

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF PHARMACEUTICAL AND BIOTECH TRAINERS

# CRAFTING BETTER COACHES

Developing sales representatives is the most important responsibility of any DM...

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP:  
WHAT HAPPENS IN THE  
WHITE SPACE ON  
ORG CHARTS

GOING MAD OVER  
MEDICARE PART D

ETHICAL VALUES AND  
THE PHARMACEUTICAL  
INDUSTRY

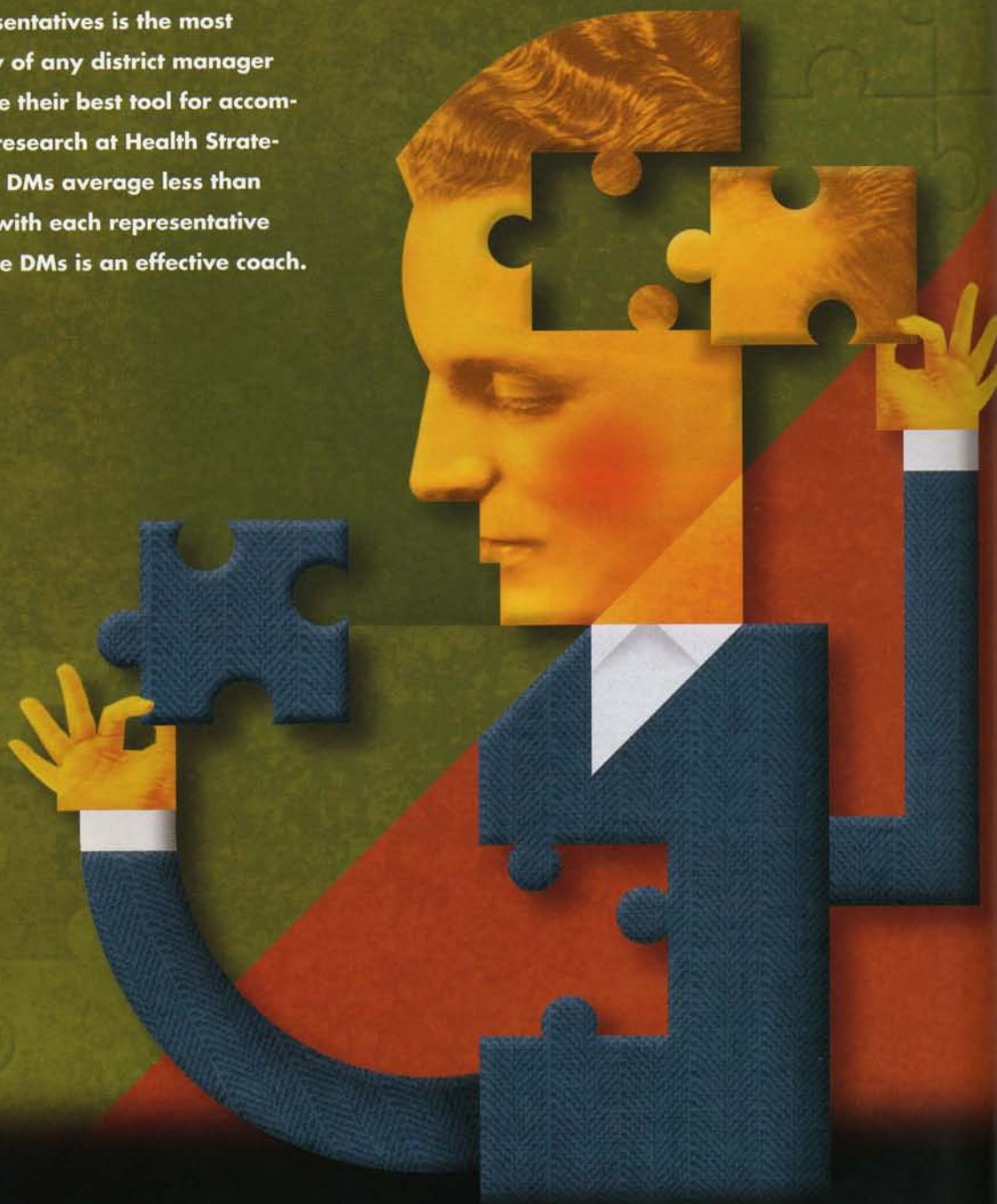
PLUS, A PREVIEW OF  
SPBT'S UPCOMING  
MEETING IN CHICAGO



# CRAFTING BETTER COACHES

by Rick Rosentbal and Rayna Herman

Developing sales representatives is the most important responsibility of any district manager (DM), and field visits are their best tool for accomplishing this goal. Our research at Health Strategies Group reveals that DMs average less than one field day a month with each representative and that only one in five DMs is an effective coach. Why so few?



## COMMON PITFALLS

**Pitfall 1: Recognizing the Role of Observer.** Many DMs transition into their coaching role after successful performance as sales representatives. Whether motivated out of the desire to help their representative make a sale or the personal enjoyment of selling, these DMs readily participate in their representatives' sales calls. Table 1 lists the typical circumstances in which DMs join sales discussions.

Although DMs participate with the best intentions, none of the activities listed in Table 1 results in more sales, and two actually worsen performance. To succeed, DMs must recognize that the best approach is not personally delivering effective calls, but *developing effective representatives*. To accomplish this, DMs need to step back from the role of call participant and embrace the role of call *observer*.

*"It's very hard not to just jump right into the conversation when with a rep on a field visit."*—DM, Average Coach

*"If the customer gets used to me as a manager coming in and giving the product discussion, I've totally unseated the representative's positioning power in the office and I don't want to do that."* —DM, Effective Coach

**Pitfall 2: The Rush to Judgment.** DMs often communicate their judgment about an event—saying, for example, "I thought you used a weak closing statement"—before *establishing alignment* with their representative. Establishing alignment consists of reviewing the sales call so that both the DM and the representative agree on what took place. Alignment might occur with a simple observational statement such as, "The doctor responded 'I'll think about it.'" Feedback based on judgments alone rarely leads to effective coaching.

**Table 1**

### Circumstances under which a DM participates in a representative's sales discussion

	% of DMs
Customer directs a question to DM	91%
Representative asks DM to participate*	84%
Representative is unable to answer customer's question	77%
Representative provides incorrect clinical product information	70%
Representative misses an opportunity to ask an important question*	52%
Representative provides incorrect product reimbursement information	49%
Representative misses opportunity to close	21%
None	1%

\* DM participation negatively affects sales goal attainment

Many coaches also jump into a detailed evaluation after every call. This results in a stream of disjointed feedback that representatives struggle to absorb. Coaching based on single instances of behavior rarely spurs productive changes in representatives.

## IMPROVING COACHING EFFECTIVENESS

Management development teams can improve coaching skills among their DMs by focusing on two key observation skills: *call analysis* and *pattern recognition*. DMs who accurately observe representative

This does not mean they have no opinion about what they are observing. Effective coaches simply recognize that when trying to change behavior, *opinions* are not as persuasive as *specific examples* that illustrate areas for improvement. Effective coaches also look for consistent skill gaps and patterns of behavior to identify the best opportunities for increasing representative effectiveness. In brief, such coaches:

- *Discuss facts, not judgments.* This helps establish alignment about a call's events and avoids subsequent disagreements over the interpretation of events.

**Table 2**

### How Average and Effective Coaches Approach Common Field-Ride Events

Event	Average Coach Approach	Effective Coach Approach
Representative asks the doctor to prescribe more of their product, and the doctor says, "I'll think about it."	Concludes that the representative used a weak closing statement and cites "closing" as a skill requiring improvement	Assesses the representative's closing statement and compares it to closing statements heard in other calls  Considers "closing" alongside other potential coaching opportunities
Representative presents three products.	Concludes that the call was a success and that "multiple product presentations" do not need coaching	Looks at calls throughout the day to assess the frequency of multiple product presentations

interactions obtain alignment with their representatives, laying the groundwork that enables representatives to change for the better.

Accurate call analysis begins with observation. Effective coaches set aside judgments and focus on *factual observations*—what they see and hear.

- *Focus on patterns of behavior.* This helps DMs and representatives filter out "one-time" events and focus on real opportunities for improvement. Table 2 compares how effective and average coaches approach events that commonly occur during field rides.

*continued on page 48*



# CRAFTING BETTER COACHES

continued from page 47

## STEPS FOR MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

Management development teams can provide DMs with opportunities to practice call analysis in a classroom setting, typically by assessing video scenes or engaging in live role-play. Desired behavioral outcomes for DMs include:

- Separating observations from judgments
- Linking common call observations to potential underlying skills
- Opening a call-analysis dialogue with representatives.

New DMs require foundational training in such concepts as the differences between observations and judgments. However, all DMs benefit from training that exposes them to *how their peers* analyze calls

and discuss call observations with representatives.

Management development teams can help DMs develop pattern-recognition skills through activities such as group discussions and case studies. Sample topics for discussion include:

- Patterns with *new* versus *experienced* representatives
- Patterns with *targeted specialists* versus *primary care physicians*
- Patterns in *physician offices* versus *other settings of care*.

Years of field rides provide experienced DMs with a wealth of knowledge about recognizing patterns. Such DMs should be encouraged to trade insights with their peers. Productive discussions include such topics as:

- "Hidden" patterns (such as, a probing deficiency masquerading as an inability to close)
- Patterns that suggest larger performance problems
- Patterns that DMs often observe but have trouble addressing.

Behavioral outcomes include:

- Finding and identifying patterns
- Engaging representatives in dialogue
- Gaining representative buy-in to proposed coaching ideas.

Table 3 presents examples of commonly observed patterns and the questions that management development teams can use to help DMs think about their approach to engaging representatives.

Meeting your needs.

Radisson  
PLAZA HOTEL & SUITES

100 WEST MICHIGAN AVENUE  
KALAMAZOO • MI 49007  
269/343-3333  
WWW.RADISSONKZ.COM

With the completion of a \$40 million dollar renovation and a total commitment to the needs of the Pharmaceutical meeting market, the Radisson Plaza Hotel and Suites in Kalamazoo, Michigan is the ideal venue for small to medium size training meetings at an incomparable location.

UPGRADE.

## CONCLUSIONS

DMs who accurately observe sales calls and establish alignment with their representatives set the stage for productive coaching sessions and better sales results (effective coaches produce 15% more sales than their average counterparts). Management development teams can ensure that new and tenured DMs build the skills to apply observation-based call analysis more consistently.

*Rayna Herman is Principal of Health Strategies Group where she directs the firm's sales force effectiveness practice. Rayna is the primary author of several groundbreaking studies on sales force effectiveness, including Access to High Prescribers: The World*

**Table 3**

Pattern	Questions to Engage a Representative
On seven of eight calls, the representative discussed only one product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you think this keeps happening?</li> <li>• How much of your bonus/ranking depends on the products that weren't presented?</li> <li>• How could you prepare for a call to get more than one product in?</li> <li>• What questions could gain you more time?</li> </ul>
Five customers in a row had questions about managed-care coverage, and the representative did not know the local co-pay amounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you think our customers keep asking about co-pays?</li> <li>• What effect does such a lack of knowledge have on prescribing?</li> <li>• Where can you get the pertinent information?</li> <li>• How would you respond to question about co-pays if you did have the information?</li> <li>• How would your confidence change if you memorized these answers?</li> </ul>

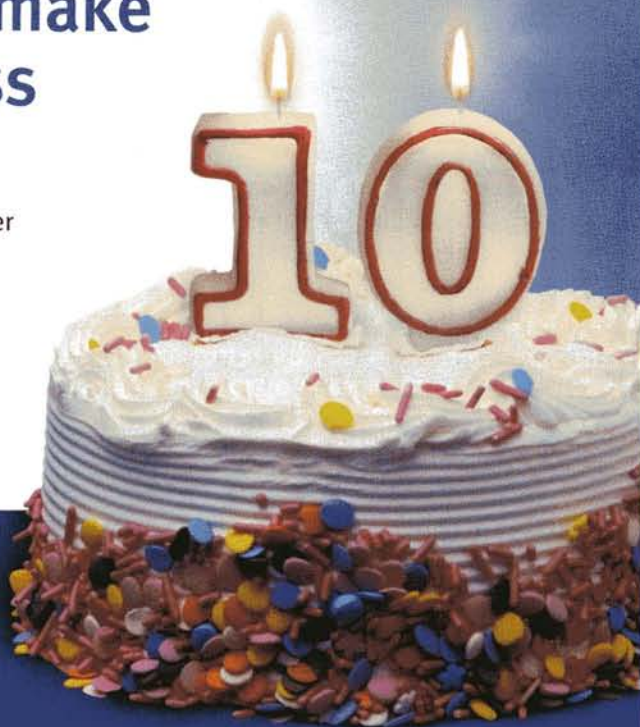
*of Doorknob Details, and Improving District Manager Effectiveness. Prior to joining Health Strategies Group, Ms. Herman spent eight years in sales and marketing at Merck & Co, Inc.*

*Rick Rosenthal is a Senior Consultant with Health Strategies Group, and directs the firm's sales management effectiveness work. Prior to joining*

*Health Strategies Group, he spent 12 years Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceuticals in territory and institutional sales, sales training, District and Regional sales management, and brand marketing. While at Ortho-McNeil, Rick hired more than 100 representatives and district managers, and participated in the training and development of more than 1000 industry professionals.*

## It takes 10 years to make an overnight success

Thank you to everyone who we have worked with over the past 10 years. Because of you, we're stronger, smarter, and more determined than ever. Our fire still burns...brightly.



interactive  
**Tricore**  
Educate. Influence. Motivate.

Phone 609.951.1000  
info@eTricore.com  
www.eTricore.com