

Boosting Sales Effectiveness with Better Field Collaboration

■ By Dr. Wendy Heckelman and Greta Schuler

In response to the rapidly changing healthcare marketplace, pharmaceutical companies are reevaluating how to utilize the field force. One response has been the creation of new roles to focus on identifying and meeting the needs of various stakeholders in government, healthcare payer organizations, channel entities, integrated healthcare delivery networks and different healthcare settings. With each different field force role and so many stakeholders impacting prescribing decisions, comes the complexity of communicating, coordinating and collaborating with their counterparts.

Obviously the goal remains to communicate the clinical and economic value of products and services while meeting financial growth goals. To achieve success, a more coordinated and aligned field force is

needed. One approach to managing collaboration, is to remember your “ABC’s”

- *Alignment* exists when people work together in support of the brand, therapeutic area and company goal(s). Creating alignment starts with the field force sharing all objectives, messaging and materials, which allows them to recognize common goals. Once common goals are reached, they become more likely to engage in collaborative business and call planning – increasingly required for selling in complex healthcare provider systems. Alignment is also reinforced by structuring incentives to reward teamwork and other desired behaviors.

Creation of new roles to focus on identifying and meeting the needs of various:

- stakeholders in government
- healthcare payer organizations
- channel entities
- integrated healthcare delivery networks
- different healthcare settings

- *Being in your lane* means that everyone has a complete understanding of all field roles and performs the duties expected of them, individually. This includes calling on agreed-upon targets and using approved messages and resources. All individuals should also be knowledgeable of how they can provide help or receive help through coordination with others, for example, using their messages and materials to help support each other. In this manner, being in your lane is less about overstepping boundaries and more about achieving synergies by working in concert with others.
- *Communication* is critical for sharing information, opportunities, and maintaining alignment. Field reps in the same geography should schedule regular meetings (teleconferences or in person) to provide a forum for sharing updates, new contacts and discussing tactics in real time.



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Field collaboration improves selling effectiveness by:

- Enhancing customer relationships and accessibility as representatives support one another's messages and initiatives.
- Improving information exchange throughout the account team.
- Identifying more opportunities as various representatives working together to uncover needs and match solutions.

Following the ABC's to foster better field integration requires purposeful commitment and dedicated time. It starts with senior leaders creating a culture that drives communication and collaboration. Field managers must coach the specific behaviors that values individual contribution around shared goals. In addition, the sales organization needs to revisit possible barriers for coordination and alignment such as: individual incentives versus compensation for achieving shared goals, CRM's that impede information sharing and structural organizational design that reduces cross-functional communication. Finally, individuals need to take ownership and accountability for their role in working collaboratively to drive results. Collectively, with the entire organization focused on alignment and coordination, the desired results can be achieved. ■

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