Vision2Voice
Medical Communications Forum

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Planning and Executing Exceptional Advisory Board Meetings

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Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) attend Advisory Board Meetings each year. Their level of knowledge and expertise, insight into particular markets, leadership qualities, and reputations are all reasons you select them to participate. Getting the most from them is a sign of a well-designed and superbly executed meeting. This is accomplished with tremendous planning and begins with developing objectives.

Brand leaders commonly put most of their advisory board planning energy into the development of information-gathering strategies. And rightly so. One means to optimize your information-gathering is to develop strong relationships with your KOLs. The better the relationship you build, the better the quality of information, feedback, and critique—both good and bad—you will receive from your KOLs.

When planning for an advisory board meeting, there are a multitude of things you can do to enhance the value it can bring to your organization. Part of the job of the pharmaceutical or medical device brand manager/director, product manager/director, professional strategies manager/director, or medical marketing manager/director is to plan for those opportunities when preparing and executing an advisory board.

Start by developing meeting objectives that are clear and elevating, yet achievable. Some examples of solid advisory board objectives are:

Solid Objectives

- To gain meaningful insights from advisors on their early experience with Product A
- To discuss new data about competitive Product X and learn advisor reaction about its introduction to the marketplace
- To elicit feedback from advisors on ways to increase Product A utilization
- To gain perspective from advisors on the perceptual relationship of Product A to Products X and Z
- To share recommendations for a treatment algorithm designed by the American Association of [our therapeutic category]
- To identify key strengths and weaknesses for our brand and uncover critical threats from our advisors

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Selecting a Chairperson

Objectives such as these are important to ensure that strategic goals are met. Before you publish them, run them by your key chairperson. Selecting a chairperson is a vital step. Your chair should review your objectives and help you fine-tune them in a way that is more understandable for the advisor attendees and, therefore, more achievable for you. A chairperson will also help you determine agenda topics, faculty speakers, and connect you to other possible attendees who can help you fill in content gaps. The time you or your agency invests in working with your KOLs is an opportunity to build on your relationships.

Developing and fostering relationships with KOLs will help you more effectively achieve your goals. Once you have a relationship established, your thought leaders can offer their external perspective of your brand and science, provide their unique insight into the competitive landscape, and connect you with other leading experts who can help fill the gaps. The greater your relationship, the more candid your experts will be. In the lifecycle of every brand there are times when tremendous insights from KOLs will help you steer your brand's ship and you'll see those strong relationships as the most important tool you have.

Selecting the right chairperson is important for the advisory board. People, by nature, follow strong leaders. We've known top KOLs to attend meetings simply because they know that the chairperson is someone they respect. Attendees have made similar statements; that they came to a particular advisory board because the chair is extraordinary. However, be careful whom you choose. Use this grid of Do's and Don'ts for selecting an Ad Board Chair:

Vision2Voice's Do's and Don'ts for Selecting an Advisory Board Chair	
Do	**Don't**
• Ensure the chair is well-respected in the field • Find someone who is conscientious and takes pride in their work • Try to locate someone who is a good conversationalist • Seek someone who is inquisitive and therefore facilitates a meeting rather than possesses the need to talk • Allow for the chair to be provocative, but open-minded • Seek someone who has a reputation for honesty and integrity	• Don't select a chairperson who speaks and advises for other key competitors in order to fully protect your confidential information • Don't select a chairperson someone who can't keep the meeting on time • Don't select someone who believes they are always right and everyone else is wrong • Don't select someone who is more focused on speaking and presenting than engaging the attendees

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Content Development Process

Once the faculty is determined and the working agenda is laid out, the content development process can begin. Set up conference calls or web conferences with your faculty. Web conferences where you can see one another and see the content at the same time are optimal. They allow for a more effective use of time and creates a more dynamic meeting that can further relationship building. Applications like GoToMeeting or Webex are recommended.

On the call, discuss your objectives and ask for recommendations as to how you can achieve your goals. While you absolutely must remain within the boundaries of the compliance framework that governs your business, give them some freedom to be creative. Ask them to communicate as if they were telling a story and, assuming it is accurate and meets your regulatory guidance, let them.

Effective sessions allow 50% of the time for a formal presentation and 50% of the time for reactions and input by the attendees. Your chairperson will guide the discussion section with your information-gathering objectives in mind.

Each of these conference calls/web conferences are continued opportunities to build relationships with your advisors. **Seize these opportunities** and truly get to know them as individuals each chance you get.

Your medical communications agency should guide you through dozens of steps, including all of the critical planning details like:

- Ensuring advisor contracts are fully executed
- Travel and logistics for attendees
- Hotel, room-set, food and beverage, and on-site meeting preparation
- Remaining fully compliant with your regulatory guidance

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Once your agency has properly compiled the agenda (see sample agenda), finished working with the faculty on the presentations, and fully prepped the faculty, you and your agency can begin to plan the final on-site logistics.

Prior to the meeting, schedule on-site time with the faculty by hosting a slide-review session. Ensure that your chair is present and allow time for everyone to review his or her slides. Use this as one last opportunity to finalize content, double-check that all objectives have been covered and confirm that your chair knows what to expect from each presentation. This ensures that the chair can guide the discussion and understand the timing of each talk.

After the slide-review session has been completed, host a dinner the evening prior to the event. It will allow for additional time for you to get to know the attendees. They will appreciate the fact that they can get to know you and spend time with their colleagues. It will engage the group prior to the ad board so that when they come to the meeting they are chair-forward and enthused about participating.

The room should be set in a U-shape to put all attendees on par with one another. This environment is conducive to conversation, as everyone can engage with one another. A few company representatives should sit at the "U" to actively participate, but be cautious not to overexpose the company and make the advisors feel overwhelmed and unwilling to be as forthcoming as possible.

A Well Run Advisory Board Will Leave a Lasting Impression

At this point it's time to let the chair and faculty go! With proper preparation, your meeting is assured to be great! Your agency should be on-site to oversee all details while you and your team engage with the participants and meet the objectives you've set out to accomplish. Enjoy the day and be proud of all you've accomplished, as a well-run advisory board will leave a lasting impression.

After the meeting, see off each of your KOLs and truly thank them for their participation. It is recommended to follow-up with them after they've all gone home with personal emails or notes to foster additional and forthright communications. Your medical communications agency should prepare an executive summary and take time to review the summary with you to ensure you've put into action

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those items that came from the meeting. Those notes and discussions will help you move your brand forward.

Planning and preparing your advisory board with the right objectives in mind is critical to the success of a well-run advisory board. Always remember that the objectives you develop are key, but building relationships with your KOLs to ensure you receive the best quality information from them is every bit as important.

For more information on advisory board strategies and keys to success, please contact the author, Dan Rehal, at drehal@vision2voice.com

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Sample Agenda

Your Brand Advisory Board

Downtown Hotel
Chicago, IL
September 2014

Objectives:

- To gain perspective from cardiologists on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the prescription agents used to treat *serious condition*
- To develop key strategies and messaging to enhance positioning of Product A
- To understand cardiologists' perception of value and key considerations for Product A

8:00 AM	Welcome, Objectives, and Introductions	Marketing
8:10 AM	Product Marketing Update	Marketing
8:35 AM	*Discussion/Feedback Session*	
9:00 AM	Review of the Efficacy and Safety Profiles of Product A and Disease State	2 KOLs
9:30 AM	*Discussion/Feedback Session*	
10:00 AM	*Break*	
10:30 AM	Strengths and Weaknesses Workshop Overview	Marketing
10:45 AM	Strengths and Weaknesses Workshop	Group
12:00 PM	*Lunch*	
1:00 PM	Clinical Experience Discussion	3 KOLs

2:15 PM	Company Access Program •Health Systems •Medicaid •Health Economic data	Managed Markets
2:30 PM	*Discussion/Feedback Session*	
3:00 PM	Lifecycle Management Update •Publications •Ongoing studies for other indications	Medical Affairs
3:15 PM	*Discussion/Feedback Session*	
3:45 PM	Closing Remarks	Marketing/ Chairperson
4:00 PM	*Adjourn*	

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