INTRODUCTION

ENGAGE HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND DISTRIBUTORS WITH DIGITAL EXPERIENCE SOLUTIONS

Getting the attention of busy physicians and hospital executives is more challenging than ever for medical device manufacturers across the globe. Doctors are busier and have less time to see patients, let alone talk to a sales representative. According to the 2016 Survey of America’s Physicians, 80% of doctors say they are either overburdened or at capacity. How are medical professionals supposed to find the time to engage with medical device marketing?

In the past, medical professionals were easier to reach. A sales representative could simply take a doctor out to lunch and discuss a product. Today, many practices prohibit vendors from even visiting an office. Because of tightening regulations and changing technology, sales and marketing strategies effective a decade ago no longer work. Plus, hospitals and care facilities are consolidating at faster rates, driving the average service cost up by 6 to 8%, according to the National Council on Compensation Insurance. Medical device companies need new tactics that match the way healthcare providers and distributors interact with products today.

Developing a marketing strategy for medical devices is already a complex process involving technical data and extensive planning. Device marketers must get product information into the right hands of the right people at the right time. Depending on your marketing objectives, your target audience may include physicians, distributors, hospital executives, patients or a combination of groups. Target audiences need to understand what a device does, how it benefits them and why they should purchase it. Given how busy healthcare providers are and how competitive the market is, that’s no small task.
DILEMMA #1: REACHING BUSY HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Doctors are in high demand because they hold sway over so much money. It is estimated the average physician in the United States influences $2 million per year in healthcare expenses, and that number is predicted to rise. The U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services puts America’s healthcare spending at almost $3.5 trillion, with costs anticipated to increase by about 5.5% each year to reach $5.7 trillion by 2026. Caught in this estimate are the various distributors, surgeons, technicians and other HCPs who also impact purchase decisions and also require the latest information on the most recent advances in their respective fields.

Medical products and services are also subject to laws, regulations and enforcement agencies, depending on the claims of the product or service being sold. Marketers must comply with special advertising rules, including laws protecting patient data and limit how physicians receive patient referrals, if they wish to advertise their medical devices. As a result, life sciences companies face unique marketing challenges in delivering detailed information on their product’s efficacy that medical executives need.

SOLUTION #1: MEETING BUSY HCPS ON THEIR OWN TERMS

Even if marketers can jump through regulatory hoops and connect with HCPs, there is always a chance a marketing campaign won’t be successful. Product information must be presented in the right way and within the best medium. It needs to be factual, engaging and easy to comprehend. Historically, the medical device industry pushed printed materials, but it’s important to get in front of today’s audience where they prefer to consume content: online. Digital marketing tools can elevate your message to have a bigger impact.

Social media and other digital channels are fast becoming one of the primary ways to reach HCPs. Manhattan Research published the Digital MedTech Physician study in 2016 to learn how primary care doctors, surgeons and other specialty physicians discover medical devices through digital channels. The study determined that physicians are, both, technologically savvy and want to learn more from device manufacturers online. It found that 50% of physicians are willing to participate in online promotional programs from medical device companies, in which they do not interact with sales representatives in person.
One way medical device marketers connect and contact HCPs is through the combination of key opinion leaders and webinars. Not only is this combination cost-effective, but life science companies can connect thousands of medical professionals with industry experts at the same time. This allows medical device marketers to provide thought leadership and expert, scientific information from sources HCPs trust in a dedicated, secure virtual environment.

With on-demand functionality, HCPs can attend these web-based seminars on their own schedules, either from the comfort of their home or on a hospital computer without having to download software. In fact, 61% of medical providers prefer KOL webinars as their primary means to access medical information over most other digital channels, and 53% of doctors view webinars on-demand. By having medical industry experts discuss clinical research, outcomes, cases and best practices on an engaging, interactive platform, your company is best positioned to be a trusted source in the healthcare space.

**ON24 Tips**

- Ask KOLs to promote upcoming webinars with short teaser videos detailing the topic they’ll cover.

- Don’t reinvent the wheel; feel free to repurpose videos and slides from previous events.

- Repurposing an in-person event for an on-demand webinar? Great. Don’t forget to include relevant resources and white papers for your virtual attendees to download.
DILEMMA #2: SCALABILITY IN EDUCATING HCPS

Face-to-face meetings are time consuming and expensive to attend, and with tighter budgets, physicians and healthcare executives are even less likely to travel to in-person events than they were before. Medical technology companies worked around this by sponsoring doctors to attend medical meetings and conferences for educational purposes. But industry sponsorships have come under scrutiny, and regulations make it difficult for companies to offer support. In addition to setting high-quality standards for medical programs, restrictions can affect which city, hotel and entertainment can be offered. If an American medical conference doesn’t meet the requirements, then attendees cannot be sponsored. Additionally, the cost of attendance is rising as more countries are introducing new regulations restricting the amount that can be spent on a doctor, such as hotel rates and taxes. In major U.S. cities, most hotels cannot accommodate such stringent requirements.

Combine higher expenses and tighter regulations with evolving technology, and in-person medical events start to lose their appeal. Modern digital tools, however, offer many of the same benefits of in-person conferences without the cost. For example, delegates no longer have to attend live conferences to acquire CME (Continuing Medical Education) credits, once the main reason HCPs attended medical meetings. Delegates can also learn about new devices remotely. Conferences also assail attendees with hundreds of papers, pamphlets and more information than they could possibly consume; digital events remove the spam and add the substance. Webinar practitioners, for example, can live-stream content and capture breakouts and speaker sessions—including PowerPoint slides, videos and downloadable PDFs—for remote viewers. Technology is rapidly reshaping the healthcare industry, and it’s making medical information more accessible to HCPs than ever before.

SOLUTION #2: DIGITAL EVENTS

Webinars offer a hybrid model of live and virtual sessions, solving the problem of resource allocation for medical conferences and events. Inviting a medical professional to a webinar, by its nature, removes logistical expenses and potential impact on transparency reporting. Even investigator meetings for global clinical trials and important product launches can be conducted virtually, ensuring that all sites
worldwide receive consistent information at the same time, speeding site initiation. Medical device companies that have gone digital with their events are witnessing dramatic results. In fact, Align Technology uses the ON24 platform and found that using digital tools like webinars have a dramatic impact on results. With webinars, the company saw a 44% increase in the number of trainings, a 54% increase in training attendance and a 15% increase in on-demand training viewership.

Digital events also scale engagement with your audiences and can accommodate anywhere from a few key attendees to thousands of people. With ON24, you can automatically transform live events, such as training sessions and virtual roundtables, into on-demand webinars that extend the lifetime of an event and deliver ongoing content experiences. By hosting sessions on-demand, HCPs can replay what they missed and attend all sessions. Plus, marketers find it easier to get internal compliance approvals with ON24’s simulive feature, where marketers can pre-record live events. Promotional Review Committees can delay viewership and marketing goals, but pre-recorded webinars can accelerate the approval and compliance process much faster.

Webinars can also facilitate real-time networking. Within ON24’s group chat feature, attendees can share thoughts on topics among peers, ask questions and receive clarification instantaneously. Medical device marketing teams can also view these important conversations and gain insights into how engaged HCPs are with various issues. Additional tools, such as Q&A, polls, surveys and downloadable resources can provide HCPs with immediate answers, deepen their educational experience, and earn CME hours.
**DILEMMA #3: MAINTAINING DISTRIBUTOR RELATIONSHIPS**

Most medical device organizations depend on distributors for success. This is especially true when selling to international markets because distributors have a far wider reach in those locations and a better grasp of a locality’s healthcare regulations. Maintaining relationships with approved distributors is crucial to any sales strategy, because manufacturers may lack the network and resources to access their target audiences.

But managing the partner/distributor relationship is challenging. Lack of sufficient support from manufacturers causes discontent among distributors. In turn, distributors could misrepresent device features and benefits as they lack the most up-to-date product information. Without fast, real-time data, distributors may struggle to close deals and meet projected sales, leading to frustration for manufacturers. It’s important for manufacturers to develop and maintain arrangements lucrative for both partners.

**SOLUTION #3: CUSTOM EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Distributors and medical device companies have the same goal: They both want to sell goods and profit as quickly as possible. But if a device is very complex, and the manufacturer cannot provide the necessary technical information, then it is likely to perform poorly next to another product that’s easier to sell. Educating partners and accommodating their goals is the best approach to encourage sales. Still, device companies must communicate expectations to distributors, so both parties can begin the partnership on the same foot.

Distributors most often fail on sales when they go unsupported. Manufacturers must equally participate by providing distributors with a high level of support and communication. Supplying distributors with the most up-to-date information on your device is crucial.
With live and on-demand access to educational webinars, engaging with distributors around the world is simple. Built-in reporting enables you to send distributors real-time information based on your audience. Organizing content and webinars into personalized education portals, where partners can find the information that's most important to them, is a cinch as well. Webinars can help manufacturers stay connected with partners abroad by facilitating product trainings, clinical studies, sales strategies and market positioning. Webinars with videos and slides can help share device demonstrations, ongoing product information and address any concerns. Distributors can gain even more insights with HCP engagement data, which includes which content they’re viewing and their level of interest.
DILEMMA #4:
UNDERSTANDING HCP DEMOGRAPHICS: WHO THEY ARE AND HOW TO TARGET THEM

The only way medical device marketers can identify the preferences and needs of doctors is through data. Access to a strong database provides the information upon which marketing and sales teams base their goals and strategies. When manufacturers are knowledgeable about patient demographics and the treatments that medical providers administer, they can create stronger messaging that’s tailored to client needs.

Most life sciences companies understand the value of behavioral and demographic information, and describe themselves as data-driven. But many medical device manufacturers, by their own estimates, say they could use data more efficiently. Most healthcare data is derived from external sources, such as social media and third-party providers. When this external data joins with internal data, the huge volume of information can overwhelm and impede sales and marketing decisions. Companies must connect relevant insights across massive datasets, but without a streamlined approach this cannot efficiently happen.

SOLUTION #4:
ROBUST DATA PROFILES

Data collected by the ON24 Platform are analyzed and turned into clear and actionable insights helping you identify materials HCPs value. Real-time reporting can be easily integrated into your marketing automation and customer relationship management platforms, making it easy for marketing and sales teams to take next steps in sync. Robust data points are based on recent information—what HCPs specialize in, topics of interest and likely patients—which helps you to track progression and key performance indicators. By understanding HCP behavior across every interaction, ON24 helps marketers turn data and insights into unified reports for marketing, sales and distributors.
Analytics can also help uncover the best performing content and the topics most important to HCPs, which can then be used to create educational portals. By creating unique content portals with information important to doctors, nurses and purchasing agents, you can specifically engage each stakeholder in the buying process. Personalized experiences include the device information, messaging and positioning that different personas care about. These customized portals make it easy for each decision maker (i.e., doctors, nurses, technicians and purchasing agents) to explore content that’s most important to them.

Integrate all your martech solutions into your CRM so they feed rich data into one place that can be accessed by both sales and marketing. By synthesizing analytics, you can make 360-degree profiles of your accounts, discover trends, and overall create more engaging content that fits the needs of your audience.
DILEMMA #5: MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE BUYING PROCESS

Unlike other life sciences companies, medical device makers rely upon a multitude of influencers, including nurses, dieticians, technicians, physicians and purchasing agents. Group purchasing organizations are one of the most important decision makers and have the power to negotiate contracts with medical product vendors and service providers. A GPO helps HCPs obtain discounts by leveraging volume when purchasing medical devices. Selecting the right medical sales organization that will best represent your device is a big decision that can have a long-term impact on your company.

There are also other variables that can shape the procurement process. Medicare, America’s national health insurance program, subsidizes the use of eligible devices in a patient’s treatment plan and influence a physician’s purchasing decisions. GPOs must factor in these healthcare insurance subsidies when devising contracts. Although it is not required that medical device companies go through GPOs, they are recognized by HCPs as critical partners that reduce costs for the entire healthcare system. According to recent data analysis from Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, GPOs save the healthcare industry up to $34.1 billion each year.

This complex buying process means device companies have to be much more advanced when it comes to data. Due to advances in technology, many medical devices, such as blood sugar monitors and blood pressure cuffs, now come equipped with smart technology that instantly collects data from device users. As your company makes a commitment to sales, you will need a specific marketing strategy showing how your device can help HCPs deliver better care.

SOLUTION #5: PERSONALIZED DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

Most healthcare providers choose which GPOs to work with in a committee setting that’s often comprised of HCPs, including nurses, doctors and other clinicians. These committees help determine which medical products are most suitable from a clinical perspective. Once companies make a decision, GPOs will begin negotiating contracts with distributors, healthcare providers and other suppliers. Hospitals must make the final decision about which product is most appropriate in each circumstance.

Although most of the decision making is in the hands of medical providers and intermediaries, manufacturers
can still play a large role in helping device users understand the benefits of their product. Companies can devise customer training programs customized to each decision maker’s unique questions, challenges and concerns. You can provide a repository for GPOs to access important training content, videos and webinars so they can optimally position your medical solution to hospitals. After contracts are won, the next major component of medical device sales is educating users on the product’s functionality. Doctors, nurses, technicians and medical assistants must be fully acquainted with all technical aspects of a device and be able to educate patients on device use as well.

Providing live or on-demand tutorials for each end-user can address to their specific uses of the device and any questions they may have. For example, doctors may be most interested in how devices help patients, nurses may want to know its ease of use and purchasing agents will need to understand pricing and how the product differentiates from others on the market.

You can pre-record individual webinars for each provider who will require detailed product demonstrations along with links to FAQs and additional background information. Using market research and customer interviews to learn what is important to each stakeholder, you can create tailored target pages for each persona that includes helpful tutorials, documentation, and relevant guides.
With the ON24 Platform, medical device companies can create meaningful connections with healthcare professionals and global distributors through data-rich webinar and content experiences. The ON24 Platform, empowers marketers to create digital events that educate on treatment options, train on product usage and influence decision makers. Leading life sciences companies such as Medtronic, Abbott and Stryker use ON24 for digital HCP engagements and drive real results as a consequence.

The ON24 Platform also empowers medical device marketers to create interactive webinars and content experiences that engage HCPs and distributors at scale and give insights into every interaction. Through live, always-on and personalized digital experiences, ON24 provides a powerful solution for medical device marketers to innovate HCP engagement and impact their bottom line.