

Are you talking to all the right people?

CASE STUDY

2018

BACKGROUND

Despite the fact that our client's product had been on the market for 18 months, and was the only available treatment for a particular condition, it was failing to meet expected goals. Senior management openly questioned whether the medical and commercial teams had been targeting the right KOLs to secure early experimentation and adoption of their new medicine.

After some heated debate, our client was instructed to commission an external investigation across two major European markets to find the top medical KOLs.

As an additional objective, the commissioning team wanted an independent assessment of their existing KOL targets. In essence, they wanted to know: "Have we been calling on the right people, or not?"

KEY ISSUES

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of this project was the prevailing atmosphere within the client company. In essence, the people commissioning the work were not convinced that the project was necessary. Securing engagement and support along the way was difficult.

Although our client's product was not an orphan drug, it was widely understood to be targeting an under-recognized condition. As a result, the potential KOLs in this area were operating below the radar screen. In response, we had to devise research approaches to find people who had no external signs of being experts within the field.

Our client wanted to know two key things: firstly, who were the local and national KOLs in the two European markets? And secondly, how willing and able were they to engage with a pharmaceutical company? This necessitated primary interviews with the people identified.

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KEY LEARNINGS

In this under-recognized condition, it was necessary to seek the opinions of physicians and a wide range of healthcare practitioners, including specialty nurses and pharmacists. In practice, we received valuable, actionable and corroborated feedback from many disciplines that helped us hone in on the experts.

When comparing the client's historic (and disputed) target list, we found that 90% of KOLs in their list also featured in the results of our independent study. However, we also found 100% more KOLs who were well-qualified and experienced practitioners in the field. It turns out that our client's original KOL list was too narrow, and arguably unambitious.

Finally, we learned that we needed to go 'above and beyond' our usual course of project communication to address the skepticism within the company. We ran many meetings with internal stakeholders (jointly and individually) to allow them the opportunity to review and comment on our findings.

When the final results were presented everybody accepted them, and harmoniously agreed to target the wider cohort of KOLs identified by MMRG's research.

To be sure you're talking to the right people, talk to the right people.

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