

Pharmaceutical Call Centers Build Relationships

WITH HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND PATIENTS

Pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical device companies have a significant need to build relationships with prescribers and patients. However, these audiences have very different needs that require companies to take varying approaches to communicate effectively with them.

Healthcare providers are under tremendous pressure to see as many patients as possible each day, and they have very little time to talk with company sales representatives about a particular product. For patients, in general, appointments with healthcare providers are fast-paced and short. And oftentimes, patients do not realize they have questions until after the appointment has ended.

Pharmaceutical call centers can help companies address these challenges by building relationships with healthcare providers and patients in a timely, efficient, and compliant manner.

Both healthcare providers and patients have a significant need for on-demand and immediate access to company representatives. The most effective and efficient option for providing this access is through a call center. But operating an internal call center for most pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies requires significant financial and staff investment. Additionally, technology updates and staff training are continuous and add considerable operating costs.

A more efficient and practical solution is to partner with a pharmaceutical call center to provide these services.

Using a pharmaceutical call center partner allows the industry to stay focused on developing innovative healthcare treatments and products. A pharmaceutical call center partner provides highly trained personnel, operational efficiencies, and flexibility to scale up or scale down the services for a particular product depending on its life-cycle stage and market conditions.

In particular, call centers can support companies by ...

- Boosting patient recruitment and referrals for clinical trials.
- Processing sample requests.
- Setting appointments between sales representatives and healthcare providers.

- Supplementing field-based promotional activities.
- Increasing patient adherence to treatments and trials.
- Providing on-demand support to answer questions from healthcare providers and patients.

Pharmaceutical Call Center Operations

Pharmaceutical call centers employ highly educated and trained professionals to work as call center representatives, provide a global footprint, and engineer workflow processes that can be customized to meet specific company or product needs.

Call center representatives can handle a vast spectrum of questions. To maximize efficiency, most pharmaceutical call centers tier representatives based on clinical experience and skills. Representatives with clinical experience, such as case workers, nurses, or pharmacists have the skills to handle questions that are scientific in nature. Experienced representatives, who don't have a clinical background, are available to field general questions; they can also work with office staff to ensure that the appropriate numbers of product samples are available.

Many pharmaceutical call centers have connections and or alliances with global partners to manage questions based on a geographic region. There is a meaningful benefit for callers to speak with representatives who speak their language and understand their cultural customs.

Many pharmaceutical call centers will work with clients to develop custom call flowcharts for each program. The call flowchart provides a detailed schematic of how calls will be managed and the actions prompted by specific responses and questions. Call flowcharts are based on the client company's standard operating procedures, and the call center will ensure programs remain compliant with company guidelines.

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Call centers benefits include...

- Highly trained professionals, including nurses (ie, RNs), pharmacists (including PharmDs and RPhs), and case workers.
- Immediate access to representatives qualified to answer clinical and scientific questions.
- Representatives from particular geographic areas aligned to answer questions from those areas.
- Flexible staffing solutions that allow for quick increases and decreases as needed.
- SOPs for handling calls

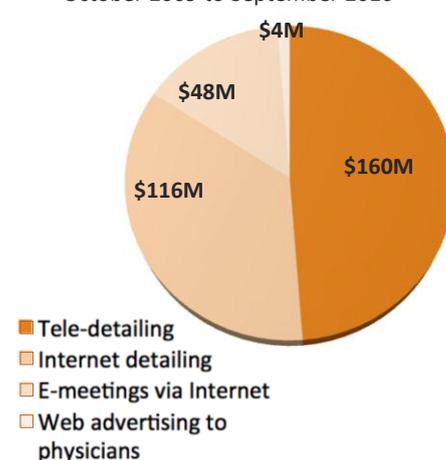
that are compliant with client company guidelines.

Assessing Pharmaceutical Call Center Partners

Pharmaceutical call centers are an extension of your company and brand and provide an effective and efficient mechanism to build good will with healthcare providers and patients. Therefore, it's imperative that potential

US Promotional Spending by New Media Channel

October 2009 to September 2010



Source: Cegedim Strategic Data, US Pharma Company Promotional Spending Trends In New Media, updated November 2010.

FIGURE 1

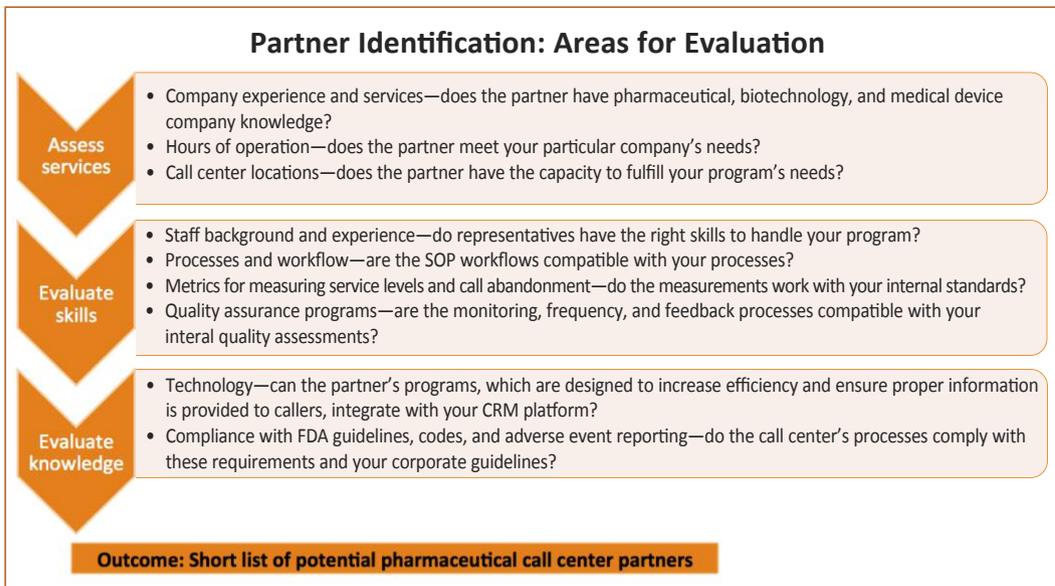


FIGURE 2

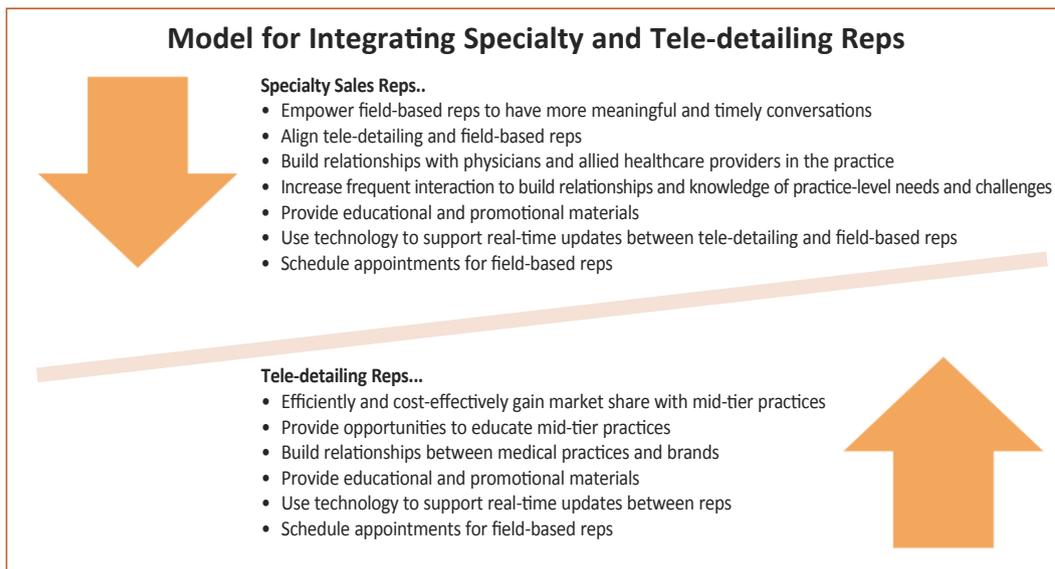


FIGURE 3

providers are thoroughly evaluated and that the right partner is chosen. The process for evaluating potential partners should include assessing services, evaluating skills, and evaluating knowledge.

Understanding these areas will help you select the pharmaceutical call center partner with the appropriate experience and skills for your program. Figure 2 outlines the key areas to evaluate and understand as a part of the assessment process.

Utilizing a Pharmaceutical Call Center to Provide Tele-detailing Services

In addition to providing informational support, pharmaceutical call center partners can help companies adapt to new sales models that

encompass physician detailing, including tele-detailing services. Tele-detailing programs, one of the fast-growing areas in the promotional mix and services provided by call centers, efficiently and effectively augment sales and promotional activities and provide healthcare providers with valuable interactions and information.

In November 2010, Cegedim published a report on the promotional spending trends in new media from U.S. pharmaceutical companies. Cegedim analysts looked at promotional spending in new media directed to physicians by top brands. They found that 49% of the spending in new media was on physician tele-detailing programs. (Figure 1 shows the promotional spending by new media channel.)

Tele-detailing programs should be integrated with all other sales and promotional ini-

tiatives. This includes using consistent messages and sharing data on contact activities and follow-up items, such as sample requests.

Tele-detailing programs are effective in a number of situations and provide many benefits including...

- Augmenting sales and promotional activities through interactions with call center representatives to answer questions, share information, and schedule appointments for field-based sales representatives.
- Building relationships with office staff, thereby ensuring they have a venue for answers to their questions and for requesting samples and educational materials.
- Expanding territories for field-based representatives to ensure all physicians and healthcare providers in a given territory have regular interactions with company representatives.
- Providing promotional support for new indications and new offerings from the company, such as support groups or prescription rebates.

Successful tele-detailing programs complement and support existing field sales representative efforts. A successful model focuses field-based representatives on specialists and tele-detailing representatives on general practitioners, family medicine practitioners, and internal medicine practitioners.

Figure 3 illustrates how to balance the field-based and tele-detailing representatives to efficiently maximize interactions with healthcare providers.

When implemented effectively, tele-detailing programs can build relationships with healthcare providers and their office staff and support promotional activities. PV

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PhoneScreen, an AMAC company, is focused on helping build and maintain relationships with patients, caregivers, and healthcare providers by working closely with each client to develop customized solutions for all call center needs and deliver exceptional results.
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