

**Product Review** Reprint # 49-04

## Mobile Medical Reference: An Effective Door Opener for Sales Reps

*A Silent, Intelligent Salesperson at the Point of Care*  
By **John Mack**

Everyone knows that pharma sales reps are less effective than they used to be (see "[Increase Physician Access and Detailing Effectiveness](#)"). There are just too many reps visiting the same physicians without having anything unique to offer.

Pharmaceutical companies are searching for new, creative solutions to the problem of decreasing sales rep effectiveness. One such solution is to provide physicians with value-added smart tools to allow them instant access to up-to-date prescribing and treatment information. A PDA-based reference and messaging solution for oncologists offered by Skyscape, a leading provider of mobile patient care solutions, is an example of how a handheld medical reference can forge stronger physician-rep relationships.

Study after study shows PDA usage surging among physicians. According to Forrester Research, half of U.S. physicians owned a PDA in 2004, compared with 14% of the overall population, and 65% of physicians with PDAs said they use them to check medications.

### Oncologist Case Study

One example Skyscape cites is a case involving increased access to oncologists to detail a mature cancer drug. The pharmaceutical company's challenge in marketing this drug was threefold:

- Overcoming "sales rep fatigue" explaining an effective, but mature drug
- Surmounting physician indifference to information received in the past about an infrequently prescribed drug
- Increasing sales rep access and detail time with practitioners

Skyscape worked with the pharmaceutical company to develop a comprehensive handheld reference and messaging solution that included clinical studies, reference material, a dosing calculator and patient management information.

The program was provided to the physician on a CD-ROM for downloading onto the doctor's personal, handheld device. The pharmaceutical

company supplied the Skyscape software as a complimentary, medically relevant reference. It included:

- The AJCC Cancer Staging Handbook with integrated TNM Staging Calculator
- Indications & Dosing information
- Clinical data supporting the efficacy of the cancer drug
- Patient management information with a dosing calculator and patient side-effects management
- Educational and safety information

### Trusted References

"Skyscape offers over 300 trusted references across 30 specialties," says John Ryder, Skyscape's vice president of sales. "Pharmaceutical companies depend on us to build value-added solutions around these trusted references. Skyscape's unique breadth of reference titles across all clinical specialties is the key to tailoring specific solutions." In developing the handheld reference and messaging solution for the oncology drug, Skyscape integrated information from the trusted and widely used AJCC Cancer Staging Handbook and TNM Staging Calculator, which determines the stage by simply inputting T,N,M variables, with clinical data and patient management issues.

The material was personalized and branded for the pharmaceutical firm, becoming part of the company's promotional program. Another unique marketing feature is triggered when the physician uses the AJCC TNM Staging Calculator. A note flashes on the PDA screen stating that the patient might be a candidate for the cancer drug. Most importantly, this customized in-context messaging is done without affecting the integrity of the trusted AJCC Cancer Staging Handbook. As a result, the physician gains a fully operational and valuable reference tool from the sales call—in this case the AJCC Cancer Staging Handbook—and the representative's message is reinforced each time it is clinically relevant.

“This ‘silent salesman’ in the software was available every time the oncologist used it,” said Ryder. “Even better, it offered the information in context at exactly the right point. The brand manager loved it!”

### Launch and Training

Skyscape launched the handheld reference and messaging solution at a pharmaceutical company gathering of sales reps, district sales managers, and support staff. The training by Skyscape experts quickly enabled the sales reps to demonstrate the solution to their physicians and to answer questions about program installation and usage. The solution also provides opportunities for repeat or follow-up visits to offer additional

content increased their detailing time, improved relationships with their physician contacts, and increased overall productivity. Sixty-two percent (62%) of sales representatives using the Skyscape program reported an increase in detail time from 5 minutes to 10 minutes (see FIGURE) and 58% reported five or more extra contacts. In addition, 77% reported improved access to physicians. An astounding 82% of respondents also indicated that the handheld reference solution has granted them access to between 1 and 3 additional physicians that they didn’t have access to previously; while 42% gained access to 3 or more additional physicians that they weren’t previously able to access.

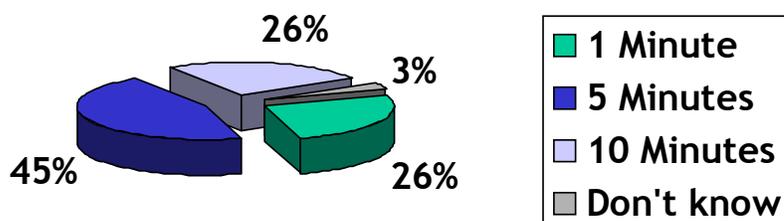


FIGURE: Percentage of survey respondents who experienced an increase in average detail time with physicians

information, updates, or other related material. Each sales rep was given a handheld device loaded with Skyscape software for use in demonstrations and for instruction in downloading and using the program.

### Increased Access is the ROI

All PDA products are not created equal. “When it comes to ROI,” said Ryder, “pharmaceutical marketers need to look for value and substance from the solutions.” Skyscape claims an increased ROI by integrating trusted medical information as a part of an OIG/PhRMA compliant incentive program to enhance participation by physicians.

A Brand Manager from one of Skyscape’s client pharmaceutical companies is confident the Skyscape handheld reference and messaging solution is driving an uptick in return on investment. “We’ve had greater access and more quality time with physicians—absolutely without a doubt and across the board,” he says.

Ryder cited results from company surveys indicating that pharmaceutical sales reps offering physicians a PDA solution tied to trusted medical

### Conclusion

These days, physicians have little time to be detailed by multiple pharma sales reps and even when they do see sales reps they don’t have time to get all the prescribing and clinical information they need. Pharma companies that provide physicians with value-added smart tools such as those offered by Skyscape will benefit from the marketing advantages that mobile technologies bring to the table.

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### Expert Consulted

The following expert was mentioned or consulted in the preparation of this article.

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