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The Role of Tablet PCs in Pharma Sales and Marketing

By Caren Spinner



Pharmaceutical companies invest substantial resources on information, training, and support to insure their sales forces are successful. Equipping sales reps with mobile technology is a critical element for delivering

and managing the flow of information between the rep and the company and between the rep and the customer.

The latest device in the progression of mobile computing technology is the tablet or slate PC. The Tablet PC is the evolution of the Notebook PC and the most mobile PC ever. However, mobility does not necessarily equate to "high impact" or guarantee an increase in face time with the physician. Understanding how to most effectively utilize this technology is critical.

Various topics that addressed the different aspects of this latest innovation in portability and performance and how they could be used in the commercial side of Pharma business were the focus of almost the entire second day of the two-day Technology Supported Physician Detailing conference organized by the Center for Business Intelligence and held recently in Philadelphia, PA. Topics ranged from software to leveraging the use of tablet PCs to increase sales force effectiveness in both the primary care and hospital-based environments.

What Is a Tablet PC?

The tablet or slate PC is a flat screen device reminiscent of the writing areas on "hand-holds" or "palms." Tablet PCs refers to those devices that include a built in keyboard, and a slate device is a Tablet PC without a keyboard. Some devices have a removable keyboard and most use a "pen" or stylus instead of a mouse for navigation. They come in various screen sizes ranging from about 10 to 14 inches and weigh from approximately 2 to 8 pounds. In terms of durability, their "life

expectancy" is on par with laptops in general. (For a more comprehensive overview visit <http://www.tabletpctalk.com/faqs/comparison/2004.php>.)

Prices vary depending upon manufacturer, but many models are in the neighborhood of \$2,000. Challenges to adoption will come from those users who are reluctant to move away from using keyboards. It is believed that "newer users" will be more receptive to pen/stylus navigation.

Mobility and Functionality

The tablet PC has a high degree of functionality and mobility. It can be used as to capture, store or exchange data and information. It can also be used as a "high tech" method to handle these data. Most important, according to Rob Dhoble, President, Diversified Agency Services Healthcare/Omnicom Group, an advertising and marketing communications holding group, it can also be used by the rep as "a robust presentation of creativity."

"Using a Tablet PC based mobile eDetailing solution," says Dhoble, "transforms the physician interaction from a 'detail' to a targeted, educational experience and enables brand teams to collect actionable business intelligence from physician call data."

Some Pharma sales reps are currently using these devices with broader usage being expected in the future. Mobile eDetailing business intelligence systems, for example, can deliver powerful insight into physician behavior and marketing message impact, and provide brand teams with valuable tools and analysis to help them better understand and direct the brand interaction at the physician level.

According to a white paper by ArcStream Solutions, a wireless systems integration firm, mobile applications are enabling pharmaceutical commercialization efforts in these ways:

- (1) To convey complex, yet accurate and complete, drug information in brief detail visits, sales

representatives can refer to mobile devices containing rich, up-to-date marketing and sales information.

- (2) To gain mind and market share among physicians overloaded with information, and complement face-to-face detail visits, mobile applications can perform e-detailing -- reaching physicians through emails and other electronic information sent directly to handheld devices.
- (3) To assist sales representatives in completing administrative tasks from the field, mobile applications can help perform chores such as expense reporting, logging drug samples, etc.

Training is Critical for Full Benefit

The challenge, however, will be to successfully deploy this technology to the field. According to Julius Sinkevicius, Product Manager, Tablet PC Group, Microsoft, one of the problems is the fact these devices are under-utilized when used as a laptop only and one of the reasons for this under-utilization is lack of proper training (hardware, software and pen navigation). "People aren't given enough training and use it as a lap top only, so it's underused," said Sinkevicius.

Microsoft is one of the innovators of software for tablet PCs and the company has made recent improvements in character/handwriting recognition software. This is significant because it facilitates a number of activities including: writing meetings notes, training and education, writing on the screen, documentation, display video and annotating text or handwritten documents. They key features supporting these benefits include a lighter device with a longer battery life and the flexibility of using a pen to write on the screen or as a navigation device, all of which is compatible with various software development kits and other business software packages authored by Microsoft.

These things are important to the sales rep because Microsoft believes that the right platform and the right technology may lead to an increase in prescriptions. Because tablet PCs allow the rep to interact in any location, the technology itself may actually provide a longer duration of detail time that can be further enhanced by the ability to attach forms and quickly search and provide information.

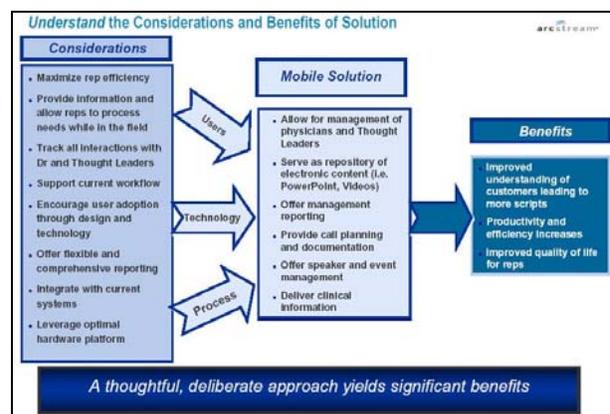
Pilot for Operational Success

According to Geoffrey McCleary, Vice President of Interactive Product Services at Hyphen, a healthcare communications agency, "The power of the tablet PC is that it allows you to 'hear' what goes on in the physicians office and 'see' the brand through the physicians' eyes" while allowing

market segmentation of physicians for true targeting.

McCleary suggested that tablet PCs enable the creation of a physician segment of one for true target marketing. This would be cost-prohibitive to do in print. In his presentation entitled, "Detailing Pilots--A Stake holder-Based Approach to Operational Success," he suggested a pilot program be developed. This pilot program would allow a company to evaluate the technology, test the impact of that technology on both the company and the business, project pilot learning onto the organization as a whole and ultimately, determine if it can be used as a viable model to drive growth.

In order to do this successfully; McCleary recommended defining the desired goals at the outset of the pilot program is critical. He also suggested that the pilot program include all stakeholders including members of the product management team, members of regulatory or medical/legal, team members from the brand's agency of record, members of the sales team, sales training, sales representatives and IT.



Tablet PCs and Closed-Loop Promotion

Another important factor about tablet PC technology is the necessity of understanding how it can be used to fulfill the needs and the demands of the physician audience. A panel discussion on tablet PC-based detailing and sales effectiveness ("closed-loop" promotion) cited examples of this.

One of the most significant observations during this discussion was that with one rep for every 8 physicians, 70% of whom are concentrated on the GP/PCP audience and with almost every high-volume prescriber (HVP) having a "dedicated rep", the rep/physician interaction has approached the point of diminishing returns. This problem is even more serious when one considers that there is growing friction between physicians and reps with 20% of physicians being "no sees" and 80% of

calls lasting less than two minutes. In addition, physicians are demanding more clinical and comparative data (see "A Crisis in Professional Detailing," [PMN Reprint 37-02](#)).

Closed-loop promotion is believed to be a solution for some of these problems. From a brand perspective, the technology of tablet PCs enables an increase in the speed of response. It permits a fast, almost "overnight" ability to change content while at the same time enabling the rep to rapidly deliver that message. From the sales perspective, the tablet PC detail makes it easy to immediately navigate to any topic that the physician raises or wants information on. It can cut down on the "waiting time" for new or updated marketing materials to be printed and mailed and at the same time can be utilized to capture market research data and other necessary metrics at the time of the actual detail.

Tablet PCs in the Hospital Setting

Perhaps one of the best applications of this technology will be in the hospital. Jon McNeary, Pharmaceutical Practice Director at Arcstream Solutions, presented "Leverage Mobile Technologies for Hospital-Centric Detailing". In the hospital setting, the laptop PC may be too difficult to handle, PDA may not provide enough functionality but the tablet PC should be ideal when one considers its size, capability and functionality.

He discussed trends in detailing in the hospital environment citing that within a strategic context, the hospital rep must meet the needs of a variety of constituents. At the same time, this must be accompanied by various tactical decisions that are being made by the identification and tracing of key performance indicators. According to McNeary, "The hospital-based reps are looking to technology as an enabler not a crutch." In addition, Pharma companies may rely on the hospital-based rep as a lens into an account and its purchasing history and product preferences.

As a result, the scope of this technology for the hospital-based rep must include a variety of capabilities including relationship building/account management, delivery of information/clinical literature, as a tool to enhance communications among different groups or administer surveys and conduct measurements of various metrics.

Use By MSLs

Medical Science Liaisons (MSLs) may benefit the most from the mobility and on-the-spot convenience of PDAs and tablet computers. Tablets can improve the effectiveness of medical

education, a key activity of MSLs. MSLs also manage thought leaders and advocacy activity. Having a database of thought leader opinions on hand along with all available clinical data allow MSLs to address physician questions immediately.

As pharmaceutical sales strategies and physicians' familiarity with interactive communications shift, it will be even more necessary that Pharma companies equip their representatives with the appropriate tools and training to insure their success. The tablet PC is the next evolution in mobile technology that has been developed to meet the various challenges inherent in the pharmaceutical sales and marketing environment.

Hospital vs. Practice Based Detailing

While many similarities exist, hospital based detailing does have some key differences with traditional, practice based detailing:

Fewer interactions with specific doctors

- Many hospitals are banning detail reps altogether or forcing them to schedule all visits
- Some doctors and thought leaders only will see Medical Affairs reps (e.g., Medical Science Liaisons), not Detail reps

Less emphasis on sampling

- Some hospitals are limiting the number of samples that can be dropped
- The workflow of a hospital-based rep is different
 - Less waiting room time
 - Move from one doctor to another in real time

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