

Going Beyond the Numbers to Measure the Effectiveness of a Pilot Sales Program

Helping teams understand if and why programs are successful

As pharmaceutical manufacturers enter an increasingly competitive market, it has become necessary to rethink the classic sales model to address issues related to accessibility and impact on physician behavior. A critical component of any new sales approach is its evaluation. While a critical outcome for pharmaceutical manufacturers is volume or share increases, these effects are often not observed immediately. Thus, a significant challenge in evaluating the impact of novel sales approaches is identifying and measuring more subtle behavioral and attitudinal precursors of volume / share changes.

Observant LLC was retained by a pharmaceutical client to evaluate the impact of a new sales pilot program designed to increase demand for an established medication – specifically the new sales approach leveraged a field force of clinical educators to creating a more balanced perception of the medication through in-depth discussions of the clinical literature between sales-based medical liaisons and physicians. A field force of clinical educators scheduled extended visits with physicians and had in-depth discussions with them about relevant clinical trials and also addressed any clinical concerns about the medication.

To provide a complete assessment of program impact, a comprehensive research design was implemented that combined both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Online surveys were conducted with both physicians exposed to the pilot program and a control group of naïve MDs to assess behavioral and attitudinal impact. Following the completion of these interviews, in-depth telephone interviews were completed with each physician to obtain more granular information on the behaviors and attitudes of interest. This qualitative follow-up enhanced the understanding of the most critical quantitative measures obtained in the online survey.

QUESTRILL[®], our proprietary data collection tool, was leveraged to integrate quantitative and qualitative data into a single analytic platform. This enabled our analytic team to identify the frequency of certain key quantitative indices and to quickly and efficiently reference related qualitative data to

understand “why” physicians responded in the way that they did.

Furthermore, the study was robustly designed to permit repeated comparisons of those physicians exposed to the sales pilot with a group of control physicians matched along a number of key demographic and behavioral dimensions. Across four waves of data collection, our team was able to differentiate behavioral and attitudinal changes that were attributable to the sales program from those that may have arisen because of other changes in the physicians’ environments (e.g., the release of new trial results).



Taken altogether, Observant LLC investigators were able to measure changes on key metrics that would not have been detected through the analysis of standard secondary prescribing data or quantitative survey results. The client team was then able to utilize the results to make an informed decision on the direction of the program. Since the evaluation of this pilot, the program has been expanded to other parts of the organization.

For more information about Observant LLC’s capabilities in designing mixed methodology studies, or our sales program evaluation capabilities, please contact info@observant.biz.