



Hitting the Mark

Eric Johnson of SVP InsiteResearch looks at changes within KOL Management.

A growing emphasis is being placed on KOL Management as a strategic marketing vehicle. The era of adding more sales representatives to increase reach is rapidly coming to an end. Companies are looking for effective alternate channels to deliver their message. Deploying thought leaders is an attractive proposition to meet this need. However, revenue growth within pharmaceutical companies is slowing due to blockbusters going off patent as well as approvals for new products are proving to be challenging. Therefore, budgets are shrinking. State and institutional caps limiting thought leader involvement with industry is gaining ground. How can companies work within these constraints and yet still generate positive outcomes from their thought leader engagements?

KOL Management programs must evolve to help industry overcome these challenges. New industry trends are focusing on highly complex algorithms, careful planning as well as a heavier focus on managing the relationship with the opinion leader.

Creating KOL plans starts with identifying and targeting thought leaders based on well defined segmentation criteria. I have had the good fortune to work with many companies in order to help them strengthen their targeting and segmentation approaches. At the end of the day, while most company's approaches vary, there are commonalities among their themes.

First, companies are completing influence mapping to validate and segment thought leaders into tiers comprising, global, national, regional and local. The next step is identifying the domains of strength for these thought leaders based upon historical activities. These domains are typically broken into tactical areas i.e. publishing, speaking, clinical trials, media, advisory board consultant, etc. Companies are not assuming just because a thought leader has engaged in these activities prior, they are motivated to continue with more of the same. Interviews and exchanges between company representatives and thought leaders identify activities in which the thought leaders wish to engage today are becoming quite popular.

Once identified and targeted as noted above, thought leaders can be further segmented for engagement. This segmentation is typically a *motivation* segment. The motivation segment is based upon the engagements in which the thought leader has expressed a desire and willingness to participate. The next layer of segmentation is to identify if the thought leader is skilled or equipped to complete the activities for which they are motivated. If the expressed area is clinical trials, is the physician equipped to complete clinical trials? If the thought leader wishes to speak, do they have the platform skills to be successful? Finally, there is an engagement level segmentation based upon fee caps for the physician. Can the physician effectively participate in the activities desired based upon the fee cap under which he or she is required to work.

Once the segmentation and targeting are completed, internal teams review needs for thought leader engagement over the coming year and match thought leaders against these needs based upon the analysis of reach, experience, desire, skill level, and cap limitations.

While specific targeting and segmentation vary, the common theme is that more structure is being placed around segmentation and targeting. These structured approaches assure that companies are using the right thought leaders in the right role and gaining the maximum benefit while leveraging the smartest spend.

Eric Johnson, Senior Vice President and General Manager

Mr. Johnson joined Advanced Health Media in September 2003 as Senior Vice President of the KOL research division bringing with him over 14 years experience in healthcare technology, and business solutions. His current responsibilities include oversight, direction and delivery of all InsiteResearch products and services, for both US and global life sciences customers. Prior to joining Advanced Health Media, Eric most recently served as Director of Sales and Service for HEALTHvision, a Dallas, TX based company, which specializes in developing web portals for hospitals and physician office software. He holds a BS in Education from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and has completed multiple graduate level courses in technology.