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## Direct to Physician Telemarketing and Sales

*When Outsourcing Makes Sense*

By John Mack

The point of diminishing returns in the sales trench warfare has been reached. Everyone knows that pharma sales reps are less effective than they used to be (see "[A Crisis in Professional Detailing](#)"). Although the pharmaceutical sales force has doubled between 1995 and 2000, the number of audited calls has only increased by 10%. At an estimated cost of \$100 to \$200 per completed sales call, a lot of money is being wasted. As the saying goes, "A billion here and a billion there, pretty soon we're talking real money!"

For most companies it makes no sense economically to add field staff, especially to cover "white" territories spread across large, mostly rural areas. Proposed and actual cuts in sales personnel by companies like Pfizer and Wyeth also contribute to the problem of territory coverage.

One solution might be eDetailing, which can be more cost-effective than personal sales calls and is available to any physician with a computer and access to the Internet (see "[eDetailing: Special Supplement](#)"). Add on to that online sampling and you might have a trend, although the jury is still out on that (see "[eDetailing: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow](#)"). eDetailing, however, lacks the personal touch and human interaction, which is so important in sales.

### Outsourced Telemarketing

Another option is telemarketing offered by companies such as ADG Pharmaceutical Biotech Marketing (ADG), which specializes in providing hosted telemarketing services for the pharmaceutical, life sciences and biotech industries. Headquartered in Ireland, 90% of ADG's work is for US companies promoting products to US physicians.

### HELP WANTED Specialty Sales Professional

Fortune 100 pharmaceutical company seeks Sales Consultants to develop and implement an effective territory business plan; utilizing effective direct selling techniques and market strategies to expand product demand. Sales territory covers a large geographic area in southern rural US with very few physicians per square mile. Most physicians in this territory have not seen a sales rep in years. You must visit at least 400 of these "no-sees" in the first two weeks on the job. Sorry, no budget is available for overnight, weekend or air travel, which, nevertheless, may be required. EOE. Fax resume to: 1-800-NO SALES.

"Our staff is educated to a university degree level, many with experience in sales as field reps," says Trevor Donovan, ADG's Director of Business Development. In fact, a good percentage of ADG's staff is recruited from the local pharmaceutical industry—pharmaceutical companies like Pfizer, Abbott and Wyeth that have based their European sales and marketing operations in Ireland.

"Savings in manufacturing labor costs was the initial reason for foreign investment," says Donovan, "but as time went on, Ireland, like the US, has lost manufacturing jobs to eastern Europe, China, and India. But what sets Ireland apart is that it is an English speaking country and has a highly educated and trained workforce." There are still some financial advantages to offshoring telemarketing to Ireland, but companies like ADG can compete these days more strongly on the basis of the caliber of its workers. ADG, therefore, should be considered on the basis of the outsourcing rather than offshoring advantages it offers.

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***"ADG helped us promote our products in a cost-effective, seamless and professional manner. They were quickly up to speed on our brands and extremely flexible. As the program went forward we were able to adapt and change our tactics. They have continuously delivered significant Return on Investment."***

— Director of Product Marketing, pharma client

The outsourced marketing and sales support services that ADG offers include:

- Market Research
- Sample Marketing & Fulfillment Services
- Direct Marketing & Mail Follow Up
- Seminar Recruitment
- Sales Support Solutions
- Inbound Response Management
- Vacant Territory Coverage
- Database Development and List Building

“Market research, sample fulfillment, vacant territory coverage, brand promotion, and combating generic intrusion are our bread and butter services,” says Donovan who cited sample fulfillment by phone as a case study.

#### **Demonstrable Return on Investment**

“Our client was a US pharma company with a pediatric product facing a major intrusion by generic competitors,” said Donovan. The market for the product was mostly in the southern US region. “Their sales force was spread pretty thinly over this territory,” says Donovan, “and they were losing opportunity to promote their product to pediatricians who had large practices but were difficult to reach. It made no sense to hire more reps to cover this area.”

The strategy used sample fulfillment as the driver to reach the physicians. ADG worked with the client to develop and implement the sample fulfillment program by calling physicians every month to check on sample supplies for three different medications. ADG personnel took orders by phone and handled the required forms, which had to be signed by physicians, by fax back to ADG.

“Through telemarketing we were able to ensure that our client did not lose market share in these areas and in most cases we helped them improve market share in several geographical regions,” claims Donovan. The return on investment was approximately 16-fold as measured by the cost of the program compared with the increase in prescriptions written.

#### **Market Research**

In another case, ADG was charged with getting feedback from doctors about the packaging and correct use of a product. The company had received sporadic feedback from a few doctors and wanted to verify if there was a problem and what exactly was the issue. ADG called doctors and

nurses in private practices and learned that there was overwhelming satisfaction with the product.

#### **Seminar & Webinar Recruitment**

Seminars or Webinars are increasingly being used by pharmaceutical companies to provide physicians with critical product information in a format and at a time convenient to the audience. The success of such programs depends to a large degree on getting the right physicians to attend and ADG offers a cost-effective recruitment program to accomplish this. ADG speaks to key decision makers in physician offices and introduces the sponsoring company and its product in a professional manner to ensure that the company’s events have the maximum possible participation rate.

The ADG Recruitment Program includes:

- Prompt Mail follow-up
- Professional introduction
- High call volumes
- Conversational approach
- Seminar attendance confirmation

ADG also conducts event follow-up campaigns. Key decision makers who have attended the programs are contacted directly by phone so that that any sales leads generated at these events are captured.

#### **Conclusion**

Getting the most from field sales is a challenging business. Overheads are high and the marketplace is increasingly regulated. ADG can supplement and improve cost effectiveness through tailored telemarketing programs such as those described in this article. With offices in the United States, Ireland and France, ADG is perfectly positioned to partner with global pharmaceutical and biotech companies for direct to physician telemarketing, professional detailing and market intelligence gathering.

As products are acquired and portfolios change, outsourcing and telemarketing help pharma companies maintain a flexible sales force to meet the challenging demands of today’s marketplace.

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