

CHANNEL AND PATIENT SERVICES:

Choosing the Right Operational Vendors

In the increasingly complex process of **successfully bringing lifesaving products to market** and to the patients who need them, it is important to consider the **best way, or channel, to deliver these medicines**. Oftentimes manufacturers engage their internal Channel Strategy and Patient Services teams later in the planning process.

Given the significant investments of time and resources throughout drug development, research, clinical trials, and regulatory review, it is in the best interest of the patient experience and overall brand success to dedicate sufficient time and resources to distribution channel and patient services strategies and vendor selection.

Selecting the right vendor(s) to distribute, dispense, and administer patient service offerings is essential in executing a successful brand launch and a key element of ongoing channel strategy as the needs of a brand evolve over time. Accordingly, manufacturers must carefully consider the unique needs of each brand, as well as the needs of relevant patients and providers, and make thoughtful

decisions regarding vendor selection and contract terms.

The chosen vendors will represent your brand to key market stakeholders, including patients and providers. These vendors must understand and complement your brand, thoughtfully and seamlessly engage your relevant customers, and simplify and accelerate speed of access to therapy. Accordingly, the vendor selection process is critical to the success of each brand and could possibly change as your brand evolves post-launch. As a result, it is important to have a strong evaluation process and continually monitor the chosen vendors to ensure that they are continuing to meet the needs of your brand.

A company paradigm (“we always use these vendors”) or choosing simplicity (“it will be easy to implement if we are already working with the vendor”) are not the right criteria to select vendors responsible for supporting and distributing your product.

Here are some points to consider when selecting vendors:

“ *What is the overall strategy for the brand? How can channel and patient services strategies support that vision? Are there synergies between the two that can be capitalized on?* ”

“ *What is your vision of the customer experience? What do your desired patient and provider journeys look like? What service offerings and vendor relationships will support and enable that vision?* ”

“ *Are you allowing enough time prior to launch to establish clear criteria and thoughtful evaluation of potential vendors?* ”

“ *Does the vendor understand the patient needs as well as the product distribution and dispensing channels? Therapeutic area? Product(s) reimbursement landscape?* ”

“ *How can service offerings be coordinated among all the product vendors?* ”

“ *Have the relevant internal stakeholders been included in the overall distribution channel and patient services vendor selection process? Do you have alignment on key decisions? (An engagement across all departments impacted should be considered when selecting vendors.)* ”

CASE STUDY

Impact of a suboptimal vendor decision

A manufacturer decided to transition existing patient hub services for Product X, a buy-and-bill product that had been on the market for over 3 years. The primary decision maker selected a new vendor based on a previous working relationship. The selected vendor had previously provided a highly rated service in a different therapeutic category. Although selected, the vendor had limited buy-and-bill experience, a lack of experience with Product X's reimbursement and therapeutic landscape, limited launch capabilities, and an HCP portal offering limited to self-administered drugs.

Within 6 weeks of relaunch, the unintended consequences of this vendor transition were both obvious and significant. Referral volume through the HUB decreased 40%, resulting in customers losing confidence in the brand and the manufacturer. Internally, the sales team supporting the brand lost confidence in the new vendor as well as the manufacturer's Market Access department, distracting them from their primary objectives and requiring

relocation of scarce resources to address internal and customer concerns.

The manufacturer recognized the challenges and created a cross departmental selection committee of relevant and knowledgeable internal stakeholders to initiate the RFP process for a new patient hub vendor. The committee selected a vendor with significant expertise with reimbursement for buy-and-bill products, as well as meaningful and direct experience in the therapeutic category.

Within 4 weeks of new vendor engagement, referral volume through the hub was not only restored to the original volume but increased an additional 8%.

Confidence in the brand and manufacturer was restored with customers and other external stakeholders. Additionally, internal teams, including Field Sales, acknowledged the success of the new vendor, resulting in restored working relationships and trust across the teams.

Brands, and their associated needs, are unique. Each one should be evaluated independently to ensure the optimal patient journey and thoughtful vendor selection. It is wise to have a portfolio strategy since a one-size-fits-all approach will result in suboptimal execution for individual brands, especially with a broad and diverse portfolio.

COEUS' Channel and Patient Services team has more than 75 years of collective industry experience that cover numerous drug launches and strategy evolution across a broad range of therapeutic categories, including rare diseases and oncology. If you are seeking a knowledgeable partner to help guide selection of the right vendor(s) to support your brand, the Patient Services and Channel Strategy team at COEUS welcomes the opportunity to learn more about your specific needs and to share the team's capabilities and experience.



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About COEUS

Established in 2009, COEUS is a leading healthcare consulting, communications, technology, and talent firm. The company offers clients a variety of services, as well as SaaS technology platforms, for various stakeholders throughout the healthcare ecosystem including all payers and emerging or more established drug manufacturers. Leveraging the deep knowledge and experience of the company's many subject matter experts, COEUS works on all drug types with a particular focus on gene and cell therapies, rare disease, and oncology. The company also has unique expertise in the creation and management of value-based agreements by leveraging COEBRA™, the company's evidence and outcomes adjudication platform. In its 13-year history, the company has supported the launch of more than 120 pharmaceutical brands and has worked with more than 300 pharma clients including many top global pharmaceutical manufacturers. To learn more about COEUS and the company's offerings, visit 1coeus.com

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