

Peers of Influence Abstract

The **majority of techniques for targeting physicians leave** stacks of money on the table, for they focus entirely on the prescription habits of the physician and leave out altogether the everyday working relationships that tie physicians together. In short, physicians are regarded as individuals whose decisions are not in the least influenced by their peers. This is surprising. Any marketer intent on selling toys knows not only should the interest of the child be aroused so the child can pester mom to make the purchase, but also mom needs to be reassured of the educational value of the toy to justify opening her purse. The marketer knows right off the bat the focus ought to be the mom-child pair. How then can the pharmaceutical marketer keep on ignoring relationships?

Not surprisingly, it dawned on pharmaceutical marketers there is something wrong with this picture. A sensible marketing strategy ought to encompass not only physicians that write a lot of scripts but also physicians that have the ability to influence physicians that write a lot of scripts. So a few years ago, the industry started rolling out medical scientific liaisons, a new breed of high-caliber professionals - including pharmacists and physicians - to reach the upper echelons of the mighty medical community in a bid to influence the influencers. But while this two-pronged approach has the benefit of not ignoring medical thought leaders, it is not the panacea. First, it is not clear which physicians the scientific liaisons should call on, for what constitutes an opinion leader is vague. Second, working relationships between influencers and high writers are not recognized and as a result cannot be leveraged. This is due to the "silo" deployment of regular sales reps to call on high writers on the one hand and medical scientific liaisons to call on influencers on the other. Third, there is no satisfactory model to gauge the return on investment of calling on influencers. Medical scientific liaisons are regarded as mere cost of doing business: Their contribution is whatever it is (hopefully positive).

Enter molecular targeting.

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