

MMS reinvents sales organization

Changes made to respond to cross-market customers

Healthcare providers are undergoing profound and rapid change. And with that change comes fear of the unknown. Step in the sales rep.

“Now is the time for each account manager to become a critical, strategic business resource to their customers.” That was the message that executives of MMS – A Medical Supply Company gave to their reps at the distributor’s recent national sales meeting, as articulated by Vice President of Marketing and Business Development Tony Gadzinski.

The theme of the meeting – “Mission: Possible” – set the tone as the company moves forward, says Gina Marchese, senior vice president sales and marketing. “[We] had one objective – define, roll out and ‘sell’ a complete reinvention of the MMS sales organization. Leveraging the old TV show and the new movies, the MMS message was that we have an amazing team of experts in different disciplines to execute a detailed plan to a successful outcome.”

“MMS’ largest opportunities lie in our ability to be flexible in all aspects of our business,” says Gadzinski. “MMS made a strategic decision years ago to view each customer as unique and to not impose ‘cookie-cutter’ solutions on them.

“Our differentiator in all the markets we serve has always been our team,” he continues. “We have cultivated an environment of intelligent and empowered people who can see the ‘forest through the trees’ and provide what each one needs to thrive in a competitive environment. This depth of expertise and ability to custom configure everything from



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delivery models, to formularies, to technology means that as customers redefine themselves, their missions and their operations, MMS is the proven resource to adapt with them.”

Reconfigured sales structure

MMS has a track record supplying all healthcare classes of trade and provider sites from the same distribution center, says Gadzinski. Nevertheless, the company traditionally employed a siloed approach to the market, with vice presidents in charge of primary care, extended care, acute care. “We weren’t really communicating inter-market,” says Gadzinski.

But as the company’s customers continue to cross market channel lines, that approach isn’t optimal any more, he says. “Because of where the market changes are – IDNs, accountable care organizations, acquisition of physician practices – we felt better served by an umbrella approach.” For that reason, the company now has area vice presidents for the South, Midwest and Northeast, with responsibility for all sales in their geographies, regardless of market.

Field reps, accustomed to calling on just one class of trade, will have to expand their horizons a bit, says Gadzinski. “The customer is changing; the person paying the bill is changing. We need to cross-pollinate and learn [new businesses].

“Our realignment assures that this in-house experience is available to all customers,” he says. “MMS knows this type of service is possible, because they have been

doing it. The ‘mission’ at the national sales meeting was to make sure that the entire sales team understands the power they have available to drive creative supply chain solutions for each of their customers.

“For each account manager to successfully complete their mission, they need to know what solutions already exist within MMS, and whom to tap for special



assignments. Intelligence about the company is even more critical than intelligence about the competition, and equally as important as customer intelligence.”

In addition to the realignment at the VP level, MMS has also made some infrastructure changes to enhance communication, streamline processes and support the sales team, says Gadzinski. “Branches (distribution centers) and area sales teams are sharing goals, systems have been upgraded to make more data more accessible and actionable, and ‘best practices’ are being evaluated across

every department and branch.” The company recently completed a systems upgrade and integration that put the entire company on one platform.

Supplier relationships

MMS has expanded the definition of “partnership” with its suppliers to include companies offering cost-management solutions that are outside the traditional med/surg product budget and can significantly impact a customer’s bottom line, says Marchese. The company identified and introduced to the sales team several partners that are generating savings in excess of 10 percent to 20 percent for customers in large budget categories, such as physician preference items, practice management and sterilization.

“All of these affiliations are with companies who have established track records for quality and quantifiable savings with leading healthcare systems,” adds Gadzinski. “These programs reinforce MMS’s ‘brand’ as a purveyor of proactive and innovative solutions to the evolving healthcare marketplace.”

“Like all constituents of the current healthcare marketplace, MMS’ biggest challenge is change – seeing it and responding to it,” says Marchese. “MMS has built our business on growing, evolving, and partnering with our customers as their business models change. With today’s acceleration of market changes in technology, healthcare reform, payers and even patient populations and treatment sites, MMS must be able to not just respond to, but help lead customers to new ways to manage, track and deliver patient care.” **TEP**

MMS award winners



President’s Club: Angie Dunn, Lisa Coser, Kimberley Weber, Jennifer Rolls, Mark Gold, Andrew Ilch



Rep of the Year: Andrew Ilch

The Truth about Medical Sales

MMS rep Andrew Ilch figured out early on that the end game is trust

Andrew Ilch has only been a med/surg rep for just a little more than three years. But it didn't take him long to understand one fundamental truth about medical products sales.

"It's really a matter of gaining trust," says Ilch, recently named Rep of the Year for MMS – A Medical Supply Company. "That's what this business is all about – knowing that the people you work with trust that you'll do what you say you'll do, and not letting them down. That's what I've built my business on."

A native of Long Island, Ilch began his career in pharmaceutical sales after graduating from Adelphi University in Garden City, N.Y. He sold pharmaceuticals for about a year and a half,

error, figuring things out, failing, punching the steering wheel." But six or eight months later, as he built his credibility and leads, business began to grow. Two years later, he had a full, specific agenda every day.

"I was able to get into surgery centers very aggressively and serve them well," he says. But he grew his hospital business as well, and today serves multiple markets, including hospital-affiliated physician practices and nursing homes.

Customers today are looking beyond saving dollars and cents on gauze, says Ilch. "A lot are struggling to keep their doors open," he says. "They're looking for ways to drive efficiencies." Purchasing professionals have changed, he adds. "In the past,

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focusing on blood pressure medication and an antiplatelet drug. It was a good experience, but there were a few things about Rx sales that didn't agree with him. For one, the pharmaceutical rep is confined to a strict, zip-code-defined territory. What's more, the Rx rep "is essentially a hired and paid marketing person," bringing glossy literature and lunch to the doctor's office, and talking to the doctor for all of about five seconds about your product, he says.

Great expectations

That's why he sought out MMS account executive Howard Goodman some time ago to learn about med/surg sales. He interviewed for a position with the company and began working for MMS in February 2010. They were humble beginnings. "When I started, I had a non-existent territory," he says. "It was a lot of trial and

buyers were just there to buy," and they sought transactional relationships with vendors." Now, buying is just a portion of their day. They're involved in capital initiatives, major OR projects. So I need to make things as easy as possible for them while, at the same time, making sure the price is right."

The rep's primary challenge – and opportunity – is uncovering his or her customer's real pain points, says Ilch. "And that's not something they'll explain to you right away. It's something you have to uncover over time." The rep can suggest solutions, but can also expect some resistance. "Everybody resists change, especially if they've been doing something for 10 or 15 years. But if you make them believe in what you're trying to do, and later they say, 'Nice job,' that's when you see the real impact of what you're doing. And that's what I'm starting to see now."