



SALES + MARKETING

Pharma Sales: Why You Need Orchestrator Reps Now

ZS Interview with
Jaideep Bajaj

Impact where it matters.

About the Expert



Jaideep Bajaj is Chairman of ZS Associates and is based in Princeton, N.J. Jaideep has held a number of senior leadership roles and served as the firm's first Managing Director after the founders, holding the role between 2003 and 2012. Prior to taking the firm's helm in 2003, he was the leader of the U.S. Pharmaceuticals industry group and Managing Principal of the Princeton office.

Pharma Sales: Why You Need Orchestrator Reps Now

The sales and marketing environment is getting tougher all the time. With restrictions on physician access, evolving provider models and increased physician use of digital technologies, the emerging challenge for pharma companies is to understand the preferences of physicians and to integrate marketing and sales efforts to reach out to them in a harmonized manner.

An important part of the solution is the orchestrator rep, who has visibility into all outreach to physicians and can refine sales and marketing efforts to their unique preferences. Imagine the possibilities: A sales rep heading into a physician visit gets an update on his tablet that the physician recently logged on to the company's website to look into side effects. Immediately, the sales rep changes his talking points and tailors the discussion to the doctor's concerns. The meeting goes well, and as the rep is leaving, the doctor asks about efficacy and mentions that she hates unsolicited email. Immediately, the rep updates the doctor's profile to pause future marketing emails, and asks the company's medical sciences liaison to call the physician directly with concise answers to her questions.

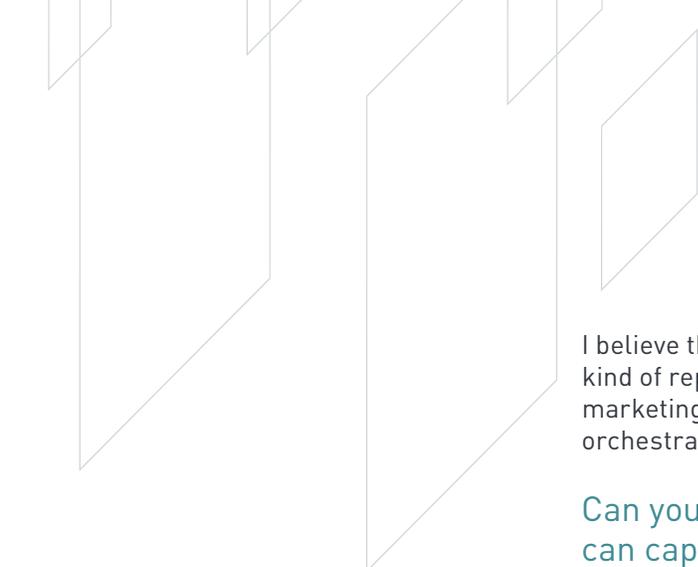
This is the kind of improved customer experience that can cement a relationship. Yet it requires an orchestrator rep who is aware of all interactions between the company and a particular physician, and can shape the sales and marketing outreach so that it's most effective.

ZS Associates Chairman Jaideep Bajaj, who has helped develop the orchestrator rep concept, says that while this application is new, it's really a logical extension of the sales rep role, which capitalizes on new data, tools and training. He talks about the potential benefits of the orchestrator rep role, and the challenges that pharma companies need to overcome to implement it.

How does the orchestrator rep differ from a traditional sales rep?

Jaideep Bajaj: There are so many points of contact between pharma companies and physicians today. Some are people in specific roles: a sales rep, a nurse, a reimbursement specialist, a medical science liaison. Marketing sends out emails, conference invites, offers on EMR systems and more. A physician may be logging on to the pharma company's website. And then a new formulary changes, and suddenly 30% of the physician's patients can't use a competitor's product on Tier 1 or 2 anymore.

The orchestrator rep is one central person who is aware of all these interactions and events, and can use them to tailor the sales call to the physician's unique situation and preferences. The idea is that the sales call is a continuation of all other interactions, so that call can be most effective. And that concept doesn't apply to just one call. The goal is to keep incorporating all interactions to continuously improve future interactions, so that the relationship is better aligned around the needs of the physician over time.



I believe this is the next wave in the evolution of pharma sales. It's not a new kind of rep—instead, it's a way to improve the effectiveness of sales and marketing interactions through better training, processes and tools, so they can orchestrate all interactions to be more effective.

Can you quantify the benefits that pharma companies can capture?

Jaideep Bajaj: This is a bleeding-edge idea. We've been talking about it in the industry for about a year and a half, and the companies are at different stages of the process. Our expectation is that they'll see better engagement between reps and physicians, improved perceptions of the brand and an increase in prescriptions between 2% and 7%.

What are the specific stages of development?

Jaideep Bajaj: It's an orchestration continuum with three steps, and the choice of the step depends on a company's culture and its need to manage the rate of change. Step one is the inform stage. In this phase, the rep knows the doctor's preferences for how he or she receives information and what content or offers he or she prefers to receive, along with all past and future interactions with the pharma company. That's an amazing amount of information to harmonize the content of a sales call and make it more effective.

Step two is the influence stage. At this point, the rep has the ability to put information back into the system so that marketing can shape both the pace and content of messages based on the doctor's preferences. So reps are actually influencing future interactions.

Step three is the orchestrate stage. At this point, reps have the ability to pause, stop or trigger specific interactions based on what they know about the physician. For example, the rep might hold a marketing email until after her visit, so that she can lay the groundwork for those messages and the email will then have more impact. Or she might want to cancel mailing a kit to a doctor because she wants to take it herself. Or she might not use the kit at all because she doesn't think the message will resonate with the doctor. The rep can also trigger follow-up actions based on available personal and nonpersonal tactics to best meet the needs of a particular physician.

What kind of IT investments are required to support this role?

Jaideep Bajaj: The first is simply to make sure you have the right data collection protocol, meaning you're able to capture the information that really matters. Some of this involves refining service-level agreements with marketing agencies to make sure you're getting data that's sufficiently precise, and at the pace you need it. Then you need to build a customer data repository so you can develop a 360-degree view of the customer based on all of these interactions and data. You also need to set up a user interface in the CRM software so that reps can easily access and use the data. Most pharma companies have some of these elements in place, so the investment is really pretty incremental. The orchestration stage will also need links between the CRM and marketing operations.

ZS at a Glance

- + The world's largest firm focused exclusively on high-performance sales and marketing solutions, from customer insights and strategy to analytics, operations and technology
- + More than 3,000 professionals in 21 offices worldwide
- + Partnered with more than 1,200 clients in over 70 countries
- + Over 30 years of experience

Do analytics factor into the orchestration element?

Jaideep Bajaj: Yes, in two ways. The first is that you need a database that shows what individual doctors prefer. We provide that to reps through the AffinityMonitor™ information. But we also build a “suggestion engine,” which provides guidance and advice to the sales rep. Given all the information you have about the doctor, the suggestion engine will tell you the two or three most impactful things you should consider doing. That's built on analytics of physician engagement and sales data, and it factors in company priorities. For example, if the rep is meeting with a doctor whose prescriptions are down significantly while there is drop-off in outreach from the pharma, the suggestions will be different than those for a doctor whose prescription levels are down even though there is a managed-care advantage. Reps can also like or dislike suggestions, which refines the algorithm over time. These concepts are already established in other industries, particularly those where sales and marketing coordinate more closely, like high-tech and consumer packaged goods.

Are there success drivers or pitfalls that companies face in trying to implement orchestrator reps?

Jaideep Bajaj: One critical element is determining who is going to own this concept, and then getting all the stakeholders aligned. You need marketing to develop the right offers. You need sales support and IT aligned because IT will help you with timely data, tools and analytics. Other personnel roles (such as the MSL, nurse or reimbursement coordinator) need to enter their activity because that improves the orchestration element. You also need a senior sponsor for this initiative—someone who cares about sales and marketing integration who says, this is my job and I'm going to make this happen. Another pitfall would be missing critical customer interaction and preference information, or trying to implement this with an existing CRM system and just hoping it somehow has all the information needed.

This is a journey, and the early steps can be highly incremental, with companies building up their processes and critical capabilities over time. The behavior of physicians has permanently changed, and the role of digital and technology is not going away. If anything, the pace of change is going to accelerate.

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