Promoting Your Brand: Six Steps for Success

By Jay Shah and Leigh MacDonald

Months and months of market access planning occur long before a new therapy is approved. Once that therapy is finally on the market, pharma companies must then turn their attention to the art of effective brand promotion.

While the first step is identifying the right prescribing physicians, how manufacturers engage with these HCPs is equally important. In today's market, pharma companies need to adopt a coordinated, omni-channel approach to ensure prescribers fully understand their brand's value.

With the right tools and data sources in place, your brand team can design and execute a promotional strategy that matures alongside your brand. Here are our recommendations for where to begin:

1. Refine Your Target HCP List

Pharma companies typically begin the process of target HCP identification well before a brand launches, often 18 to 24 months before commercial availability. By accessing real-world data, your team can use parameters like prescribing behaviors, historical lab tests, patient demographics and specialty traits to identify an initial target list for a given TA or indication.

Once that target list is defined, your brand team can determine what your sales force sizing and structure should be. How many sales reps are necessary, and where should they be deployed? Right-sizing territory alignment will help the entire team be more efficient and impactful.

However, don't forget that market access is always shifting. Once your brand becomes available, it's important to ensure that these target HCPs are still big prescribers—and that no NPIs have been overlooked. By leveraging coverage and claims data, your team can **overlay territory alignments with current market dynamics** to better understand volume at the NPI level across all territories. Where are patients being rejected, and which access barriers are impacting them?

Based on the data coming in, your brand team can continually update and refine its target lists, making sure that reps are engaging with the right physicians at the right time. Sales reps can deploy various NPI targeting strategies, such as targeting HCPs based on new coverage wins, shifting prescription volume, or even access criteria where competitors are excelling. All of these strategies are defined by the quality and robustness of the claims, coverage and lab data you're leveraging.

2. Ensure Consistent Pre-Call Planning

Before sales reps engage with an account, they need to be prepared. As there are many variables that can impact the discussion—from patient demographics to IDN affiliation to payer coverage details—reps must plan ahead to be well-equipped for the conversation.

Do lab alerts indicate that this physician is ready to prescribe? Have there been recent coverage wins that impact this physician's patient population? Does a physician tend to write more prescriptions for a competitor than your brand? Is that because of access barriers, or a general lack of information? Knowing these answers ahead of time will help your sales reps deliver curated messaging that resonates with the physician. Even when there are multiple physicians in the same practice or location, a sales rep should endeavor to tailor their messaging to each physician's unique patient population.

Part of the pre-call planning process requires recognition of the clinical pathways at play for this particular account. Given physicians' affiliation and location, are they incentivized to write prescriptions for certain brands? Understanding how much influence an IDN or health system has on prescribing behavior will help your reps target HCPs with more freedom in deciding which brands they administer to their patients.

3. Monitor HCP Behavior with Trackable Follow-Up

Instead of printed leave-behind materials, sales reps are now far more likely to send digital content to HCPs after a meeting. Using pull-through templates, your field teams can curate relevant brand messaging content based on each account's prescribing behaviors, while maintaining plan-level granularity for coverage status. As coverage restrictions can vary considerably from one health plan to another, dynamic links allow physicians to pull up the precise information they need for an individual patient.

The transition to rep-triggered emails can also help your brand team better manage HCP engagement—as well as field team performance. Your team can **track how often HCPs are engaging** with your content and clicking various links. Your team can also assess the efficacy of your strategy by tracking how frequently reps send pull-through content to their accounts. Is this messaging resulting in a change in prescriber behavior, or an uptick of new prescriptions? If content utilization is low or infrequent, you may need to refine your messaging.

Investing in a one-stop platform for HCP engagement and pull-through can help pharma companies simplify the process for sales reps. The ability to manage pre-call planning, the physician meeting itself, and all post-call activity directly from a single CRM application increases productivity, ensuring that your reps are always focused on the best areas of opportunity. For example, our **FormTrak in Veeva solution** uses real-world data to guide field rep deployment and real-time alerts to notify reps of coverage wins, lab orders, and other pertinent information.

4. Reinforce Brand Messaging with Educational Content

Physician education is an essential but often-overlooked component of a brand's promotional strategy. While some physicians might be eager to prescribe a cutting-edge new therapy, others are more cautious adopters. For these HCPs in particular, peer-to-peer promotion is an effective tool. Many pharma companies accomplish this by engaging specialist communities in conversation on topics that are relevant to their brand, like diagnostic questions, testing guidelines, or common secondary symptoms.

Developing a presence in online medical communities, like **Skipta's specialty-specific groups**, can help your brand team disseminate efficacy and safety data while also gathering insights on prescribing behavior, access barriers, and HCP sentiment. These communities offer many ways for HCPs to engage with indication-specific content, from mastery quizzes to virtual roundtables, Q&A sessions, and videos.

Pharma companies can also institute wrap-around messaging based on the physician's past behavior and/or current happenings, such as a pending lab order or positive test result. For example, your team might send your brand's efficacy data to a physician who attended a virtual roundtable but has never met with a sales rep. A physician who visited with a rep three months ago, but who hasn't yet written

a prescription, might encounter efficacy-focused brand ads within their specialty community's newsfeed. Meanwhile, a physician who is awaiting results from a relevant lab test might receive a sales rep phone call, followed by coverage data.

5. Ease the Prescription Process

While this may seem obvious, creating a **clear, informative brand website** is an essential component of a strong promotional strategy. Although your digital follow-up material should certainly contain dynamic coverage information, it's unrealistic to expect that HCPs and their office staff will always retain these emails—or access your coverage information before prescribing.

Having a brand website ensures that both HCPs and potential patients can research your brand at any given time. Unfortunately, many manufacturers make the mistake of publishing either aggregated or out-of-date coverage data on their brand website, which can negatively impact uptake; knowing that "80% of Aetna patients are covered" is not sufficient information for an HCP interested in prescribing.

Brand websites that incorporate **dynamic coverage look-up tools** are more likely to drive prescriptions, as HCPs can quickly search by insurer channel and plan name to determine if a particular patient is covered, and with what restrictions. These websites can also be equipped with all of the supporting documents that an HCP might need, from prior authorization and medical exception forms to patient eligibility criteria for various testing panels. Your team should be offering HCPs and office staff everything they need to smooth patient access to your therapy.

6. Keep Evaluating Your Strategy

Last but not least is the process of continual evaluation. To be successful, your brand team should periodically measure the efficacy of your promotional efforts. Is your sales force sizing correct, and are sales reps supported with the right tools? Are more patients getting on therapy now that you've changed the sequencing of your wrap-around messaging? Do HCPs **understand and remember your brand's value proposition**?

To remove any bias from your evaluation, let the data speak for itself. By leveraging claims and sales data, your team can monitor the impact of HCP engagements and touchpoints on actual changes in prescribing behavior over time. Your team can map market share from before your launch to the present day, noting the correlations between field rep activity, omnichannel outreach, and volume changes.

As you evaluate your promotional strategy, you might discover the need to expand your target list using real-world data. Broadening your list to include referring physicians, full care teams, and even co-located HCPs—who may influence prescribing decisions—can be an effective strategy. While these HCPs might not have been the primary focus of your field outreach, they are still important targets for non-personal promotion.

For pharma companies with multiple brands on the market, it's especially important to ensure sustainable best practices for brand promotion. Establishing a replicable process of designing, executing and evaluating a brand's promotional strategy will help your team pivot as necessary, adjusting to new market events. Strong brand awareness will depend on your ability to leverage real-world data, HCP feedback, and market access expertise to accomplish your utilization goals.

Need help with your strategy? Learn more about **FormTrak***, our dynamic promotional solution, as well as targeted non-personal promotion via* **Skipta***.*

Contact us about reaching relevant HCPs with timely brand messaging.

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