



Get it right the first time.

# ***10 Key Tips for Launch Training***

If you are like many trainers at small or new pharmaceutical, biotech, or medical device companies, you are a department of one. Being handed the job of developing and delivering training for an upcoming product launch can be daunting, but someone's got to do it, and that person is you.

From our collective experience helping "departments of one" develop effective pre-launch, launch, and post-launch training programs, we want to share some key tips for you to consider as you embark upon the huge task at hand.

### **1 Acknowledge the magnitude of the task.**

Designing and implementing training for a product launch requires providing participants with everything they need to sell your new product. Depending upon the experience of your sales force, this could include disease state training, product training, market access training, identifying customer needs, using selling tools appropriately, and handling customer questions and concerns, just to name a few. It is a lot, and oh by the way, all that content needs to be reviewed during a week-long live event and it has to be fun too. (Breathe now.)

### **2 Identify and involve all stakeholders from the start.**

Although you are a department of one, you are not a company of one. Many stakeholders will need to have a say in what goes into your launch training program. Colleagues from Marketing, Sales, Medical, Legal, Regulatory, Compliance, Market Access, Patient Services, and Corporate Leadership will need to be part of the training. Identify necessary stakeholders, explore the role they will play in the development and/or review of materials, and build their time into your development schedule. If you are an emerging company, new stakeholders may arrive on the scene almost daily. Share your plans with them, and establish a connection and communication channel. One new stakeholder with differing ideas can derail three months of planning if you're not careful.

### **3 Determine your training audience.**

It is probably a given that you'll be training the field sales team, but are you also responsible for training the internal marketing and communications teams? What about medical science liaisons, account managers, reimbursement specialists or even nurse case managers who provide patient support services. They all have different needs. You will need to consult with your stakeholders early on to figure this out. This could lead to different tracks for your launch meeting. Or it could mean designing activities that are flexible enough to work for participants with differing roles.

#### 4 Identify all reviewers.

Above, we suggested that you identify all your stakeholders. Some but probably not all of these stakeholders will also be reviewers. By identifying all reviewers up front and understanding their role in the process, you will help avoid situations such as last minute comments when it is too late or very complicated to make changes.

#### 5 Determine who will design and write the curriculum.

Due to the enormity of the task, it is unlikely that you will be able to design the curriculum and write all the materials yourself. You will need help. Depending upon your budget, you may want to consider an outside supplier partner and a production company to help build a successful launch meeting. As a part of the process, develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) that defines the objectives for the launch, and the role and tasks in the development of the launch program that you want your partners to take on.

#### 6 Create a development schedule.

During a product launch, “so much is in flux”, and this is precisely why you need to put schedules in place. A schedule shows holes, identifies new questions or key dependencies, helps quantify resourcing needs, and educates your colleagues on the enormity of the task and the need for their total commitment. Schedules can identify bottlenecks and help justify the need for resources. Consider using project management software that can help you develop schedules, particularly when there are many stakeholders, steps, and moving parts.

#### 7 Don't forget about “time bombs” when you create schedules.

- a. Build in medical review time. This is often fixed. You may, for example, have to submit a document “Monday at noon” to get a review by a certain date (usually a week or so later). Ensure that your supplier partners understand the review process and they take this into consideration.
- b. Understand the document review process. Most companies require document development in a specific format. The references must be solid and annotated correctly. Determine if your medical reviewers prefer certain textbooks/resources over others. It's always a best practice to consult Medical for any do's and don'ts on sourcing before you start development. And if you are using a document management system, understand the process to upload documents correctly, and don't forget to educate your training partners too.

- c. Prioritize work streams. Your product could get fast-tracked for approval, so you should plan for this possibility by creating a plan that ensures that essential content is ready to be rolled out on time. Prioritize nice-to-haves and need-to-haves.

## **8 Choose experienced and flexible partners to help you.**

Launch training materials are typically developed prior to the drug's approval and in tandem with marketing and sales tools, and in most cases, they cannot be finalized until the product is approved. So what happens when there are delays? You want an experienced partner that can demonstrate their understanding of the launch process and their flexibility to work through the challenges with you. During the selection process, ask them for case studies that are indicative of how they successfully dealt with the challenges that can arise during a launch.

## **9 Keep things simple and interactive.**

The clinical, product, marketplace, and selling-related content that participants have to learn and maintain can be complex. So, when designing your launch curriculum, keep the design and formats for delivery of all that complex content as simple as possible, chunking learning sequences into digestible pieces. Make it as interactive as possible to keep it engaging. Utilizing electronic/mobile components and incorporating fun gaming activities throughout the launch can help ensure participant engagement. Create interactive workshops that encourage participation, and ensure that your facilitators are prepared to deliver the training to make it a successful launch.

## **10 Stay positive and smile.**

Positive body language can help you be more upbeat and encourage others to respond positively to you, both of which can make your more successful.

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