



OVERCOMING COVID-19

## Leveraging an underutilized sales force



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COVID-19 has forced many biopharmaceutical manufacturers to ground their field forces and focus them on digital personal engagement tools with a focus on webinars, emails, and virtual meetings to reach their customers. Yet this shift to digital sales engagement has yielded limited success to date as healthcare professionals are focusing on their own practice survival in the face of decreased patient volume, a need to transition to telemedicine, furloughing nonessential staff, and navigating an increasingly complex practice and reimbursement system still reliant on paper forms and fax machines.\* **In this installment of our “Overcoming COVID-19” series, we consider the usage of a currently underutilized, if not grounded, sales force in building a more effective commercial model.**

Traditionally, marketing often does not involve sales reps in the creation of training assets, much less the core initiative itself—which often leads to blank stares at sales meetings, and limited usage of the tool. Today, the global pandemic has also hastened a decade-long trend of decreased representative access to physicians alongside a shift towards digital nonpersonal marketing channels. In addition to navigating new brand challenges specific to COVID-19, many brand marketing teams are overwhelmed amidst the challenges of day-to-day remote working, especially those with brands preparing for a launch or new indication.

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### THE GOOD NEWS

Brands have an experienced, capable, and available audience in their sales force, who are looking to help their careers. By deputizing them into marketing, brands can keep the work flowing, get ahead of their deliverables, build more effective tools, and generate higher usage by the sales team.

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At Evoke Giant, we recommend creating fewer, yet more compelling playbooks in partnership with key stakeholders to increase content utilization, which ultimately leads to more productive interactions with healthcare professionals. By aligning sales and marketing in development, sales can provide valuable feedback into the overarching brand strategy, and marketing can better ideate with the voice of the customer present throughout the process. In our experience, **having sales team insights during the creative development process strengthens our ability to humanize campaigns and create more focused, valuable content.** The resulting initiatives subsequently experience **significantly higher usage and effectiveness.**



## Leveraging an underutilized sales force

### Break down the old siloes and fix the commercial model for the future

We recommend that commercial leadership starts with a pilot approach: Assign some of your top sales and medical reps to a marketing rotation and designate a role for them in the development of core initiatives alongside the marketing team. Discuss the rotation with your agency, who can help integrate your reps into the creative process. For example, at Evoke, we've found that being able to facilitate a discovery and onboarding process with the reps quickly can better align them to brand objectives, allowing them to work directly with our team and bring initiatives to life.

Through this pilot, the brand marketing team can benefit from the additional resource support and gain a real-world perspective of the customers' individual needs. Sales can gain insight into the broader brand strategy and develop true ownership of initiatives that are "made by and for" their sales team, while further contributing to the overall success of the brand.

In addition to benefitting specific initiatives, we've witnessed several instances of sales representatives becoming the most strategic and successful marketers for their brands. Conversely, we've also seen marketers becoming top performers while doing a sales rotation. Ultimately, this pilot could serve to help bring historically distanced teams together in pursuit of the same brand goals. And then, just maybe, as we start to see the siloes between sales and marketing finally come down, we can evolve the commercial model to fit the needs of the future better, global pandemic or not.

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If you have questions on how to start implementing this pilot, or would like to discuss additional quick wins or ideas for implementing more effective, agile ways of working, please reach out to [business@evokegroup.com](mailto:business@evokegroup.com).

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#### \*References

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