Efficiently and effectively communicate key marketing messages in a language the sales force could quickly understand and use.

The Approach

Alliance Performance Systems developed a comprehensive sales system for Biotech A that developed sales representatives' skills in the following key success areas:

- Understanding the customer's business drivers to build on clinical knowledge
- Selling to multiple decision makers at the "C" (chief officer) level
- Buyer-focused questioning skill development
- Strategic planning skills and process

Each component of this sales system was built around simulations. Each sales representative applied all of the skills and concepts they acquired to actual customer situations. Reps learned how to approach customers with the intent to address their needs, a dramatically different approach from Biotech A's usual and more traditional product-focused launch.

Alliance Performance Systems also worked with Biotech A to design and build an integrated curriculum of learning. Instead

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Sales Training Toolkit



of a hodge-podge of unrelated courses, each introducing conflicting language, models and skills, Alliance customized all of the workshops to provide continuous reinforcement. Each new skill set/process was designed to build upon those preceding it. This structure gave the training both continuity and relevance.

The final piece of the solution was an advanced application lab. In the lab, sales reps role-played calls on key customers in a private practice and on a hospital P&T committee. The advanced lab further reinforced the reps' shift from being clinical talkers focused on regurgitating marketing messages toward becoming reps skilled at addressing customer needs and providing value at the organizational level.

The Outcome:

Biotech A achieved its new product acceptance goals for ExcelDrug faster and at a higher level than targeted. In fact, within the first year after the product launch, Biotech A's sales force achieved 100 percent formulary approval in all targeted accounts. The sales system designed and implemented by Alliance Performance Systems gave the sales force the skills it needed to achieve this success even in the face of aggressive pushback from an entrenched and better-funded competitor.