

Original Article**Perception of Medical Representatives towards Sales Profession:
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Received 2 June 2015; received in revised form 27 June 2015; accepted 27 June 2015

Available online 28 June 2015

Abstract

The pharmaceutical sales representative is the source of communication in so far as doctors are concerned. He/she is also an important source of feedback from the company's point of view. He can provide very important and valuable feedback on what is happening to the company's products in the market place, how they are being perceived, what- competitors are doing and what are the customer demands/suggestions/complaints etc. As sales is one of the challenging task, medical representatives of various companies come through various challenges in their routine job. The present study was to analyze the perception and attitude of medical representative toward sales profession.

Keywords: Medical Representatives, Marketing.**Introduction**

The American Marketing Association define marketing as: "Marketing is an organizational function and a set of process for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stake holders¹. Marketing is all about customer care and satisfaction. To perform these activities personal selling plays very important role as it is one the part of promotional mix. In pharmaceutical selling, the sales personnel are popularly known as medical representatives or detail men since they detail the products to the medical professionals. Detailing is singularly the most important task that a representative has to perform².As we go back to the history of pharmaceutical marketing, it reveals that the first pharmaceutical sales representative appear on the scene in 1850s in the United States³.

Selling may be defined as the process of analyzing potential customers' needs and wants, and assisting them in discovering how such needs and wants can best be satisfied by the purchase of a particular product, services or idea⁴. The focus of selling thus is on the needs and wants of customers rather than on the features of a product. The emphasis therefore, should be on the benefits to the customer. A pharmaceutical sales representative is a vital link between the company and the medical professionals, distributors and retailers.

The pharmaceutical sales representative is the source of communication in so far as doctors are concerned. He/she is also an important source of feedback from the company's point of view. He can provide very important and valuable feedback on what is happening to the company's products in the market place, how they are being perceived, what-competitors are doing and what are the customer demands/suggestions/complaints etc. Now-a-days, some of the distributors are also recruiting sales representatives to market their stocked products.

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As sales is one of the challenging task, medical representatives of various companies come through various challenges in their routine job. The present study was to analyze the perception and attitude of medical representative toward sales profession. The following objectives were framed.

Objectives of the study

Perception analysis of pharmaceutical sales representatives towards sales profession.

Methodology

Survey Design

The survey on medical representatives was conducted by means of personal interview only.

Questionnaire design

Questionnaires were typed in Microsoft word and then converted to PDF format for ease of printing. Size of paper used was A4 and 100 copies of questionnaire for medical representative were printed. Questions were included in questionnaire for medical representatives. Questions were meant for collecting their personal information like experience, qualification reason to join the profession, behavior of doctor, training given by company, expectations of doctors and short term and long term goals of medical representatives.

Types of questions

Both open end and close end questions were included in the questionnaire. In case of close ended questions respondents were asked to tick (✓) most appropriate answer and in few questions respondents were asked to give number in order of preference.

Medical representatives list

Survey on medical representatives was done in major hospitals of Bangalore.

Results and Discussion

Survey of medical representatives

Out of 100 medical representatives who participated in the survey, 40 % belongs to foreign MNC, 30% belongs to Indian MNC, 20% belongs to Medium sized companies and 10% belongs to small and local companies.

Table 1. (Number of MR).

Company	Number in Sample 100
Foreign MNC	40
Indian MNC	30
Medium sized	20
Small sized	10

Medical representatives were met personally, interviewed and their responses were noted in questionnaire. Except questions in questionnaire some other questions were also asked by the author, many interesting facts came out, they are discussed with some of the questions below.

Experience as Medical representative

Top response was '1 - 2 years' (37%), followed by '< 1 year' (32%). 16% of respondents told they are working as medical representative for 3 - 4 years, 10% told they are working as medical representative for 4 - 5 years and only 5% mentioned that they are working for more than 5 years.

The study revealed that majority of the representatives working in field for many companies are having experience less than 2 years. The reason may be high attrition rate and quick promotion to first line manager after having experience of 3 – 4 years.

Qualification of Medical Representative

A large number of respondents (46%) were science graduates. 23% were bachelor in pharmacy. A significant number (17%) were having diploma in pharmacy. None of respondent had matriculation as minimum qualification. 14% of respondents mentioned any others.

Reason behind joining this profession

Top answer was (43%) 'Attractive salary and perks' followed by 'Opportunity to meet most respected professionals in medical field' (29%) second top. 13% of respondents told they joined this profession because they like sales and marketing job. 12% respondents told they like to see places therefore they joined this profession. An insignificant number of respondents (3%) told that they joined this profession as a last choice, after trying other jobs.

Expectations of you on your current job by the company

Majority of respondents (53%) told that sales, good customer relationship and market feedback are expected of their sales job. 30% mentioned that only sales and customer relationship is expected of them, 9% told only sales is expected of them. 8% respondents told that only market feedback expected of them on your current job by the company.

General behavior of doctors towards Medical Representative

Majority of respondents (61%) told that doctors welcome them and give prescription regularly. Others got 14%. 'Will ask you to wait for him but usually never meet you eventually' and 'always welcome you but never give prescriptions' got 8% each. 'Always welcome you but have tendency to discourage you' got 7%.

Satisfaction with the training given by current company

Majority of the sales representatives (63%) claimed that their company provided nearly everything they need to know. 18% pointed out that the company provided only some of the things, 11% revealed that company provided only few things they need to know and 8% representatives complained that no training was given to them by the company.

Qualities doctors expects with medical representatives

The survey indicated that regularity has been considered as the most essential quality of a medical representative followed by brief detailing, good education, sincere in claims, product knowledge, personality, courtesy and salesmanship in that order of preference.

Short term and long term goal

Very few respondents respond to this question, when asked to majority of respondents that why they are not responding to this question they told they have not decided their goal yet. Top answers were-

- 1) Majority of respondents told their short term goal is to become first line manager and long term goal is to become second line manager.
- 2) Some respondents told that their short term goal is to work in product management and long term goal is to become marketing manager in reputed company.

3) Few respondents told their short term goal is to earn money as they are preparing for some entrance exams and in long term they may be working in field different than pharmacy.

4) Very few respondents told they want to continue earning money as short term and for long term they want to be entrepreneurs.

5) Some respondents only mentioned their long term goal that was they want to become general manager sales and marketing.

Conclusion

Survey to medical representatives indicates that majority of medical representatives working in field have experience less than 2 years, majority are science graduates. Most of medical representatives are working as medical representative because of good salary and perks. Survey indicates that most of the companies are focusing on sales, good customer relationship and market feedback. Most of the medical representatives told doctors welcome them and give prescription regularly. Most of them are satisfied by the training given by the company.

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Table 2. (Experience as medical representative).

Company	Response				
	< 1year	1 - 2 year	3 - 4 year	4 - 5 year	> 5 year
Foreign MNC	12 (30%)	14 (35%)	7 (17.5%)	4 (10%)	3 (7.5%)
Indian MNC	10 (33.33%)	14 (46.66%)	3 (10%)	1 (3.33%)	2 (6.66%)
Medium sized	7 (35%)	6 (30%)	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	0 (0%)
Small sized	3 (30%)	3 (30%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)
TOTAL	32 (32%)	37 (37%)	16 (16%)	10 (10%)	5 (5%)

Table 3. (Qualification of MRs).

Company	Response			
	Science graduate	Diploma in pharmacy	Bachelor in Pharmacy	Any other
F- MNC	19 (47.5%)	3 (7.5%)	9 (22.5%)	9 (22.5%)
I- MNC	12 (40%)	10 (33.33%)	6 (20%)	2 (6.66%)
Medium	10 (50%)	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)
Small	5 (50%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)
TOTAL	46 (46%)	17 (17%)	23 (23%)	14 (14%)

Table 4. (Reason behind joining the profession)

Company	Response				
	Attractive salary and perks	Opportunity to meet most respected professionals in medical field	Opportunity to see places	I like sales and marketing job	As a last choice, after trying other jobs
Foreign MNC	31 (77.5%)	5 (12.5%)	1 (2.5%)	2 (5%)	1 (2.5%)
Indian MNC	6 (20%)	9 (30%)	5 (16.66%)	10 (3.33%)	0 (0%)
Medium sized	4 (20%)	9 (45%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
Small sized	2 (20%)	6 (60%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)
TOTAL	43 (43%)	29 (29%)	12 (12%)	13 (13%)	3 (3%)

Table 5. (Expectations on job by current company).

Company	Response			
	Sales only	Sales and good customer relationship	Market feedback	Sales, good customer relationship and market feedback
Foreign MNC	2 (5%)	10 (25%)	5 (12.5%)	23 (57.5%)
Indian MNC	1 (3.33%)	10 (33.33%)	2 (6.66%)	17 (56.66%)
Medium size	2 (%)	5 (%)	0 (%)	4 (%)
Small size	4 (4%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
TOTAL	9 (9%)	30 (30%)	8 (8%)	53 (53%)

Table 6. (General behavior of doctors towards MR).

Company	Response					
	Tend to ignore you always	Will ask you to wait for him but usually never meet you eventually	Always welcome you but have tendency to discourage you	Always welcome you but never give prescriptions	Welcomes you and give prescription regularly	Others
F-MNC	0 (0%)	1 (2.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	34 (85%)	5 (12.5%)
I- MNC	0 (0%)	1 (3.33%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.33%)	25 (83.33%)	3 (10%)
Medium	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)
Small	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)
TOTAL	4(4 %)	8 (8 %)	7 (7%)	8 (8 %)	61 (61 %)	12 (12%)

Table 7. (Satisfaction with training given by current company).

Company	Response			
	No training was given	Provided very few things I need to know	Provided only some of the things I need to know	Provided nearly everything I need to know
F- MNC	0 (0%)	1 (2.5%)	7 (17.5%)	32 (80%)
I-MNC	0 (0%)	2 (6.66%)	4 (13.33%)	24 (80%)
Medium	3 (15%)	7 (35%)	6 (30%)	4 (20%)
Small	5 (50%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	3 (30%)
TOTAL	8 (8%)	11 (11%)	18 (18%)	63 (63%)

Table 8. (Qualities doctors expects according to MRs).

Company	Response							
	Regularity	Sincere in claims	Brief detailing	Product knowledge	Courtesy	Good education	Personality	Good salesman -ship
F- MNC	260	201	225	159	109	219	99	82
I- MNC	195	199	168	121	75	164	86	53
Medium	182	95	107	118	45	109	84	41
Small	65	45	56	110	43	54	34	21
TOTAL	702	540	556	508	272	546	303	197
Rank	I	IV	II	V	VII	III	VI	VIII
