

MD Snapshot

by Peter Shaw

Credible *and* Effective

Establishing credibility in the eyes of doctors is the foundation of sales force effectiveness

Establishing credibility with your customers is the key to gaining their confidence and influencing their clinical behaviors and prescribing habits. Sales force effectiveness can be monitored and evaluated by a number of different means. The ultimate measure of success has always been sales, but sales figures alone do not shed any light on the behaviors and skill set of the

sales professionals who drive those sales. Historically, the industry has looked at call frequency, message retention, and growth in total sales. One area that has been overlooked is the opinions of those on the receiving end of sales drives—the doctor or other healthcare professional at whom the message is aimed and who is responsible for writing the prescription.

MD Mindset conducted a survey of over 1,000 doctors from 16 different specialties. Over a six-week period, in excess of 10,000 rep-doctor interactions were assessed. In addition to collecting basic demographic information on every interaction, each rep was assessed on a 15-point scale by a doctor on 14 key performance indicators (KPIs). These covered every aspect of the interaction, from rapport to knowledge and use of supporting materials/data.

This column will concentrate on the overall credibility of the sales professionals (as assessed by the doctors) and how that affected the doctors' intent to change their clinical and prescribing behaviors. We will look at which KPIs have the greatest influence on overall credibility and how that differs by specialty.

It is clear from this data that the more credible the sales profession-

al is in the eyes of the doctor, the greater the impact on their intent to change clinical/prescribing behaviors. This varies widely between specialists. This data suggests that Allergists proved to be the most likely and Oncologists the least likely to have their clinical (prescribing) behavior influenced by a rep.

What's more interesting is that the different aspects of the interaction between a rep and a doctor show considerable variability. All doctors expect high levels of clinical knowledge, understanding of the supporting data, and knowledge of competitor products. But, when looking at relevance of the key message, managed care issues, and interpersonal skills, this is where the differences between specialties become apparent. In this case the five KPIs that had the most impact on credibility were: Support of key message with clinical data (C), understanding of the clinical data (I), competitor knowledge (K), ability to address concerns (L), and closing and expectations relevant to the discussion (M).

Knowledge of the doctor's clinical practice and individual needs are key to understanding their mindset, as is knowing what is important to them and their patients. This helps establish credibility, which increases effectiveness, changes clinical behaviors, and ultimately impacts sales figures. Over the following months, we will be looking in more depth at the personalities, needs, and expectations of the different specialists and will show how these elements have an impact on their interactions with sales reps. We will show how you can gain the credibility and mental access that will have a positive impact on your sales. [PR](#)

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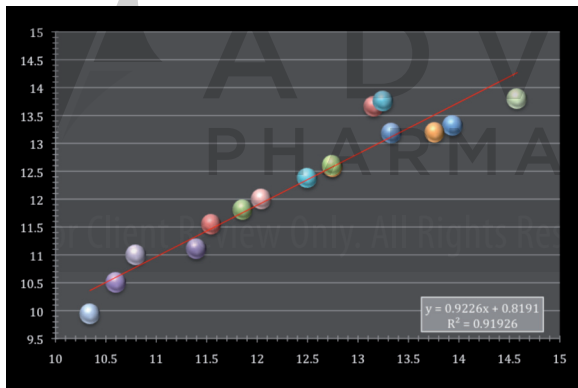


Figure 1: Intent vs. Credibility. In this chart the independent variable (x-axis) is “Overall Credibility” and the dependent variable (y-axis) is “Intent to change clinical (prescribing) behavior.” Each bubble represents one specialty.

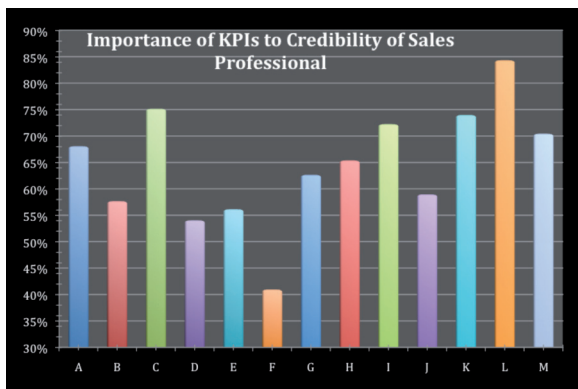


Figure 2: Shows the relative importance of each KPI in determining the overall credibility of the sales professional to that specialist.