

# MARKET INSIGHTS

## Beyond 2019

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## Insights on External Deployment by the Pharmaceutical Industry

The ever-changing Canadian health care environment has forced the pharmaceutical industry to rethink external deployment



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Historically, the pharmaceutical industry has, for the most part, deployed in a traditional manner. Today, Sales, Medical, Medical Science Liaisons, Market Access, Government Affairs, Public Relations, are still the norm, however the mix is shifting. This is quite evident in the reduction of sales positions with increases in all of the other above-mentioned departments. One of the fastest growing roles is the Medical Science Liaison (MSL) within Medical Affairs. This growth can be attributed to several factors, including the type of products launched (rare and specialty molecules) as well as the change in influencers, who require a deep understanding of both the scientific and health outcomes related to the medications. MSLs are generally able to address questions that may be off-label or pre-NOC where traditional sales reps are not. In addition to the changing landscape, a more focused lens has been placed on corporate governance and compliance, in light of the Sunshine Act and other regulatory bodies' initiatives. Ultimately these forces have moved a great deal of resources and activity from Commercial to Medical. This transition has been largely difficult with internal "turf" battles transpiring as the norm for the first few years. On a positive note, the 'pendulum' has started to swing the other way and organizations are settling after years of adjustment.

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Beyond the shift to MSLs, contract deployment is emerging both internally and externally. In many cases, deployment for head count for go-to market strategies starts with short-term contracts, moving to long-term contract offerings and then to full-time company-employed as the market evolves. This graduated employment structure is largely due to global headcount constraints, as well as unknown market conditions. For many companies, it isn't unreasonable to assume a lack of reimbursement status over two years post launch. This transition between types of deployment contracts also allows companies to test the capabilities of their front line and 'try before they buy.'

A recent benchmarking survey of more than 20 Canadian companies showed that 10% of externally deployed resources were considered 'non-traditional.' Non-traditional was defined as either hiring through a third-party organization or on a part-time employment basis. This is not a surprise; these non-traditional structures will vary between deployment needs and corporate culture. In addition, the benchmarking survey showed that 58% of full-time employees were 'externally deployed' or frontline facing. We continue to see many support roles outsourced locally or supported globally (finance, HR, analytics etc.).

A leader's challenge is to figure out the correct mix for the deployment of their frontline. Typically, hospital

and rare disease portfolios can be straightforward due to the size of your customer base. Specialty and primary care can be more challenging, as communication needs to flow from specialty to primary care customers and finding the correct mix of effort is an art, meaning a national one-size-fits-all approach may not necessarily be the right approach.

One of the key success factors we have observed is strong leadership through an organizational shift and the subsequent and ongoing communication and training. Companies that communicate that roles have changed and offer the required training and support are indeed the successful ones. The classic example is area sales managers who move from 'therapeutic experts' to 'coaching and development experts.' They need skills for coaching their reps when they are no longer required to be the therapeutic area expert.

Some great innovation is occurring with companies that are willing to try new approaches to deployment. As the market continues to evolve and change, leaders need to continue to assess their front line to ensure the right mix of employees are deployed in order to meet customer and patient needs.

**CPM**

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