

For pharma, field deployment is now global. Here's how to set your company up for success.

4 factors to optimize implementation and drive success

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Field deployment's strategic importance in the pharma industry has grown considerably due to technological advancements, increasing market complexity and heightened competition. Global field deployment programs now provide pharma with the essential foundation to enhance and maximize the returns on their large-scale digital customer-centric initiatives, which are essential for long-term growth and market leadership.

A field deployment strategy's effectiveness is intrinsically tied to the harmonization of processes across markets. In reality today, variations in local market dynamics and regulatory requirements have led pharma companies toward a decentralized structure. Teams selling similar products are structured and managed differently across countries, despite often targeting comparable customer segments.

These differences extend to field deployment, where local teams often operate with independent budgets, relying on manual methods, spreadsheets or locally managed IT systems. Amid rising pipeline pressures and the growing need to control costs in sales planning, pharmaceutical companies are increasingly moving toward scalable, cost-effective solutions. This shift has accelerated efforts to centralize operations while harmonizing technology platforms and best practices across markets.

At the same time, regulatory bodies worldwide continue to introduce new frameworks and guidelines to ensure the safety, efficacy and affordability of pharmaceutical products. To comply with local regulations while maintaining global operational consistency, organizations must establish and maintain a strong presence across multiple regions. A global field deployment program offers a structured framework to navigate these regulatory demands, mitigating the risk of noncompliance and the accompanying costly delays and penalties.

We've identified four key factors that pharma companies can embed in their global field deployment strategies to drive optimal results.

Factor 1: Responding to changing business strategies

Organizations must be equipped to adapt swiftly to changing business strategies and to prepare for new product launches with minimal lead times. A global field deployment model facilitates this agility by standardizing technology, automation and data quality checks, ensuring seamless integration across diverse operational functions. By enabling rapid responsiveness to market demands and shifts in strategic direction, this model empowers organizations to align their field deployment strategies with corporate objectives.



We've seen clients experience a 50% reduction in the time required to plan and execute the deployment of a new sales force, as well as in the restructuring of an existing sales force.

Factor 2: Managing the cost of implementation

Pharma organizations face increasing pressure to minimize total ownership costs across administrative, IT and operational functions. By standardizing processes and business rules across markets, companies can reduce variability and enhance operational efficiency. This harmonization streamlines administrative tasks and promotes the consistent adoption of best practices globally.

Organizations using a unified field deployment approach can achieve operational excellence while effectively managing costs. Implementing a new platform leads to reduced expenditures by eliminating legacy technology, minimizing the need for extensive support teams and lowering vendor costs. Cost avoidance also arises from the time and bandwidth gained by business and operations support teams through automated processes, allowing for their strategic redeployment to other critical programs.

CASE STUDY

ZS successfully rolled out the ZAIDYN® Field Deployment solution to 55 countries, with an average implementation cost for most countries as low as 10% of stand-alone implementation costs. The observed savings stemmed from:

- Increased process efficiencies
- A reduction in overall licensing and infrastructure costs compared to disparate legacy systems
- Lower operational costs due to centralized operations

Any cost avoidances are projected to offset the implementation expenses in less than three years.

Factor 3: Taking a data-driven approach

As with many industries, the pharmaceutical sector is increasingly prioritizing strategies that maximize the value that their vast amounts of accessible data hold. By leveraging advanced analytics, these insights drive more informed decision-making, strengthen regulatory compliance and support the development of customer-centric strategies.

For field deployment, a data-driven approach harnesses analytics, technology and continuous data streams to optimize the performance of field teams. For instance, using data-driven business rules has proven effective in optimizing sales territories, identifying key customers for sales representatives and determining the appropriate number of calls for each customer segment. These methods significantly enhance decision-making, resource allocation and overall operational efficiency.

CASE STUDY

We partnered with a client to transition a cluster of their markets from explicit customer alignments to a data-driven, business rules-based approach. This transformation led to improved alignment quality for both new customers—who are now automatically assigned through master data management (MDM)—and existing customers, ensuring ongoing compliance based on data-driven criteria. Over time, this shift is projected to reduce alignment maintenance efforts by more than 70%.

Factor 4: Enabling business in emerging markets to thrive

Pharma is increasingly emphasizing emerging markets due to their growing populations, expanding healthcare infrastructure and rising demand for affordable medications. These markets offer significant growth potential, particularly as the demand for chronic disease treatments and preventive care increases in regions like Asia, Latin America, Africa and some parts of Europe.

However, these emerging markets often encounter challenges due to limited resources for substantial up-front investments in technology, systems and processes. A global field deployment platform serves as a critical enabler for these markets, providing access to an extensive suite of advanced solution capabilities that would typically be out of reach due to local budget constraints, such as what-if scenario modeling, territory optimization and dynamic alignment.

By incorporating these markets into a unified global strategy, pharmaceutical organizations can leverage local market insights while capitalizing on the operational efficiencies brought about by standardized practices. This approach not only bolsters competitiveness in smaller markets but also enhances the organization's overall market positioning, driving broader success across diverse regions.

CASE STUDY

By implementing our platform globally for a leading pharmaceutical company, we transitioned it from legacy systems and have now scaled to 70 countries, meeting its comprehensive field deployment needs. This transformation resulted in a 60% reduction in runtime through optimized process flows and the easy onboarding of new countries, allowing a single team to manage operations end-to-end. The integration of previously fragmented systems has greatly enhanced efficiency and service levels, demonstrating the power of a unified global operations model to deliver substantial savings and improved service quality.

Bringing these factors to life with technology, processes and people

While these four factors can drive global field deployment success, their impact hinges on how well organizations operationalize them through the right enablers. Technology, processes and people are the foundational pillars that bring these strategies to life. Now, we'll explore the considerations and best practices that support scalable, consistent and effective execution across markets.

The tech to take your field deployment global

Platform technology offers the kind of all-in-one capabilities that enable organizations to meet challenges across geographies. Organizations will want to think about these capabilities as they decide which to implement in their global field deployment strategy:

Infrastructure and cloud preparedness. Existing on-premises systems may struggle to keep pace with emerging technologies and innovations, potentially limiting a platform's impact.

The right platform capabilities. For a successful global field deployment, pharma organizations must carefully select a platform that is scalable, adaptable and integrates seamlessly with existing systems. The platform should work out of the box, eliminating the need for significant customization and provide immediate prebuilt solutions. At the same time, it should empower organizations to rapidly enable new capabilities, ensuring alignment with evolving business needs.

Equally essential is having access to comprehensive consulting services and technical support for ongoing optimization, ensuring prompt issue resolution and enhancing productivity. Advanced planning and execution features, combined with stringent security measures, are also vital for ensuring data integrity and operational reliability. The platform should serve as a digital foundation and should be future-ready, not only fulfilling current operational



needs but also supporting advanced capabilities, sophisticated analytics, integrated AI recommendations and continuous innovation. This includes generative AI for real-time query resolution and insights, AI-driven vacancy management, proactive anomaly detection and more.

Availability of standardized data from source systems. The quality of a global alignment platform's deliverables is fundamentally dependent on the quality of data that can be supplied to it. An organization should provide the platform with good quality data from multiple sources, such as customer and product MDM systems, customer relationship management platforms and human resources systems.

For example, having a unified customer MDM system or a combination of U.S. and ex-U.S. MDMs, ensures standardized customer data across all regions. This standardization guarantees consistency in how healthcare providers and accounts are identified, categorized and reported globally. This then allows pharma companies to create uniform alignment rules and a consistent targeting strategy across regions with similar market characteristics, ensuring streamlined and optimized field force operations.

Data integration readiness. Once data is standardized, it needs to be integrated with the global alignment platform through a mechanism that is robust and conforms to modern standards. Many organizations have legacy systems that are regional in nature and may not be designed for easy integration with modern platforms. These legacy systems can complicate data extraction and transformation. Ensuring that data exchange systems are adaptable to regional data variations is crucial for smooth operations in a multicountry environment.

For example, in a global context, double quotes are commonly used in customer names or addresses, especially in Arabic and Hebrew regions where such special characters are prevalent. This can cause issues with traditional file exchange mechanisms that rely on character delimiters (such as CSV files). Double quotes may be interpreted as control characters, causing data parsing errors or file corruption. Capabilities such as providing data in Apache Parquet format are important to avoid these issues.

Harmonization across teams: The processes necessary for global field deployment

Organizations should look to create a global field deployment strategy that ensures consistency and quality. To do this, they need a comprehensive harmonization strategy. This involves assessing the current setup, designing standardized frameworks, gathering requirements and establishing a common working model. Organizations will want to ensure they're armed with the following harmonization processes:

Universal best practices. By creating universal best practices that can be tailored to local nuances, organizations can strike a balance between standardization and configurability. We find an effective mix to be about 85% standardization and 15% configurations. This mix not only enhances operational coherence but also allows for responsiveness to local market demands.

An implementation strategy. Implementing a global field deployment platform is a complex transformation, and choosing the right rollout strategy is key. A wave-based approach—starting with pilot regions and scaling to broader clusters—can reduce risk and improve adoption. Champion countries often showcase early wins that build momentum for subsequent markets. Additionally, sharing lessons learned across markets helps refine the rollout process and accelerate implementation timelines. Organizations must be prepared to address unexpected deviations promptly after the rollout, and that will require a strong and cohesive vision among leadership teams. Significant deviations in outcomes between the global platform and existing local systems can generate numerous queries from market leaders and field representatives.

A strong central operations team. A strong central operations team ensuring round-the-clock support for markets globally is necessary. Deploying a global platform also offers the opportunity to manage ongoing operations centrally through a shared services model that could potentially be set up to align it with the GCC strategy. It is important to reuse the skill base across countries. For this, a shared service model can be set up either in-house or through partnerships with external vendors.

Organizations will want to implement service-level agreements (SLAs) to establish clear performance expectations with both third-party vendors and internal teams. By defining precise KPIs such as system uptime, incident response times, daily deliverable cutoff times and issue-resolution time, SLAs ensure that service providers adhere to agreed-upon standards. Implementing standard operating procedures provides a structured framework that ensures consistency, quality and regulatory compliance across global operations.

People management on a global scale

The success of any large transformational program depends heavily on how various stakeholders and user groups feel about it. Effective stakeholder management ensures that all parties have a shared understanding of the program's goals, facilitating alignment between the organization's objectives and stakeholder expectations. This is essential for communicating clearly, mitigating risk, driving adoption, optimizing resources and supporting ongoing improvement and in the global platform deployment program. Effective people management requires:

Defined roles and responsibilities. Emphasizing well-defined roles and responsibilities is crucial to ensuring that each stakeholder understands their specific contributions and accountabilities within the framework of the operating model. Ambiguity and lack of clarity surrounding the new operating model can lead to misunderstandings and inefficiencies in collaboration, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of the new model. To mitigate these risks, organizations must proactively address any ambiguities by establishing clear role descriptions, outline expectations and provide comprehensive orientation sessions for all stakeholders involved.

User and leadership buy-in. A transformational program may face challenges due to lack of adoption by end users as they may resist change due to fear of disruption, unfamiliarity with

the system or doubts about its value. A dedicated focus on a robust communication strategy, change management and its clear implementation is essential to facilitate the adoption of the new platform and operating model by end users. Emphasizing the “What’s in it for me?” principle effectively conveys the personal and operational benefits of the change, ensuring that stakeholders understand the value of the new system in relation to their specific needs and challenges.

Strong and visible support from senior leadership is essential for communicating global strategies and driving transformation, fostering widespread adoption on a global scale. In parallel, it is crucial to identify and empower regional champions who can advocate for the deployment within their respective regions. These individuals serve as vital intermediaries, bridging the gap between overarching global strategies and local execution. By leveraging their understanding of regional dynamics and building relationships within their communities, these champions can effectively promote the benefits of the new platform, address localized concerns and encourage buy-in from end users.

Tailored training programs. Preparing and upskilling end users in their knowledge and familiarity with the new platform helps drive successful outcomes. A well-structured training approach—combining workshops with interactive materials—ensures users will be confident in adopting the new platform. To sustain knowledge over time, organizations should also provide ongoing support, such as periodic refreshers or help resources, reinforcing learning as the platform evolves.

Standardizing your field deployment strategy for the future

The competitive landscape is intensifying as pharmaceutical organizations face increasing pressure from the rise of biosimilars, generic alternatives and heightened international competition. To maintain a competitive edge, companies must differentiate themselves not only through innovation in their product portfolios but also by optimizing their field operations. A global field deployment program facilitates the rapid and efficient scaling of operations, ensuring timely market entry and maximizing market share in key regions.

Platform technology, in particular, offers organizations the ability to scale implementation standardization across geographies. By carefully planning changes to minimize disruptions and establishing robust program governance, organizations can accelerate the harmonization of global field deployment processes while reducing operational costs. As the demand for standardized approaches continues to rise, pharmaceutical companies will be well equipped with the tools and methodologies needed to manage this transition effectively and set up a strong field deployment foundational base for other emerging opportunities in the marketplace.

About the authors



Ankur Gupta As a leader in our digital and technology practice, Ankur is responsible for designing and scaling innovative technology solutions for clients. He brings a blend of analytics, technology and domain expertise with data to drive delivery of large-scale digital transformation programs.



Rishabh Singh Sethi As a key member of our digital and technology practice, Rishabh brings over a decade of experience in the pharmaceutical industry, specializing in global field deployment and digital transformation. He has successfully partnered with multiple large pharmaceutical clients to optimize and streamline their alignment management strategies and operations, leveraging advanced technology solutions to drive efficiency, ensure compliance and foster long-term growth.



Abhinav Gupta leads ZAIDYN's go-to-market strategy and business development as part of ZS's knowledge services expertise center. He shapes and executes initiatives that drive market penetration and growth, with a strong focus on commercialization, strategic business development and deep market insights. His expertise in sales enablement and go-to-market strategy ensures the sales team is market-ready, while his leadership fosters thought partnership across all market segments, solidifying ZAIDYN's position as a trusted industry leader.



About ZS

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