



Diagnosis

Current rep assessments don't take the whole picture into account

Prescription

The doctor's perspective will help give you a clearer understanding of performance

Sales managers have difficult jobs, which are made harder by the fact that they must inspire, direct and coach their sales personnel to enhance sales force effectiveness (SFE).

SFE is directly linked to a manager's ability to affect change in sales force behaviors, and those behaviors lie in the realms of selling skills, product and clinical knowledge.

What is very clearly missing in this equation is the perspective of the customer – the doctors the representatives call on; specifically, the doctors' perception of which behaviors they value and will change their clinical behaviors and prescribing habits. Without an understanding of how, why and what a doctor needs to use a product and apply products to patient problems, no member of the team can expect to change or sustain changes in clinical behaviors and prescribing habits.

We conducted a retrospective study from more than 350,000 doctor-representative interactions surveyed by Metamorph Doctors. Two very compelling outcomes have emerged from our analysis:

First, doctors consistently rate representatives much differently than the sales managers – even when using the same set of criteria (selling skills and knowledge). In many cases, skills that are rated higher by managers are rated lower by doctors. The result is that doctors indicate representatives are not bringing value to the call, therefore access to the doctor becomes limited and no change in clinical behavior takes place.

Second, doctors consistently rate top sales performers – those who exhibit best-in-class behaviors – in the middle to upper-middle of the rankings when judged on the behaviors that will change their clinical behaviors and prescribing habits. Thus, the traditional use of experienced and top performers' best-in-class practices as models for coaching for success may need to be reexamined and modified.

Analyze this

Increasing sales force effectiveness through a doctor-focused team

by Mark Vitello, Michael Kessler and Peter Shaw

This article will address the first outcome above and explore new coaching methods that need to be applied to ensure that managers are aware of, and are coaching, the precepts of doctor-focused selling.

Traditionally, managers ride with their representatives and observe a call with a doctor. They assess the representatives' behaviors using the company-taught topics of selling skills, messaging, and use of promotional materials and clinical evidence – and sometimes the best-in-class behaviors of top performers – as the basis of their critique. Managers observe, assess and coach to behaviors, not necessarily to outcomes, using checklists that provide for presence, absence and/or degree of observed behaviors.

The challenge is to help managers align themselves with the needs and requirements of their customers – the doctors. The most effective solution is to have doctors and managers participate in a real-world exercise of evaluation and coaching. This way, managers can learn directly from observing and applying the precept of doctor-focused coaching.

We have introduced a unique model that is enabling managers to improve those sales representative behaviors that doctors have positively responded to, and that have been proven to change their clinical behavior. Central to this program, which is called “Coaching to the MD Mindset,” is understanding that doctors perceive and rate representatives' behaviors differently than managers and trainers. The coaching model offers a direct comparison between doctors' and managers' ratings of sales representative performance, so the manager can see where he or she differs from the doctor.

In this coaching model, managers observe some of their representatives conducting real product calls with real doctors. After the call, the manager and doctor measure the representative's presentation using identical performance criteria. The doctors then give the representative verbal feedback on the call, explaining why they rated as they did. Separately, the manager and the instructor analyze the differences that exist between the two measurements and review the feedback. The manager is shown not only the difference between the two perspectives, but also gains insight into why and what needs to be done differently.

This comparative analysis clearly points out what the doctor values versus what the company and managers value in a sales call. This allows managers to coach to the needs of the customers by being not only behavior but outcome oriented and making coaching doctor focused.

Let's look at a typical example of the results of using this coaching model, and how they lead to a positive outcome. In an assessment call, the manager gives a high rating to the representative on closing because he

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or she asked the doctor to write for the product at the end of the call. The manager acknowledges that the selling skill is applied appropriately and perceives that the representative is moving product use forward by asking for the business.

The doctor, on the other hand, rates the representative significantly lower on closing. The reason for this has to do with the doctor's mindset: the doctor did not have enough information to be able to answer the closing question at that point. The doctor chooses to answer the question politely (and sometimes not so politely) to end the conversation. The reason for this is directly linked to the MD Mindset. Doctors need all the clinically relevant information in proper sequence before they can commit to using a product. Therefore, the doctor perceived the representative as pushy and did not believe he brought value to the call by being product focused rather than doctor focused. The call was terminated quickly, without any real intention to use the product.

With the manager's positive reinforcement for utilizing the selling skills tools out of sequence, there is frustration all around because it doesn't ensure a real commitment to product use. The doctor has not gained the information needed to change prescribing habits and product utilization is not guaranteed.

So, based on the subsequent analysis and educational session, the appropriate coaching

outcome would be for the manager to explain that, in this case, closing for some action other than product use would have been preferable. This would have reinforced that the representative's interest was with the doctor, the doctor's needs, solving the patients' problems – and not exclusively on product use. By presenting in a doctor-focused manner, the representative gains more time, brings more value, and is more likely to bring doctor satisfaction and product utilization. In other words, a successful call.

Managers must broaden their perspective from one of coaching focused on messaging and product to one of delivering information based on the behaviors doctors feel bring value and will change their clinical behaviors and prescribing habits. This creates the culture of selling based on the needs of the doctor and the practice, and establishes a doctor-focused environment rather than a product-focused selling environment.

“Coaching to the MD Mindset” enables sales managers to:

- Evaluate their alignment with doctors' needs
- Analyze their representatives' response to the MD Mindset and how it is necessary to adapt to it
- Discuss with their training department specific support for themselves and their representatives to help them align their efforts with the needs of their customers.

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