

Pharmaceutical REPRESENTATIVE®



Right in front of your eyes

How to make the most of your brand's marketing materials

by Paul LeVine and Jeanne Zucker

Diagnosis

In a crowded and sometimes hostile selling environment, it's hard to establish yourself as a useful and credible resource for physicians.

Prescription

Your brand's marketing resources can help.

Every day, more than 100,000 pharmaceutical sales reps compete for face time with physicians. Increasingly, doctors are limiting the amount of time they spend with reps, which results in shorter details. In some cases, reps are finding it hard to get past the front desk. The problem is complicated: While physicians complain that reps deliver dubious messages, some consumer protection groups and physician organizations contend that visits from pharmaceutical reps should be eliminated completely because they interfere with patient-centric decisions.

Once you do get in the door in this crowded and sometimes hostile marketplace, how can you demonstrate your credibility *and* make the most of your contact with the physician? The answer may be right in front of you.

Your brand's marketing team has developed a wealth of information that can benefit your targeted physicians. Knowing how to use this information can help you establish a solid partnership with the entire office staff.

Anticipate patients' questions

Your prep work prior to each detail should include preparation for questions that may result from your brand's advertising and marketing campaign. These are the questions patients may ask their doctors – not what doctors want to know about your brand. You'll need to be able to back up the brand's claims and arm the doctor with the tools, references and additional information he'll need to best answer patient inquiries. After the detail, keep in touch with the physician. Let him know when a new advertising campaign is launching so he can prepare for an increase in patient questions, particularly if the advertisement's call-to-action statement is "See your doctor." Be sensitive to what that means to the doctor and his office, and get him comfortable with the content.

Read the fine print

Market research and clinical data used in your brand's advertising campaign are available to you, as cited in your sales aids. Review, review, review! The ad's fine print often contains the most important prescribing information for doctors.

ease-education Web sites and office-based patient-education materials. Make physicians aware of the resources available to patients through these programs. If a Web site provides screening tools for patients, explain to the doctor how they can help create efficient and

back" or "patient-physician communications" programs. These programs, which are often tied to samples or vouchers, offer a structured way for patients to report their treatment experiences back to the physician through a third party. Find out whether your brand has

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Use what you've got

Five ways you can connect using your brand's marketing materials:

Remember your prep work. Anticipate the doctor's questions, and keep him informed after your detail.

Study the fine print. Know the information behind the information.

Inform your physician of supplemental education materials, such as brand-loyalty programs and educational information offered on your brand's Web site.

Provide testimonials to make the doctor more comfortable with your brand.

Consider "patient feedback" programs. If your brand offers one, let your doctor know.

Also be sure they are informed of the efficacy, safety, adverse reactions, contraindications, patient types and relevant dosing information for each product. Present the research behind the advertising claims, making sure to do so in an unbiased manner. Focus on scientific data and avoid the advertising and sales messaging.

Supply all the tools

Brands generally offer supplemental patient education through customer relationship management or brand-loyalty programs, dis-

productive doctor-patient discussions. Print copies of the screening tools for your physicians and their office staff.

Physicians often take a skeptical view of these educational materials. Because they are compiled by the manufacturer, doctors often believe the information has been spun to the brand's advantage. However, staff and physicians frequently forget that the Food and Drug Administration requires manufacturers to provide solid clinical and educational information supported by data. Remind physicians of this. Point out what is relevant, and reassure them that there is value in directing patients to these resources.

Provide testimonials

What could be a better selling point than a patient's endorsement? Not a paid spokesperson who is part of an ad campaign, but a real patient who offers feedback about your brand and its educational materials. Ask your marketing team if they can provide you with patient testimonials on the usefulness of the educational materials in affecting patient adherence to prescribed treatment.

There's nothing more convincing than feedback from an average patient (or two or three!), especially when the brand is new to the physician. Supplying patient feedback will help the physician get comfortable with the materials and, ultimately, more comfortable prescribing your brand to patients in the future.

Talk the talk

Many marketing teams offer physicians the opportunity to participate in "patient feed-

back" or "patient-physician communications" programs. These programs, which are often tied to samples or vouchers, offer a structured way for patients to report their treatment experiences back to the physician through a third party. Find out whether your brand has

initiated this type of program. If so, take advantage of it, but make sure to explain the program to physicians and staff members in a simple and nonthreatening way. Such a program will show your confidence in your brand, and doctors will appreciate the opportunity to gather patient commentary they can evaluate. Physicians rarely find out when a medication or treatment works so give them a chance to hear some positive feedback. This is not only helpful from a clinical perspective, it may also build brand loyalty!

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