



Subject: **“Target Eagles”** Summary Report  
For the Pharmaceutical Industry

The pace of change in the pharmaceutical industry has been staggering. A highly successful pharmaceutical representative who left the industry in 2001 and returned to it only recently summed up the situation in a recent interview: “I can’t believe the changes. The competition is so much greater; access to physicians is practically gone. There’s no time to build that good old-fashioned relationship anymore. I feel like just **another face in the crowd.**”

A quick look reveals the possible reasons:

- Even with the recent downsizing the number of sales representatives has doubled since 1995. Estimates suggest that over 80,000 representatives are pounding the pavement.
- High-prescribing physicians have reached the saturation point. These highly sought after physicians are being called upon about 400% more often than they were a decade ago.
- Only 1 in 5 calls ends in a face-to-face meeting.
- The typical detail has been reduced to a 30-45 second product data dump.
- Physicians are rebelling against the current state by instituting restrictive policies.

There is clear concern that the glut of sales representatives will greatly reduce the impact of any one individual calling on a physician office, making it **critical to hire and develop top performing Eagles.**

Vaya Group conducted a research study of pharmaceutical sales representatives to identify the selling styles, behaviors, and skills of top performers and average to non-performers. Sales representatives from over fifteen pharmaceutical companies were included in the study.

**Research Purpose:** To examine the behavioral and selling differences between highly successful representatives and average representatives in an effort to learn how top performers approach their sales jobs differently than others.

**Research Hypothesis:** Top-performers will display a selling style and possess a skill set that is clearly differentiated from the average group. Top performers will display a more assertive, consultative, business partnering style and skill set than their counterparts.

**Methodology and Instrumentation:** Each study participant was assessed utilizing a behaviorally based interviewing system. The instrument consisted of 85 open-ended questions built around real world situations. Each participant was required to vividly describe how he/she had handled critical work situations in the past, and each response was empirically coded for concrete behaviors evidenced in their approach.

The interview assessment of over 500 representatives allowed Vaya Group to investigate the behavioral differences and selling style differences between the two groups of sales representatives. This empirical research focused on answering three specific questions that are most relevant to the pharmaceutical industry today:

1. Are these measurable, behavioral differences between highly successful and typical reps?
2. Do today's top performing reps approach their jobs with a different formula for winning in the marketplace?
3. If there are significant differences between the two groups and are these differences found in trainable areas or do they surface in areas that must be addressed during the selection process?

**Highlights of Top Performer Success Factors:**

- Eagles possess the difficult to train “fire in the belly” and intense work ethic.
- Top performers also possess the more sophisticated consultative selling skills in which they leverage a broad and deep understanding of the customers’ business to best meet their needs.
- These two attributes are the key drivers that allow Eagles to successfully differentiate themselves from “average” performer.
- When they meet a physician, Eagles show themselves to be a valuable knowledge source regarding disease states and their business.
- Eagles ask purposeful questions to unearth the motivations, needs, and fears of the physicians. They use this knowledge to better target physician interests in needs during sales calls
- Their Attack skills (e.g., tenacity, competitive, self-assured and assertiveness) help them to bring the physician toward a mutually beneficial goal.
- While they place less emphasis on pure product knowledge and relationship selling, Eagles display solid capabilities in these areas.

**In Contrast:**

- Average representatives displayed very weak Business Partnering Skills.
- These representatives also displayed rather modest Attack-style skills.
- They lacked the energy level and competitive spirit of the Eagles, and they displayed little understanding of the market, business issues or unique needs of the physician.
- The one consistent quality found among these representatives is friendliness.
- The Relationship Selling Style is in strong evidence; they rely on their amicable demeanor and social conversation to gain support for their products and company
- This group knows how to detail, but is slow to ask questions aimed at uncovering the broader needs or concerns of a physician; therefore, the relationship never goes beyond surface-level rapport.
- These representatives simply lack the more effective selling strategies.

Top Performers

Lead Selling Styles	Least Utilized Selling Styles
Attack	Relationship Selling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitive</li> <li>• Self-assured</li> <li>• Assertive</li> </ul>	Technical Problem Solving
Business Partnering	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big-picture thinking</li> <li>• Market knowledge</li> <li>• Persuasive communication capabilities</li> </ul>	

Industry's Bottom 1/3

Lead Selling Styles	Least Utilized Selling Styles
Relationship Selling	Attack
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendly</li> <li>• Outgoing</li> </ul>	Business Partnering
Technical Problem Solving	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analytical</li> <li>• Technical Capability</li> </ul>	

**Conclusion:**

The skyline of pharmaceutical sales continues to evolve. With increased competition, representative saturation, and disgruntled physicians, a 'more of the same' sales effort will not lead to bottom-line sales success. The need for pharmaceutical companies to focus on the hiring of Eagles has never been greater. Reps need to come pre-equipped with the passion, assertiveness, tenacity and the 'fire in the belly' to compete in today's fiercely competitive environment. In addition, pharmaceutical sales training must address the importance of business partnering skills. The Eagles bring health care knowledge, business acumen, and solution selling skills that differentiate themselves in the market place while adding value to their physician's practice.