



» CASE STUDY

# CALL POINT: INTEGRATED PHYSICIAN PRACTICE

Whether you're with a pharmaceutical drug company, a distributor of medical and surgical supplies or an EMR provider, you know that your ability to access decision makers in Integrated Physician Practices (IPPs) is crucial to your effectiveness – you know that "getting in" is considerably more than half the battle. If you've been at it for any length of time, you know that accessing those decision makers has never been more challenging... and it's not getting easier. For good reason – consider these changes in the world of healthcare in recent years:

» Physicians and IPP executives have grown increasingly sensitive to public scrutiny that looks for any hint of undue influence by pharmaceutical drug companies on physician's prescribing habits.

PHYSICIANS WHO ARE  
DEEMED ACCESSIBLE TO  
PHARMACEUTICAL SALES  
REPRESENTATIVES ARE  
STEADILY DECLINING  
77% IN 2008  
65% IN 2012  
55% IN 2013

Source: ZS Associates Access Monitor  
2013 Executive Summary

In many cases, the result has been an atmosphere of overly cautious policies that make prescriber access difficult for pharmaceutical and other medical industry sales representatives.

» Constantly shrinking health payer reimbursements mean Physicians are forced to see more and more patients per day to maintain their existing revenues. Shrinking profits lead to leaner staffing models. Increasing administrative burdens from Payers, Hospital/Practice Groups, ACOs, etc. add another time burden on already strained resources. Put it all together and you have today's Physician Practice – one in which time to spend with Pharmaceutical Representatives is severely limited.

RESEARCH FROM ACCENTURE FOUND THAT THE PERCENTAGE OF INDEPENDENT U.S. PHYSICIANS DECREASED FROM 57 PERCENT IN 2000 TO 39 PERCENT IN 2012.

Source: Accenture Clinical Transformation –  
New Business Models for a NewEra in Healthcare

» The number of independent local physician practices continues to decline as more and more of those practices are acquired by hospital groups and other IPPs. That means the once simple task of identifying the decision maker in an individual practice has become a complicated task of identifying decision makers and influencers in an organization that might include scores of practices.



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» While admittedly slow to the party, many physicians are beginning to express a preference for interactions with vendors (including pharmaceutical sales representatives) via technological channels vs. face-to-face. The new skill set required to effectively engage prescribers via technological channels is increasingly becoming a core competency for effective pharmaceutical and medical industry sales representatives.

These were the challenges that led one Big Pharma company to reach out to ASLAN. Knowing that the changing landscape required a new approach and new skill sets for both their tenured reps and their new hire Millennials, they were looking for a partner to help re-tool their team.

### New Perspective, New Approach, New Skills, New Support

Working with the pharmaceutical client's senior leadership, ASLAN worked to design a set of programs to address many of the challenges faced in the new world of healthcare:

1. Customized training programs were created in which a product-centered "detailing" approach was replaced with a practice-centered solution approach. Pharmaceutical representatives with ASLAN's client learned to listen first to discover challenges being faced by prescribers and their staff. With that understanding, the client's representatives were able to communicate relevant solutions that were uniquely aligned with practice challenges and objectives.
2. The client's representatives were trained to identify and gain access to the real decision makers in sometimes very large and complex IPPs. Representatives who specialized in calling on the largest of these hospital and physician organizations were specifically equipped to gain access to influencers and decision makers (e.g. Chief Medical Officers) in the C-Suites of these organizations.

3. To ensure that a process of ongoing change and skill development was in place, ASLAN trained and certified the client's managers to own the process of continuing skill development in their respective sales groups. ASLAN conducted workshops to equip managers with a coaching skill set then co-coached and ultimately observed managers in actual coaching sessions with reps until managers reached a level of coaching competency required for certification.
4. Working with the client's leadership, ASLAN developed programs to equip representatives to comfortably and confidently utilize the various sales skills while engaging with physicians and other practice staff via a variety of channels including, face-to-face, telephone, live video, webcasts and co-browsing.

### How Did It All Turn Out?

ASLAN's pharmaceutical client relied in part on the report of an independent third-party market research firm to determine whether the efforts of its sales force were proving effective. Prior to training, those reports indicated that compared to its competitors, a relatively high number of physician offices reported having had conversations with sales representatives from the ASLAN client. That apparently positive metric was however accompanied by another measure indicating physicians found those interactions to be relatively irrelevant to the needs of their practices when compared to conversations with sales representatives from the client's pharmaceutical competitors. Following the training and coaching initiatives, significant improvements in those relevance metrics were reported without any corresponding erosion in the industry leading level of contact with customers.



In addition to the noted improvements in physician-assessed relevance, internal measures also showed that the number of calls in which ASLAN client sales representatives successfully connected with a prescriber doubled following training. Managers also reported a significant increase in sales representative interactions with other physician office personnel – nurses, office managers and receptionists.

ASLAN continues to partner with this client to improve the effectiveness of its sales force. To date ASLAN has worked with six different divisions providing training for sales representatives in the US, Canada, Central and South America, Europe and Asia.

Since 1996 ASLAN has been at the forefront of training for companies that sell to Integrated Physician Practices. We led the way in advancing a physician practice centric approach to engaging prescribers over the more traditional approach that centered on detailing. When industry leaders set out to pioneer new and innovative communication channels as a part of their sales process, they brought in ASLAN to prepare their sales representatives for the new style of interactions. Our list of clients who work with Integrated Physician Practices includes industry leaders like Johnson & Johnson, Ethicon, Merck, Purdue, Upsher-Smith, Cardinal Health, Anda/PractRx, Abbot, St. Jude, Stericycle, Advanced Sterilization Products and many more.

**For information on ASLAN and our full range of solutions contact us:**



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