



Four Key Steps for Improving Key Opinion Leader Engagement

In today's life sciences marketing environment, key opinion leader (KOL) management is a vital tactic for ensuring product adoption by both payers and providers. With the growing pressure for global, regional, and affiliate marketing groups to manage and engage with KOLs more efficiently, the need for a structured, centralized, and effective approach to KOL management becomes increasingly important.

The ROI of KOL Management

When a product team omits important key experts from marketing activities, resources can be wasted. Additionally, those important key experts who could effectively impact product uptake may be enlisted by a competitor. Both could lead to a less than optimal product uptake in a specific market.

Comprehensive KOL identification and mapping can pinpoint new and/or previously overlooked KOLs who can lead to product adoption in key markets through their share of voice. Incorporating the most important KOLs into a marketing plan can increase market share through the communication of key product messages to decision-makers and their expert advisors. They can also help you engage in product value discussions even before messages are finalized. This increases adoption of scientific knowledge in the healthcare community as healthcare providers look to KOLs in each market for information.

KOL mapping and identification also protect against competition by enabling strong relationships to be built with essential KOLs before competitors have a chance to engage them.

Finally, it's critical to identify rising stars and future experts. This focuses marketing resources on KOLs who will have a long-term impact on product adoption; creates opportunities for early engagement with up and coming stakeholders; and provides a larger, more sustainable pool of advocates covering insights and approaches to novel product adoption.

Moving Toward a KOL-Focused Marketing Approach

Based on our experience working with major clients to define and implement KOL management processes and organizations to ensure that they function appropriately and bring the highest value to brand teams, we've developed a high-level approach focusing on the following four areas:

- 1. Set and Define Objectives:** KOL management, engagement, identification, tactical plans, and advisory boards will not be successful without setting objectives for the interaction. Each brand team has specific short- and long-term objectives for KOL engagement and objectives and brand plans should reflect the goal of measurable results from KOL engagement.
- 2. Organization:** Once objectives are set, all departments/functional areas that interact with KOLs need to be aligned in their KOL management and engagement plans. An assessment of how many and in what format KOLs should be engaged needs to be aligned with goals and expectations.
- 3. Process:** KOL identification, tactical planning, and execution processes for long-term iterative engagement with KOLs are critical. The use of virtual advisory boards for virtual engagements in place of or in between large meetings allows you more cost-effective and robust engagement with key individuals.
- 4. Measurement:** Long-term measurement and feedback loops help refine the success of your KOL strategy. Measurement should include both internal effectiveness of team members in implementing the KOL plans and external impact the plans have had on KOL-focused outcomes as defined by your objectives.

Ensuring Ongoing, Objective KOL Utilization

Identifying and managing the differences in objective and subjective KOL decision-making is crucial in addressing KOL management. Although it's generally advised to only make objective KOL decisions, realistically that's not always possible. For that reason, surveys and subjective data points should be among the decision criteria for mapping KOLs.

Ideally, surveys are quantitative where appropriate, and their resulting datasets stored within a KOL management system. In this manner, the "uptake," or measurement of "advocacy level," can be measured over time and, most importantly, can be tied to specific KOL activities to determine which activities, topics, and events result in increased advocacy levels.

Another measure of "belief in our scientific evidence" can be created by identifying events, programs, meetings, and interactions that can be linked to agreement with a company's scientific beliefs. For example, if a KOL management system tracks an

interaction on a specific study, a second interaction on the same study, and then a third, it can be determined that after three interactions, the KOL may be ranked as in agreement with the scientific platform. The KOL management system can indicate that an objective related to understanding the scientific platform was achieved. In this manner, by measuring events and interactions in support of a platform, as well as when objectives related to it have been achieved, a robust set of data related to the medical community's understanding of that platform is created.

KOL mapping exercises profile KOLs with all objective and available data so that companies can make objective and scientifically focused KOL management decisions.

How Life Sciences Companies Can Improve KOL Management

One of the key approaches life sciences companies can take is to create various definitions of KOLs to segment KOL subgroups for specific tactics and activities. These definitions should be based on a robust set of factual data gathered from online sources and surveys. This factual data will also determine which KOLs meet which definitions and, over time, how the landscape of KOLs may change as data change. An example may be building a KOL definition from the number of citations on specific topics, the number of nominations by other KOLs, past membership in specific committees, and speaking at plenary sessions.

All these data, gathered either from publicly available sources or in market research engagements, can be used as criteria to define the perception of a specific KOL's expert opinion within a community or network. In addition, it is important to visually map the connections between KOLs to generate lists of key experts who may not be immediately apparent when the data are viewed in a one-dimensional format.

Companies will then be able to run segmentation reports to clearly identify those KOLs who conform to, for example, a second tier of influence within each country, which KOLs are rising stars based on specified criteria, which KOLs will be important for market access versus clinical activities, and which KOLs are highly regarded by specialists versus those whose network is more tied to general practitioner communities.

Best Practices for Improving KOL Management

Understand a KOL's broader involvement in healthcare decisions:

- Include involvement and engagement in market access decision-making
- Identify a KOL's place in market access networks
- Include involvement in patient advocacy

Refine the current segmentation criteria:

- Rank publications by topic, authorship position, chairing important review committees
- Identify expertise networks related to specialists versus general practitioners
- Cover and rank congresses by topics presented, posters, type of presentation, e.g., plenary session
- Add associations, committees, and leadership positions
- Incorporate guideline frequency and impact

Improve validation of a KOL's community standing with primary research:

- Understand ranking through nominations by other members of the healthcare community
- Use software for complex, refined, and faster scoring, weighting, and mapping of networks

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How Truven Health Analytics™ can provide excellence in KOL Identification and Engagement for your brand team

Truven Health has been helping clients with their KOL identification and management strategies and activities for more than a decade. Our Heartbeat Profiler database is the largest global key opinion leader (KOL) data set available with more than 2.5 million KOL and Market Access profiles worldwide. Our track record of engaging KOLs in virtual advisory boards through Heartbeat Advisor means that we have a tested system for virtual engagement with KOLs and you benefit from best practices we've learned over the years. With sophisticated analytic mapping features and supporting local language, we provide best-in-class KOL identification, mapping, and virtual advisory board services anywhere in the world to help you engage key stakeholders in discussions about product value.



For More Information

To learn more about how Heartbeat Profiler and Advisor can help you maximize your KOL selection and engagement plans, please email lifesciences@truvenhealth.com.



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