

Creating winning sales behaviors in pharma

Helping pharmaceutical firms build a successful sales force



Questionmark Viewpoint

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Introduction: replicating winning behaviors and increasing sales

Top-performing pharmaceutical salespeople win new customers and build revenue.

But research shows that less than half expect to hit their annual sales targets.¹ Although many believe their targets were reasonable when set and that, in many cases, their employers have invested in training them.

One way to improve sales performance is for pharmaceutical firms to identify what their most successful salespeople do well through staff tests that assess key skills.

With the insight from these assessments, they can then replicate the “winning behaviors” across the rest of the sales force, using relevant training and support.

When the pharmaceutical industry is changing as quickly as it is, many pharma salespeople recognize they may not have all the skills they need. But they understand that their future success depends upon their ability to adapt.

AstraZeneca use case: assessing on-field pharma sales teams

Questionmark works with global pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca to help the firm assess the scientific knowledge of its on-field sales team.

Having previously used paper assessments or CD-ROMs, AstraZeneca wanted to increase the security of its assessments, lighten the workload and simplify the process.

AstraZeneca chose Questionmark because of the simplicity of the system, the range of different question types, surveys and reporting capabilities.

It is now delivering a range of assessments including pre-, during- and post-training tests, surveys and quizzes to employees.

¹ https://c1.sfdcstatic.com/content/dam/web/en_us/www/documents/reports/sales/state-of-sales-3rd-ed.pdf

We help employers and their people unlock potential to deliver better performance and safely meet compliance requirements.

It's why one in six US Fortune 100 companies use our enterprise-grade assessment platform.

Questionmark Viewpoint

Questionmark Viewpoint is a series of white papers and reports that we produce to explore the challenges that our customers are facing, and which we help them address. These papers are based on what we are hearing from customers, and on research from other experts.



The five key skills firms should look for

Often, the most successful salespeople have clear behaviors, habits and skills that enable them to sell more.

Employers can begin to understand what works and what doesn't by using staff tests to assess what these high performers do that others don't.

They can then replicate good habits and successful strategies by training all of their sales teams.

But what skills and habits should firms be looking for in their salespeople?

Over the last year, salespeople have been forced to adapt to new restrictions. Even now, face-to-face meetings are rarely possible.

In this new environment, pharmaceutical salespeople often need to have five key skills:

1. **Excellent product knowledge:** salespeople must show a real understanding of their products. Customers know they can access basic information online, so salespeople must be able to go further.
2. **Ability to qualify leads:** analyzing which leads are worth pursuing, and which to drop, means a salesperson's time and energy can be used effectively.
3. **Meeting management:** salespeople must come to virtual meetings fully prepared. Sales meetings over Zoom or Teams are likely to be shorter than their "real-world" counterparts, and it is harder to rely on the human connection.
4. **Robust research and consultancy:** salespeople need to talk about how a product will help meet required needs and standards, not just explain what a product does.
5. **Adaptability:** change is the new constant. Salespeople must be able to adjust to new situations, learn new skills and tackle new problems. It must be a core component of a successful sales team.

How assessments help: how employers can replicate winning behaviors

Assessments help measure employees' skills. By using assessments to track progress and performance, employers can help improve it.

There are five ways that assessments can help employers:

1. **Establish sufficient product knowledge:** by using assessments to identify whether everyone selling a product has sufficient knowledge, pharmaceutical firms can see what is missing. They can use this information to inform their decisions on training and how to support underperforming members.
2. **Check whether training is working:** by testing employees who are undergoing revised training programs, employers check their support works. If training is not working, employers can adapt their support to avoid costly failures.
3. **Assess sales partners:** pharma companies can check the skills and knowledge of the sales partners they use, by conducting online tests across the entire sales operation.

Employers can adapt the content of training programs to ensure that those representing their firm and product exhibit the skills and strategies that create success.

4. **Meet compliance requirements:** staff assessments can also help employers discover whether salespeople know and follow relevant regulations.

By testing people's knowledge of and attitude towards regulation, firms can ensure sales teams follow the rules and avoid compliance breaches and potential fines.

5. **Test attitudes to change:** in today's world, adaptability is quickly becoming one of the most important skills for all workers. Online assessments can test staff attitudes to change and identify those who have the right mindset to adapt and thrive.

Making an impact: assessments and business performance

Crystalizing the qualities of strong performers is important in industries that are going through a period of rapid change.

Pharma firms will do better if they ensure teams are agile and have the skills to thrive. But there is a skills shortage around engineering, data analytics and process development.²

So, when the industry is changing so quickly, getting a clearer understanding of why some salespeople perform well, and others don't, is crucial.

Gaining such understanding from staff tests could make a difference to a business's performance.

Starting a conversation

We have worked with pharmaceutical firms around the world, helping them to build a more agile and successful workforce and meet the challenges outlined in this paper.

If you are interested in beginning a conversation with us, please visit our website and book a demo: <https://www.questionmark.com/sectors-and-uses/pharmaceuticals/>.

² <https://www.pharmexec.com/view/skills-shortage-imminent-threat-life-sciences-innovation>

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About Questionmark

We help organizations and their people unlock their potential to deliver better performance. Questionmark provides a secure enterprise-grade assessment platform and professional services to leading organizations around the world, delivered with care and unequalled expertise. Its full-service online assessment tool and professional services help customers to improve their performance and meet their compliance requirements. Questionmark enables organizations to unlock their potential by delivering assessments which are valid, reliable and fair, which can be defended.

Questionmark offers secure powerful integration with learning management systems (LMS), learning record stores (LRS) and proctoring services making it easy to bring everything together in one place. Questionmark's cloud-based assessment management platform offers rapid deployment, scalability for high-volume test delivery, 24/7 support, and the peace-of-mind of secure, audited U.S., Australian and European-based data centers.

Working with Questionmark

To further explore how Questionmark could work for your organization, or to book a free consultation and demo, please see: <https://www.questionmark.com/request-demo/>

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