

Training tenured representatives

Invest in your sales force's greatest asset

by Rayna Herman and Ashley Mahoney

The major sales force expansions in the late '90s changed the face of the industry's tenured sales representative. Today, most tenured representatives are younger than 40, and many intend to be career representatives, which means they're looking forward to 10, 20 or even 30 more years in the field.

In 2005, 46% of representatives in the industry had at least five years of experience, and we estimate that this proportion will grow to 64% by 2010.

Companies must keep up with their sales forces' changing makeup and brush up their efforts to train and develop these tenured representatives. To help address this challenge, Lambertville, NJ-based Health Strategies Group recently examined the needs of 158 tenured representatives (with at least three years' experience) at 16 pharmaceutical companies.

To train or not to train?

Training helps sharpen skills, and sharper skills lead to better performance.

Only four in 10 tenured reps have participated in training in the last year.

Investments in dedicated training for tenured representatives increase job satisfaction and demonstrate the company's commitment to these representatives. Yet only four in 10 tenured representatives (41%) have participated in training in the last year. Of these, 55% perceived this training as very relevant for them.

Tenured representatives give the following advice on making training more relevant for them:

- Provide a choice of courses so representatives can focus on areas of development based on their experience.
- Link all programs to the "real world" so participants understand how they can

Diagnosis

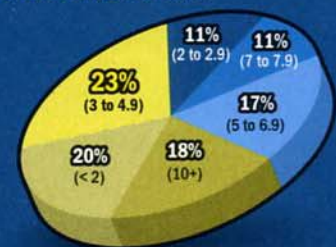
Your tenured reps are being neglected.

Prescription

Developing a training course for tenured reps based on their wants and needs can help you capitalize on your greatest asset.

Time to tenure

Number of years it took to become a tenured representative:



Source: Health Strategies Group, 2005

apply what they've learned to their day-to-day job. Case studies and hands-on exercises that involve brainstorming can help cement the application.

- Leverage tenured representatives' experience. Tenured representatives want to serve as sounding boards for new training programs and to mentor new representatives. If you mix new and tenured representatives in the same class, ask the tenured representatives to help with facilitation or to "champion" concepts within the course.

Key areas of interest for tenured representatives include:

- Business skill development.
 - Business analysis and strategy at territory, company and industry levels.
 - Managed care, including local implications.
 - Advanced clinical information.
 - The psychology of selling.
 - Mentoring skills.
 - Personal development.
 - Staying motivated.
 - Administrative tasks.
 - Time management.
 - Computer skills.
 - Financial and retirement planning.
- Tenured representatives prefer classroom training at their company headquarter-

Developing tenured reps

The who, what, when and how of training tenured reps

Who

Facilitators:

- Professional individuals with substantial field experience
- Physicians, pharmacists or other healthcare professionals

Participants:

- Tenured representatives only

What

Business skill development:

- Business analysis and strategy at territory, company and industry levels

- Managed care, including local implications
- Advanced clinical information
- The psychology of selling

Personal development:

- Staying motivated
- Administrative tasks
- Time management
- Computer skills
- Financial and retirement planning
- Mentoring skills

When

- Frequent classes
- A variety of time
- Refreshers during each course

How

- Live training with time for brainstorming
- "Preceptorship" format
- Audio or video self-study

