

## **So you want to be a pharmaceutical sales rep?**

Graduates of CALS have gone into pharmaceutical sales and pursued successful professions. How do you break into this competitive profession? Networking is the best way to get a foot in the door. Because this profession sounds glamorous to students, is highly paid and offers fancy perks, you will not be alone in your quest to break in. Here are some tips to help you get started.

### **Am I suited for this type of job?**

You must be an excellent communicator, a strong leader, independent and possess a strong work ethic. Although the salaries are lucrative, you have to work long and hard for your pay. Reps work out of their home and visit Doctors in various locations. No one is looking over your shoulder to see where you will be and when, but you will have sales goals to meet, so it is up to you to manage your time effectively. Your science background will be a foundation for the job, but the company will train you on everything you need to know. You have to be a go-getter, and very personable, so begin practicing your networking today!

### **Most pharmaceutical companies look for the following competencies in new hires**

#### **Resourcefulness**

- Manages budget to maximize return on investment.
- Manages resources to obtain the greatest impact in targeted accounts.
- Develops and adapts innovative approaches to penetrate the market, increase market growth, improve product sales, and differentiate company from the competition.
- Capitalizes on business opportunities within accounts and throughout the territory.
- Pursues opportunities for expanding applications of existing products with clients where appropriate (e.g. using it earlier in the treatment cycle).

#### **Selling Effectively**

- Tailors sales approach to meet individual customer needs by utilizing appropriate resources.
- Demonstrates confidence and skill in presenting material.
- Uses convincing logic and valuable information to sell to a customer.
- Effectively qualifies, clarifies, and handles objections.
- Moves from rapport building to making the sale when the timing is right with the customer.
- Negotiates with customers to close the business.
- Explores disagreements and conflicts by getting input from multiple perspectives and using diplomacy and tact to resolve.
- Actively builds support for ideas and helps achieve consensus.

#### **Work Approach**

- Follows through with commitments to others. Adheres to policies, procedures, and standards provided by the company and industry.
- Completes all administrative tasks in a timely fashion.
- Adjusts to changes without undue frustration.
- Maintains focus and productivity when working on multiple tasks.
- Uses adversities as opportunities to learn and improve.
- Readily tries new approaches and ideas to improve effectiveness.

#### **Building Relationships**

- Acts in a professional, friendly, respectful, engaging manner that encourages people to give their time and consideration.
- Puts people at ease and establishes trust quickly addressing needs and promptly following up.
- Cultivates positive rapport and relationship with broad base of constituents (e.g. physicians, nurses, and pharmacists) that will serve the sales representative.
- Networks with others to expand contacts.

- Identifies and understands customers' needs.
- Works effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.
- Shows consideration for the demands and sensitivities of others.
- Adapts interpersonal behavior to meet the needs of the situation and the different constituents.

### **Business Judgement**

- Understands the business at multiple levels (i.e., the local territory, district and national).
- Uncovers competitive activity and direction.
- Understands indicators of corporate financial health (e.g., return on investment, profit and loss).
- Understands market development in the healthcare industry (e.g., formularies) and their impact on the prescription business.
- Seeks additional information to consult and advise with clients.
- Analyzes information and data; recognizing important trends.
- Makes decisions that move issues forward and spur progress.
- Makes decisions that reflect consideration of both the long- and short-term interests of the business and subsequent implications.

### **Communicating**

- Communicates in a clear and concise manner.
- Presents ideas with confidence, enthusiasm, and conviction.
- Provides direct answers to questions.
- Communicates clearly at both a broad and detailed level.
- Writes business communications that convey points clearly and uses appropriate language and style for the situation.
- Asks open-ended questions to initiate discussion, elicits the information needed from others, and takes the time to fully understand and capture the message.
- Listens to others without interrupting.
- Listens and appropriately responds to issues and concerns of others.

### **Demonstrating Product Knowledge**

- Learns new technical and scientific information.
- Remains current on all relevant product information, utilizing a variety of resources, such as the Internet, company material, or medical libraries.
- Knows own and competitors' products and position.
- Understands and uses medical terminology, conveying scientific information accurately.
- Keeps current on federal drug regulations.

### **Fostering Teamwork**

- Focuses on common goals that impact the business and/or team.
- Operates in complementary ways with counterparts by focusing on everyone's contributions and strengths.
- Collaborates with colleagues to support mutual needs, share resources, penetrate the marketplace, and achieve strategic goals.
- Coordinates efforts to bring in other company resources beyond pharmaceuticals to expand account penetration.
- Shares ideas with others.
- Recognizes the successes of others.
- Assumes team leader role in cooperative work efforts.
- Coaches and mentors less experienced colleagues.

### **Managing the Business**

- Targets developing relationships with key opinion leaders and decision makers.
- Recognizes organizational and political realities and approaches people in constructive ways.

- Establishes a mutually beneficial partnership with customers (e.g., consulting pharmacists).
- Determines who the opinion leaders and/or decision makers are that can influence others and invests in them.
- Determines key constituents who are responsible for driving business.

### **Personal Leadership**

- Establishes challenging personal goals and expectations.
- Demonstrates an acute sense of responsibility and urgency regarding successful territory management.
- Consistently strives to perform at a high level, putting in additional time and effort as needed.
- Consistently keeps a positive attitude about the job and job related activities.
- Persistently pursues gaining access to key constituents.
- Operates with integrity, clarifying the value of products offered and also answering forthrightly, questions about the effectiveness of side effects, etc.
- Initiates action on one's own to accomplish responsibilities.
- Takes initiative to explore local issues and territory opportunities.
- Takes ownership and demonstrates entrepreneurial investments.

### **Planning and Organizing**

- Uses business information to plan for both near-term and longer-term results.
- Develops and implements plans (e.g., territory, account, and calling) that include goals, action plans, timeframes, and resources.
- Prioritizes multiple tasks and schedules high-priority tasks first to meet objectives.
- Spends time in specific areas of territory in proportion to business and strategic potential.
- Schedules daily, weekly, and monthly activities utilizing personal organization tools.
- Prepares for client calls, events, and other important activities in advance.
- Demonstrates proficiency with sales force automation by utilizing current technology.

### **How hard is it to break in?**

In today's competitive job market you will be competing against applicants with significant sales experience. If you have the core competencies listed in this document, you stand a chance of being considered for an entry-level position. Some recent grads choose to start at the lab bench of a pharma company, and use that as a stepping stone to transfer into sales. You may have a better chance of getting into pharmaceutical sales if you have already proven yourself with the company.

### **How can I improve my chances?**

Get involved in leadership and get sales experience, even if it is not technical, it will transfer as a skill set. Meet as many people in the industry as you can. Conduct informational interviews with other reps. Get names of new contacts with every interview you conduct. This is how your network will expand. Ask to ride along with a rep to observe a day in the life. Visit places that reps hang out- Doctor's offices. Strike up a conversation in the waiting room. They spend a lot of time waiting, so they might as well pass the time sharing advice with you. You can't miss the rep, s/he is the one all dressed up carrying the donuts! Ask the receptionist if you aren't sure. This sounds really bold, but if you are cut out for this type of work, you should be able to handle this without being too intimidated. "I am researching the pharmaceutical sales profession and I am interested in talking to the reps that visit your office. When do you expect them? Can you point them out to me? Can I get a name and some contact information to conduct an informational interview?" You are likely to catch one right in the waiting area if you stay long enough.

### **Where do I search for jobs?**

You can look for postings on various web sites, searching under the pharmaceutical category. You can also view the company web site, for example: Glaxosmithkline.com

Viewing vacancies on web pages is worthwhile, but realize that hundreds of job seekers will use this method, including those with experience in the industry. Most graduates find entry level jobs in this profession by networking with personal contacts and referrals. The hiring managers are the Regional or District Managers. The goal is to get your resume in the hands of these managers. You will not find a directory of names, but if you are creative and persistent and use the suggestions above, you are likely to meet a lead that may open a door for you.