

Real-Life Strategies for Account Managers to Help Grow Market Share

Better customer relationships are essential to driving market share, and training plays an important role in sustaining effective collaborations with customers.

Here are some strategies that trainers can use to help their companies meet their long-range business objectives.

Proven Education for the Life Sciences.

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Make sure the commercial team understands the latest lingo.

“It is important for those of us in the industry to provide the platform for training so we can give our customer-facing teams the knowledge they need to meet with a C-Suite executive, a provider, and everyone in between,” says Randolph Legg, area vice president, Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals. “It all starts with training and providing a suite of resources.”

Legg says terms like MACRA (which stands for the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015) come up regularly in discussions with physician groups and integrated delivery networks (IDNs), and sales teams need to understand how Medicare payment rules and other trends will affect their customers.



“We need to ensure that our teams are well prepared before we start interacting with customers, especially in 2017, which is a critical year because of the introduction of MACRA’s Quality Payment Program,” Legg says. Under MACRA, the Quality Payment Program (QPP) provides two tracks for physician participation: advanced alternative payment models (APMs) and the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS). For physicians, 2017 is the first year for submitting performance data that will determine their payment for services provided to Medicare beneficiaries beginning in 2019.

Empower sales professionals to seek out collaborative opportunities.



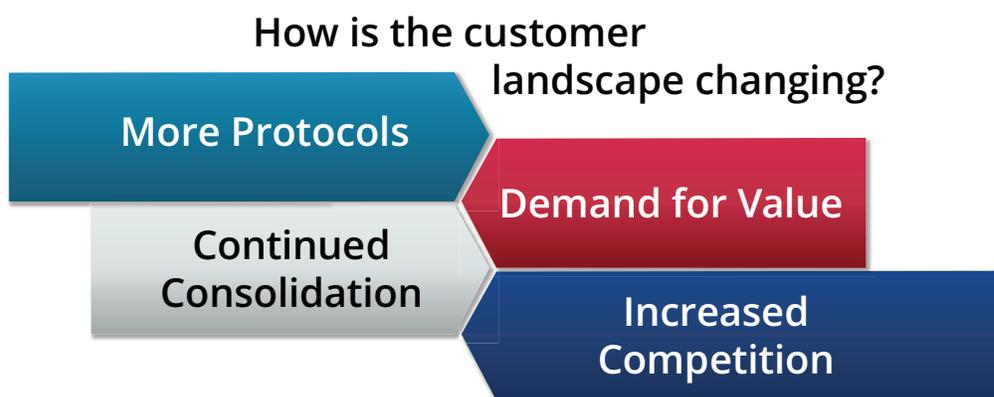
With MACRA, the government repealed the sustainable growth rate that was used to control Medicare spending on physician services and implemented a “permanent doc fix” to determine physician payment, says Jason Gaines, former vice president of corporate development and innovation at Allina Health. Under the MIPS track of MACRA, physicians’ Medicare payments can be adjusted up or down by 4% starting in 2019, based on their performance. By 2022, that percentage increases to 9%. “For specialty practices that have a large Medicare population, that is real money,” Gaines says.

Under MIPS, physicians’ performance score—and ultimately their payment—is based on four categories: quality, cost (resource use), advancing care information (healthcare information technology), and improvement activities. Gaines believes the advent of MACRA creates an opportunity for the industry to help organized customers improve their performance across all four categories.

Refresh your training often to reflect the changing landscape.

“Staying on top of market changes can be very burdensome for our clients, but we can stay on top of those changes for them,” says Britney Conrad, executive director, learning solutions, CMR Institute. In fact, CMR Institute updated its MACRA module three times just in the first month it was released because of changes released by CMS.

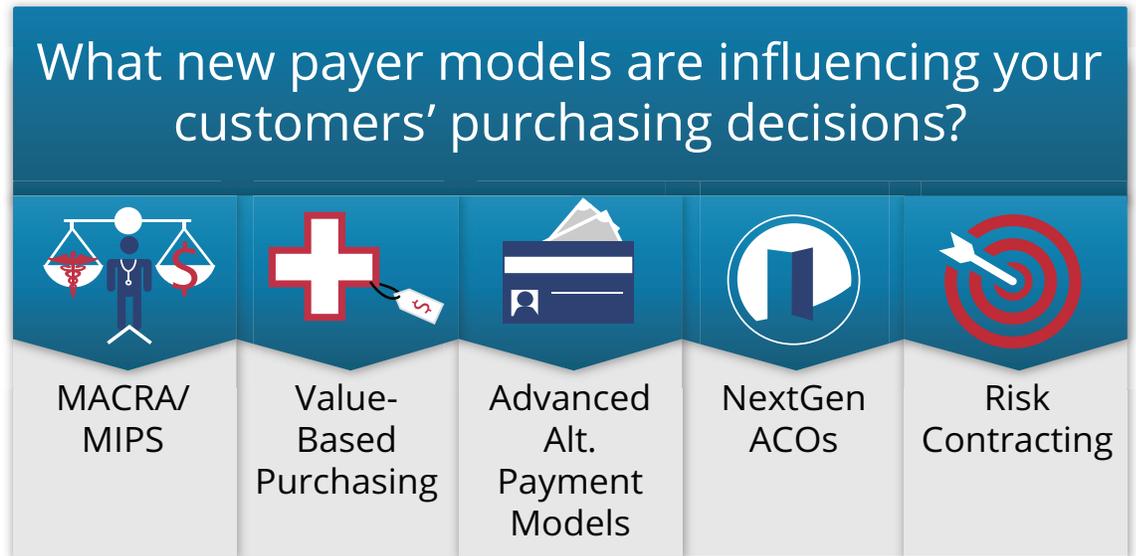
Most biopharmaceutical companies prioritize their investments in research and development, rather than in training and development on current trends, which makes training partners so valuable, Legg says. “Someone has to invest the time, energy, and resources to maintain up-to-date training materials,” he says. “Boehringer is trying to respond to these changes by adding more on-demand training and finding more partners who can keep that training relevant.”



To help sales professionals stay current, training content should be customized to reflect the company’s needs, Conrad says. “We work with each client to understand their goals and create customized training plans to prepare commercial teams for better conversations with their customers,” she says. “For example, one company might need a set of modules to train a team that calls on physicians that still have a lot of prescribing power. Another company might need content that helps them call on health systems where they have conversations at the C-suite level.”

One new payment model that is emerging on the landscape is the NextGen ACO. “NextGen ACOs are building on learnings from the Pioneer ACOs and Medicare Shared Savings Program,” Gaines says. “Now, there are more

predictable targets, and there is a higher level of financial risk and reward. As a trainer, you should differentiate your training for those who call on customers who are NextGen.”



Embrace a role-based approach to training.

“A role-based approach to training can lead to an increase in market share because each role delivers a consistent message to all types of customers,” Conrad says. “In this approach, we tailor content to various roles in a commercial organization based on who they are calling on. A great example of this would be an emerging topic like risk contracting. Representatives might need to understand this on an introductory level, whereas an account manager might need to have specific strategies so they can have complex conversations with decision makers. At the same time, district managers need to have coaching strategies to pull through these strategies in the field.”

Become a change agent.



Rob Dieter, vice president of sales, US Healthcare Solutions, Boston Scientific, says trainers can play an important role in change management in many life science organizations. “Our training team has to help educate and reorganize the thinking of our leadership, from the account managers all the way up to our executive committee,” Dieter says. “They help them understand the transformation of healthcare, how our customers are being paid, how consumers are accessing care, and how this lines up with the Triple Aim. This creates a very dynamic environment because every six to 12 months, the reimbursement model and expectations on providers continue to evolve.”

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