

Secrets of Breaking into Pharmaceutical Sales

Version 3.5

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“Sharing the inside secrets of a pharmaceutical sales recruiter with you!”

By: Pat Riley, President of 10 Abbott Street L.L.C. (pharmaceutical sales recruiter)

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www.pharmaceuticalinterviewquestions.com

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Secrets of Breaking Into Pharmaceutical Sales

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1 of 96

Acknowledgements:

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ
For saving my soul and giving me the courage to be a man of God.

Mom and Dad
For the unconditional love and support
Thank you for being my “life-support” during the tough times.

Darla
For the sweet love

“Super Dave” Wadsworth
For listening and sharing the passion for this project.

“Any my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus”
Philippians 4:19

About this Book

Congratulations and thank you for purchasing *Secrets of Breaking into Pharmaceutical Sales*. You have taken a positive first step in the process of becoming a pharmaceutical sales representative. Your desire to learn more about becoming a pharmaceutical sales representative is perfectly timed, as the demand for quality representatives is growing each year, but so is your competition.

Secrets of Breaking into Pharmaceutical Sales is overflowing with information and proven strategies to better educate and prepare you for a pharmaceutical sales career. Combining your desire with the information in this document can give you a huge advantage over your competition. A career move into pharmaceutical sales will require bold and courageous thinking.

“You have to be willing to learn some things you don’t know so you can begin to make better choices and decisions. To avoid ‘kissing the pavement’, you have to be willing to learn the Life Laws and how things work so that you can fold all of that into your Life Strategy.” Life Strategies by Phillip C. McGraw

When you are done with this book, you will know how to:

- Network your way into a pharmaceutical position
- Find the open and the “hidden” positions
- Build a very targeted resume that gets positive results
- Prepare for the interview process
- Correctly answer the interview questions
- Thoroughly research a company
- Review a listing of the major pharmaceutical companies.
- Sell yourself to the hiring manager as a person he/she MUST hire you NOW!

Take the time to read, study, and apply the information in each chapter to be able to properly position yourself for a rewarding and exciting pharmaceutical sales career.

About the Author

Pat Riley has been in the executive search field for more than 6 years. He began his pharmaceutical sales recruiting career with a leading Houston-based search firm. While at this firm, Pat Riley worked with two world-class pharmaceutical companies to build and expand their national pharmaceutical sales teams. Whether directly or through an affiliate program, Pat has worked with the majority of major pharmaceutical and medical companies. Pat earned awards for top performance in the placement of candidates on a national basis and, in the process, built one of the nation's leading pharmaceutical sales and medical sales recruiting practices.

In October of 2001 he started **10 Abbott Street L.L.C.**, an executive search firm specializing in pharmaceutical and software sales placements.

Also in 2001, Pat Riley and a business partner (with 9 years of pharmaceutical sales experience) launched www.pharmaceuticalinterviewquestions.com. This purpose of this site is to provide people with the tools to obtain a pharmaceutical sales position. This site is a “one-stop-shopping” pharmaceutical sales career portal, overflowing with all the information you need to educate and prepare yourself for a career in pharmaceutical sales.

Pat Riley is a native Texan who earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1992 from Texas A&M in Industrial Technology. After graduation, Pat Riley spent his first 5 years in various sales positions within corporate America.

Secrets of Breaking into Pharmaceutical Sales

INTRODUCTION	9
WHY YOUR TIMING IS PERFECT!.....	9
TIPS AND TRICKS TO GET YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR.....	12
SUMMARY	12
PERSONAL CONTACT	12
EIGHT METHODS OF CONTACTING PHARMACEUTICAL SALES REPRESENTATIVES AND/OR DISTRICT MANAGERS.....	13
1. <i>Physician Offices</i>	13
2. <i>Cold Calling (Direct Contact) Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives</i>	14
3. <i>Social Organizations</i>	16
4. <i>Pharmacists</i>	16
5. <i>Trade Shows (Continuing Medical Education Forums)</i>	17
6. <i>Medical Schools</i>	18
7. <i>Alumni Connections</i>	18
8. <i>Pharmaceutical Societies</i>	19
APPOINTMENT WITH A PHARMACEUTICAL SALES REPRESENTATIVE	19
<i>Materials from Representative</i>	20
<i>Referral Programs</i>	20
<i>Thank You Notes</i>	20
SIX DIFFERENT WAYS TO BREAK INTO PHARMACEUTICAL SALES	21
1. <i>Job Postings (Internet and Newspaper)</i>	21
2. <i>Job Boards/Career Boards</i>	21
3. <i>Newspaper</i>	22
4. <i>Recruiters (Headhunters)</i>	22
5. <i>Pharmaceutical Company Website Submission</i>	23
6. <i>Resume Distribution Services</i>	24
RESUMES, COVER LETTERS, AND BRAG BOOKS	25
SUMMARY	25
WHAT GIVES YOUR RESUME A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE?.....	25
<i>How a Hiring Manager “Reads” your Resume</i>	25
<i>Building your Resume</i>	26
<i>Information that Should NOT be on your Resume</i>	29
<i>Mistakes and Myths on a Resume</i>	29
<i>Corporate Resume Template (Blank)</i>	31
<i>Corporate Resume Template (Complete)</i>	32
<i>Recent College Graduate Resume Template (Blank)</i>	33
<i>Recent College Graduate Resume Template (Complete)</i>	34
COVER LETTERS	35
<i>Cover Letter Template</i>	36
<i>Resume and Cover Letter Distribution Protocol</i>	37
BRAG BOOK.....	37
PROFILE OF A PHARMACEUTICAL SALES REPRESENTATIVE	38
SUMMARY	38
BASIC REQUIREMENTS	38
CAREER PATH.....	39
CAREER DEVELOPMENT (TRAINING AND EDUCATION).....	40
ENTRY-LEVEL COMPENSATION EXPECTATIONS	41
OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME	41
TYPICAL DAY AND SCHEDULE REQUIREMENTS	44

SUMMARY	44
TYPES OF SALES TERRITORIES AND TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS	44
TYPICAL DAY OF AN EXCELLENT SALES REPRESENTATIVE.....	45
ANATOMY OF A SALES CALL.....	45
RESEARCH.....	46
SUMMARY	46
WHERE DO YOU START?	46
1. <i>Company Website</i>	46
2. <i>Clinical Studies</i>	47
3. <i>Competitors</i>	48
4. <i>Medical Professionals</i>	48
5. <i>Online Financial Sources</i>	48
6. <i>Industry Information</i>	49
7. <i>Websites</i>	49
8. <i>Consumer Media Publications</i>	50
9. <i>Company Matrix and Product Matrix</i>	50
THE INTERVIEW PROCESS.....	52
SUMMARY	52
WHAT OCCURS DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS	52
<i>When do you Discuss the Compensation Package?</i>	53
<i>Preparing for the Interview</i>	53
<i>Questions to Ask the Hiring Manager</i>	53
<i>Closing the Interview</i>	54
FOLLOW UP: THANK YOU NOTES.....	54
SAMPLE THANK YOU NOTES.....	56
<i>Sample 1</i>	56
<i>Sample 2</i>	56
CONCLUSION	57
APPENDIX A: PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY LISTING	58
PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY INFORMATION TABLE	58
GIFT #1: PHARMACEUTICAL SALES INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & ANSWERS.....	60
HOW THESE QUESTIONS WERE COMPILED	63
PHYSICAL PRESENTATION	64
PHARMACEUTICAL MARKET PERCEPTIONS.....	65
<i>Why are you interested in pharmaceutical sales?</i>	65
<i>Why are you interested in our company? What do you know about our products?</i>	65
<i>What is your perception of a typical day for a pharmaceutical representative?</i>	65
<i>What do you think is the most challenging aspect for a pharmaceutical representative?</i>	66
<i>What is your strategy for overcoming this challenge?</i>	66
<i>How do you get to meet with a doctor who does not see pharmaceutical representatives?</i>	66
<i>Why do you think you would be good at pharmaceutical sales?</i>	67
<i>How do you think you would get a physician to switch to your drug?</i>	67
<i>How would you approach someone who had used your drug, had a bad experience with it and stopped using it?</i>	68
<i>How many sales calls do you think a representative makes per day?</i>	68
<i>How do you get past the gatekeepers?</i>	68
<i>What can you do for us that someone else can't? or Why should I hire you?</i>	69
<i>What is your approach when you are trying to influence a thought leader?</i>	69
<i>What important trends do you see in our industry?</i>	69

DRIVE AND DETERMINATION.....	70
<i>In your current position, what goals have you accomplished? Not accomplished? Why?.....</i>	70
<i>What makes you out-perform your competitors or team members?.....</i>	70
<i>Tell me about when you've postponed action on goals you needed to accomplish. What were your reasons?</i>	70
<i>What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?.....</i>	71
<i>Do you like to win or hate to lose?.....</i>	71
<i>Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?.....</i>	71
<i>How do you balance your competitive spirit with a team mentality?</i>	71
SALES ABILITY.....	72
<i>How do you create value when your product is the same as your competitor's product?</i>	72
<i>What sales approach works best/least for you?</i>	72
<i>Sell me this product (pen, product brochure, desk).....</i>	72
<i>How did you turn around a "hostile" relationship into a sale?</i>	73
<i>Tell me about the sales process. What is the most important phase of a sales process? (i.e. preliminaries, investigation, demonstrating capability or closing)</i>	73
<i>Tell me about your current customers and current products. Why were they customers and how did you close them? Give examples.....</i>	74
<i>How have you helped increase sales/profits?</i>	74
<i>What do you consider your most significant accomplishment and why?</i>	74
<i>Describe four personality profiles (driver, amiable, expressive, and analytical). Which personality profile describes you? Which profile type do you enjoy working with the most? Which personality types do you NOT like dealing with?</i>	74
STRATEGIC PLANNING SKILLS	76
<i>You are given a territory and a list of physicians to call on. How would you organize and prioritize your call schedule?</i>	76
<i>How do you plan your activities?.....</i>	76
<i>What were your goals? How did you set and achieve them?</i>	76
<i>What do you do when your schedule has to be altered?</i>	77
JUDGMENT AND EVALUATION SKILLS	78
<i>Sales are flat in your territory and you are working a full 40-hour workweek. I tell you that a great time to see your customers is early morning or on Saturday or Sunday. What is your response?.....</i>	78
<i>Tell me about the last time you took a "risk".</i>	78
PRESSURE MANAGEMENT	79
<i>Tell me about a time when you were pursuing an activity in the presence of adversity. What was the outcome?.....</i>	79
<i>Tell me about a situation where you gave your all and you were not successful. Why not? What happened?</i>	79
<i>What are some of the obstacles you have had to overcome in your current position?</i>	79
<i>What are the highest-pressure situations you have been in recently?.....</i>	79
<i>When was the last time you lost your temper? What happened? What was the outcome?.....</i>	80
<i>How do you relax and relieve stress?</i>	80
TEAMWORK.....	81
<i>What is the most significant contribution you have made to your employer?.....</i>	81
<i>What do you value more: team or individual success?</i>	81
<i>Have you ever interacted in a group where your ideas were shot down?.....</i>	81
<i>Have you ever had to work with or for someone who was difficult to get along with? Tell me why. How did you handle them?.....</i>	81
<i>Tell me how you have had to modify your behavior in order to accomplish a goal.....</i>	82
<i>Tell me about your last manager.....</i>	82
<i>Have you ever had a situation where you and your boss (or coworker) did not agree?.....</i>	82

<i>How did you resolve the problem?.....</i>	83
GENERAL BUSINESS DISCERNMENT (BUSINESS SAVVY).....	84
<i>If you inherited a very successful sales territory, would you add or change anything?.....</i>	84
<i>How would you build a virgin territory? Tell me your thought process.</i>	84
<i>Do you consider yourself entrepreneurial? Why or why not?.....</i>	84
<i>How do you gain access to a decision maker?.....</i>	84
<i>Tell me about a set back in your career plan?</i>	85
<i>Who do you consider the mentor in your life? Who has had the most influence on your life and why?</i>	
<i>How would they describe you?</i>	85
<i>How do you keep up with current events?.....</i>	85
FINAL NOTE	86
GIFT #2: FOUR EXAMPLES OF PROVEN PHARMACEUTICAL SALES RESUMES THAT RESULTED IN JOB OFFERS!	87
GIFT #3: LEARN HOW TO CREATE A KEYWORD/ASCII RESUME TO UPLOAD ON THE INTERNET	92

Introduction

Why your Timing is Perfect!

- **The pharmaceutical industry is a GROWTH industry**
When assessing a career move into a different industry, evaluate the industry based on the criteria of past financial performance and future growth potential. You will be pleased to know the pharmaceutical industry has a positive financial track record and a positive future based on the amount of investment in research and development. The table below shows a positive sales track record and a positive increase in research and development expenditures. (Hint: use this information in an interview when the hiring manager asks why you want to go into pharmaceutical sales.)

Year	Sales	% Increase	Research and Development Expenditures	% Increase
1997	110.8	9.1%	19.0	12.4%
1998	124.6	12.4%	21.0	10.8%
1999	153.3	23.0%	22.7	7.9 %
2000*	164.6	7.4%	25.6	13.0 %
2001*	178.1	8.2%	30.5	18.7 %

* Estimated

Sales and Expenditures figures are in millions

Research and Development expenditures include US and Abroad combined expenditures

Source: Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, *Pharmaceutical Industry Profile 2001* (www.PhRMA.org) phone number (202.835.3400).

- **Current sales force model used by pharmaceutical companies**
The current sales force model for a large pharmaceutical company has a rate of one district manager to six to nine sales representatives in a team or “pod” hierarchy. Some large metro areas will have three to four district managers responsible for different drugs and teams, so the number of sales representatives in a large metro area with a large company can range from 18 to 36. The turnover ratio with pharmaceutical sales representatives is low compared to other industries, but there is a continued need to hire new representatives because of the high number of sales representatives required in this sales model. The need for talented pharmaceutical sales representatives will continue to grow based on the current sales force model.
- **Continued investment in drug research and development**
Pharmaceutical companies invest more in research and development than any other industry. Because of the large potential profit, pharmaceutical companies spend millions of dollars to develop and market new products. The table below indicates the investment in the future (research and development) of the pharmaceutical industry in comparison to other industries.

Industry	Research and Development Expenditures as a percentage of sales
Pharmaceutical	15.6 %
Computer Software and Services	10.5 %
Aerospace and Defense	3.9 %
Automotive	3.5 %

Source: PhRMA *Pharmaceutical Industry Profile 2001*, (www.PhRMA.org) phone number (202.835.3400).

As you can see, pharmaceutical companies invest a tremendous amount of revenue in research and development. According to PhRMA *Pharmaceutical Industry Profile 2001*, an estimated \$30.5 million was spent in 2001 on research and development alone. However, the number of drugs that make it to market is very low. It is not uncommon for pharmaceutical companies to have only one drug make it to market out of 10 drugs in research and development. Most major pharmaceutical companies promote 4 to 5 drugs. Over 70% of a pharmaceutical company's revenue comes from only 20% of the drugs (PhRMA *Pharmaceutical Industry Profile 2001*). The financial risk is high, but the potential financial reward is higher. Research and development is the future of a pharmaceutical company. Thus, with such a commitment to the future, a career in pharmaceutical sales is a solid choice.

- **Marketing of new products**

The result of the large investment in research and development is an increasing number of new drugs on the market. Pharmaceutical companies spend millions on product promotion and brand awareness. To gain a competitive advantage, pharmaceutical companies are changing they way they market their products. They have advanced beyond their traditional advertising target market (medical professionals) and are trying to create end-user demand. Have you noticed the increased number of commercials for drugs? The pharmaceutical companies want potential customers to walk into a medical professional's office and ask for their drug by name. This type of "pulling" marketing is one advantage of working for a larger pharmaceutical company.

- **The pharmaceutical industry is recession proof**

There will always be sickness. People will continue to need drugs to assist in the healing process as well as to retain a high quality of life. Regardless of the valuation of the stock market or political situations, the medical/pharmaceutical industry is a solid career choice.

- **Aging of US population and increasing life expectancies**

The baby boomers represent one of the largest target markets in the US economy. The auto industry knows this and so does the pharmaceutical industry. As the boomers continue to age, their spending habits will change. The baby boomer market will spend more on healthcare products than any other market group. The amount of dollars spent by the baby boomer market will continue to grow rapidly

until 2015. People are also living longer due to advances in science, health, diet, and medications. As life expectancy continues to grow, so will the dependence on drugs to maintain a normal lifestyle.

- **Advances in genetic (DNA) technology**

The next frontier in pharmaceutical sales is based on the understanding of human DNA. Recently, the federal government funded a project called the “US Human Genome Project” to uncover the mystery behind DNA. In essence, researchers are able to unravel the extremely complex DNA chain. With this information, researchers will be able to provide custom cures based on your unique DNA sequence. Researchers will also be able to locate genetic propensities or diseases and develop a custom cure at the DNA level. This is truly an exciting field and the possibilities are unlimited. However, these types of innovative products will take several years to develop and bring to market. Keep an eye on the larger pharmaceutical companies and see who forges strategic alliances with each other.

Bottom line:

You have been provided with several compelling reasons why the pharmaceutical industry is a great career choice. The industry has a proven track record of success and is investing heavily in its future. Advances in technology, quality of life, and life expectancy all add up positively in your favor. Study the remaining chapters, get an interview, and secure your future as a pharmaceutical sales representative in a proven industry!

Tips and Tricks to Get Your Foot in the Door

Summary

In this chapter, we will provide you with several proven strategies on how to “Break into Pharmaceutical Sales” through networking. This chapter includes ways to find pharmaceutical sales representatives, methods and scripts on how to approach pharmaceutical sales representatives, questions to ask during your appointments, and other ways to break into pharmaceutical sales. Your networking should focus on four critical areas: pharmaceutical representatives, answering job postings, job boards, and working with recruiters.

To become good at networking, you must ask, “Who do you know?” and “Do they know anyone else?” Remember this valuable saying:

It’s not WHO you know, but who THEY know!

Personal Contact

To set yourself apart from your competition, you must take the extra time to establish personal contacts within your network. Use the phone, schedule appointments, make lunch dates, and write thank you notes. Use your creativity to get noticed and be professional in your approach. People like to help their friends. Maintain a positive, upbeat, persistent attitude and remain patient.

Why do you want to speak to a sales representative or district manager?

Speaking with a pharmaceutical sales representative or district manager is probably the best way to break into the industry. You want to build a relationship with existing pharmaceutical sales representatives and district managers for several reasons. First, a referral from a representative to their manager is golden. The referral usually carries more weight than a resume from any other source. Second, they know the industry and might be able to provide you with a list of contact names (i.e., other sales representatives, hiring managers, or recruiters) or existing or potential open positions.

Your goal in meeting with a pharmaceutical representative or district manager is to learn as much as possible about the pharmaceutical industry and evaluate this opportunity as a potential career move. If possible, ask the representative for permission to ride with them to see what their typical day is like (if you are able to ride with a sales representative, use this information in future interviews). While observing the sales representative, ask questions about the industry, company, products, sales techniques and express why you are interested in pharmaceutical sales. While this is not a formal interview by any means, the impression you leave with this sales representative will influence their decision to refer you to their hiring manager.

How do you contact pharmaceutical sales representatives?

Who are they and how do I meet them? The answer to both of these questions is your network. Your network with the people listed in the following sections that personally know the representatives or medical professionals that have regular contact with

pharmaceutical sales representatives. These target professionals are your family physician, hospital pharmacists or personnel in physician's offices.

Eight Methods of Contacting Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives and/or District Managers

1. Physician Offices

Speaking with your family physician is a great place to start your networking. If you do not see a physician regularly, ask a family member for the name of their physician. If you use this method, use your family member's name as a referral. When you make the call to the physician or office manager, politely ask to schedule a brief appointment of 10 minutes or less. Target either an internal medicine or family practice physician, as they have the most pharmaceutical companies calling on them. Do not worry if you do not receive an immediate call back. However, if you are not able to speak with the physician, try to speak with the office manager or head nurse. Everybody loves to talk about themselves and their job and would be flattered that you value their opinion.

The Goal of Speaking to a Physician

Your goal is to speak with the physician to get their expert opinion on the medical profession as a next career move and obtain the names and numbers of pharmaceutical sales representatives currently calling on them. Keep the meetings brief and ask just a few questions to get maximum information. The best possible scenario is that you get to copy their Rolodex of pharmaceutical sales representative business cards!

Sample Phone Call Script

"Hello, this is (your name). I'm a patient of Dr. X (or I am X's brother), and I am thinking about a career in pharmaceutical sales. I would be grateful for Dr. X's advice and would love an opportunity to learn from his extensive knowledge. Would Dr. X have 10 minutes to briefly meet with me sometime?"

Sample Questions and Script for your Appointment

"Hi, Dr. X. Thank you for meeting with me. I am thinking about a career in pharmaceutical sales and would be grateful for your advice and to learn from your extensive knowledge."

- *What pharmaceutical companies do you respect?*
- *Which companies consistently bring quality products to market in your opinion?*
- *Tell me about your favorite sales representative and why do like him/her? What value to they bring to you?*
- *Can you tell me about some of the other representatives who call on you?*
- *Would you feel comfortable sharing the names of some representatives so that I can learn from them?*
- *Can you offer any other advice as I pursue a career in pharmaceutical sales?*

Thank You Follow-up

Follow up with an immediate (within 24 hours) handwritten thank you note. Carry a stack of thank you notes and stamps with you in the car. A handwritten card is seldom done and it really separates you from your competition.

2. Cold Calling (Direct Contact) Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives

As you now know, speaking directly with pharmaceutical sales representatives is a very effective method of breaking into pharmaceutical sales. Direct calling is another valuable tool. In the cold call, you do not have any referral names to get you past the initial small talk. You only have a few minutes to gain rapport and communicate your desire to break into the industry.

Where and How do you find pharmaceutical sales representatives?

Catching the representatives is an art and you need to find the right opportunity. Try going to a large hospital or a medical professional building and look for pharmaceutical sales representatives in the cafeteria, hallways, or waiting rooms. The typical pharmaceutical representative will be well dressed with a nice leather handbag, briefcase, or a small suitcase on wheels (the suitcases on wheels contain sample drugs and product promotion literature).

The lobby is a very good place to catch the representatives. Try to position yourself in an area where you can see the pharmaceutical sales representatives getting off the elevators or when they finish their pay phone duties. The best time to catch a representative is in the morning between 8:30 and 10:00 am and the afternoon between 1:00 and 2:00 pm. Lunchtime is also an excellent time.

Tips on Approaching

Remember, you just want to meet them and introduce yourself. Your goal is to get their business card or contact information for a later meeting, not to have an interview with them in the lobby of the hospital. Remember to be confident, humble, and sincere. If it is not a good time or they look like they are rushed, don't push it. Make sure you physically approach them from the front rather than chasing them from the back (makes a better first impression).

Sample Script

"Hi, Name (it will be on his name badge.) I am (your name) and am very interested in doing what you do for a career. I would be grateful to learn from your experience. Would you be open to sitting down and briefly talking about your job sometime?"

Favorite Watering Holes

Just like everyone else, birds of feather flock together and eat together. The same holds true for the pharmaceutical industry. Also, pharmaceutical representatives typically do not have a central office, so they usually meet at restaurants (sometimes hotels) for team meetings. When you meet a pharmaceutical sales representative, ask them where they have team meetings or where the dining hot spots are. The best time to catch them for breakfast is between 7:00 and 9:30 am. Arrive early, have breakfast, and wait for a break in the flow of the meeting to approach the table and introduce yourself and tell them your intentions.

Sample Script

“Hi, I am (your name.) Are you all with a pharmaceutical company?” If they say yes, respond by saying, “I am very interested in doing what you do for a career and I would love to learn from you and your experience.” Could I meet with one of you briefly at your convenience?”

Make sure you get contact information, such as a business card.

Phone Contact

When given the choice of numbers to contact the sales representative, first use the cell phone, and then use the pager number. The best time to reach the pharmaceutical sales representatives are:

- In the morning before they make their first call (8:15-9:00 am) or throughout the morning
- Lunch time or right after lunch
- At or around 5:00 pm when their day is ending and they are in their car

As you will see, they are a mobile sales force and making contact can be a frustrating game of hit or miss.

Regarding the use of their home phone number, we suggest you try between 8:00 and 9:15 pm. Do not call later than 9:15 pm.

Remember to be persistent and patient. You are busy and so are they. It may take you several days to make contact. You must be prepared to leave several phone messages that are positive, upbeat, and concise.

Sample Phone Call Script

“Hello, my name is John Doe. X suggested I talk with you. He/she said that you would be a good person to speak with about becoming a pharmaceutical sales representative. I would be grateful for your advice and an opportunity to learn from your experience. I would love to meet with you briefly at your convenience. It would be great if you would call me back at (your phone number). I look forward to talking with you.”

Note: Some people are busy and they may get back with you two or three days later or two weeks later. While some representatives have time for your call, others do not. Be patient and be professionally persistent.

When the representative *does* return your call, say the same thing as above and try to schedule a meeting with them. Also, make sure you have your “90-second commercial” rehearsed and ready.

Note: Some representatives will be willing to help you and others will not. If you do encounter someone that is unwilling to help, simply thank them for their time and try to get another contact in the company through networking. If they respond by saying, “we are not hiring” in a tone that sounds like they won’t help you, ask if you can call them back once a month to see if there are any changes. Also, you may ask them if they know of any other companies that are hiring (Get a meeting from a meeting).

3. Social Organizations

This is one of the best methods of networking and finding key contacts, but one of the most underutilized. Think outside of your immediate group of friends and sphere of influence. You will have to ask yourself, “Who do I know?” and the most important question, “Who do *they* know?”

Grab a sheet of paper and start listing the names and numbers of people you know. Do not leave anybody off the list. The one person left off the list might have a contact that could lead to your pharmaceutical sales position. Tell them that you are trying break into pharmaceutical sales and ask them if they know anybody who could provide you with assistance. Ask them if they know a representative or someone (doctor, pharmacist) that has contacts with representatives. This could be a direct relationship they have or a relationship their relatives, friends, or co-workers have. Do not forget to get their phone numbers.

Here are just a few groups to start you thinking: family, friends, former co-workers, social groups, social clubs, Church organizations (some of the larger churches have “In Between-Job-Ministries” that provide free services and great networking opportunities), neighbors, homeowners groups, sports buddies, and hobby buddies.

Send out an email to all of your buddies in your email address book. The purpose is two fold: first, to let them know your intentions and second, to give them your resume as a Microsoft Word attachment. The email should not contain personal information and should be generic enough so they can forward your information to the next contact. Include in your message that you are looking for a pharmaceutical or medical sales position and ask them to forward your resume to anybody that they think can help you reach your goal.

If you are sending out holiday cards, think about including a note about your job search along with your family picture.

4. Pharmacists

When networking with pharmacists, we suggest that you focus your efforts on hospital pharmacists rather than retail pharmacists (i.e. Walgreen’s, Eckerd’s). Due to the high number of different pharmacists in a retail chain pharmacy and national buying contracts, most of the pharmaceutical companies have stopped calling on retail pharmacists.

When targeting a hospital pharmacist, try speaking directly to the Pharmacy Director or Assistant Director. We recommend that you start your networking at one of the smaller hospitals (200 or less beds) first, and then move on to the larger hospitals. Try to schedule an appointment ahead of time, as pharmacists are very busy. The appointment should be no more than 15 minutes.

The Goal of Speaking to a Pharmacist

Your goal is to speak with the pharmacist to get their expert opinion on the medical profession as a career move and obtain the names and numbers of pharmaceutical sales

representatives currently calling on them. Keep the meeting brief and ask just a few questions to get the maximum information. The best possible scenario is that you get to copy their Rolodex of pharmaceutical sales representative business cards!

Sample Phone Call Script

“Hello, this is (your name). I would like to speak to either the Pharmacy Director or the Assistant Director. I am looking for some advice about the pharmaceutical industry. More specifically, I would like to learn about the pharmaceutical sales industry as my next career move. I thought of your hospital because my relatives have been patients and I was very impressed with the professionalism of the staff. Would it be possible to meet with (Name) for a few minutes at his/her convenience?”

Sample Questions and Script for your Appointment

“Hi, (Name), thank you for meeting with me. I am considering a career in pharmaceutical sales and would be grateful for your advice and the opportunity to learn from your extensive knowledge.”

- *What do you think about this industry as a career?*
- *In your opinion, what makes a “good” representative?*
- *Are there any companies that you think would be great for a career?*
- *Could you share the names of some representatives that call on you?*

Thank You Follow-up

Follow up with an immediate (within 24 hours) handwritten thank you card. Carry a stack of thank you cards and stamps with you in the car. A handwritten card is seldom done and it really separates you from your competition.

5. Trade Shows (Continuing Medical Education Forums)

In layman’s terms, this section refers to trade shows. A trade show is an outstanding opportunity to network and is the only place that brings together a huge number of pharmaceutical companies and their customers in one place. Most of these “trade shows” are called forums and are conducted by medical schools at hotels. One of the drawing forces to these forums is the industry-leading lecturers that provide information on the latest advances in science and research. Pharmaceutical companies have booths filled with top sales representatives and district managers hoping to meet with their customers. Capitalize on this excellent networking opportunity by bringing several copies of your resume and speaking to as many people as you can about your desire to break into pharmaceutical sales.

One important contact you should make is the Continuing Medical Education (CME) coordinator. The CME coordinator organizes these events and has the yearly schedule and names of the exhibitors (i.e., sales representatives and hiring authorities). Take the time to introduce yourself and tell them about your intentions. The best possible scenario is to get a list of all of the participating pharmaceutical sales representatives.

If you do not have a medical school in your city, many large hospitals also have CME events like this. You can also pull forum schedules off of medical school websites. The

drawback to this method is the infrequency of these events – some only occur every other month.

Gaining entrance to a trade show can be tricky. At most of the larger trade shows, gate-keepers monitor the attendees by looking for name badges or armbands. You must be creative to get past them. However, remain honest and truthful in your speech and actions. Here are a couple of suggestions that have worked:

- Buy a One-Day Pass to the show. This may be expensive (\$200.00 and up), but you are investing in your career-not just a trade show.
- Ask a friend who is working the show or a “new” friend to help you gain entrance to the show. Finding a new friend is easy. Just frequent the coffee carts, restaurants or phone banks outside of the entrance and introduce yourself to your “new” friend and tell them of your intentions of becoming a pharmaceutical sales representative (it is amazing what a cup of coffee can get you these days!)
- Walk into the show like you know what you are doing---Confident that you look like a pharmaceutical sales representative.

6. Medical Schools

Contact the larger medical schools in your area and try to speak to the Director of CME. Most of the offices in the CME program will have a person responsible for relationships with pharmaceutical companies. Call and ask to speak to this person.

The Goal of Speaking to a CME Director

Your goal of speaking with the CME Director is to get their expert opinion on the medical profession as a next career move and obtain the names and numbers of pharmaceutical sales representatives currently calling on them. Keep the meetings brief and ask just a few questions to get the maximum information. The best possible scenario is that you get to copy their Rolodex of pharmaceutical sales representatives’ business cards!

Sample Phone Call Script

Use the same script as for the pharmacist, but change the name to the Director of CME.

7. Alumni Connections

Do not forget about your Alma Mater. This is another great source of contacts, because most of them have a similar background (i.e., college degree, career-focused).

If you are a recent college graduate, most colleges have a career center that caters to you. Get to know a career counselor. They spend 40 hours a week working with hiring authorities from some of the largest companies. Also, become familiar with your Alma Mater’s career websites. Add their websites to your “favorites” list.

Colleges also have Alumni Centers that work with graduates who have experience in corporate America. The bond between alumni is strong and can really be used to your advantage.

Capitalize on your social relationships, such as fraternities, sororities, clubs, and associations. Call them to catch up and mention your job search intentions.

8. Pharmaceutical Societies

After you network and develop a relationship with a representative, you may have access into this group. Some cities have a Pharmaceutical Society in which representatives from the companies are members. They will usually meet for lunch or happy hour once a month and many of the representatives will be in attendance. If you get this opportunity, you have struck gold! He or she will introduce you to everybody. After you get their cards, set up a meeting to discuss your career intentions.

90-second Commercial

After you have made your initial approach and when you are asked about yourself, you must have your 90-second commercial memorized and ready to go in an instant. Your answer must be clear and concise.

The “90-second commercial” is about you, what you have done, and why they should hire you. This needs to be concise and focused on your RECENT accomplishments.

90-second Commercial Script

- *Hello, my name is “X”.*
- *I am interested in a pharmaceutical sales position with your company. I am responding to a job posting found in “X”.*
- *I am currently with (or I was most recently with) company “X”, where my title was “X”. While in this position, I sold “X” products and earned the following awards: “X”, “X”, and “X”. I increased sales “X”, “X”, and “X”, resulting in an additional “X” dollars in revenue. My clients were “X” and my contact points were “X”.*
- *I am interested in making a career move into pharmaceutical sales because of “X”, “X”, and “X”.*
- *I received my 4-year degree from “X” University with the following honors: “X”, “X”, and “X”.*
- *My first job out of school was “X”, where I was responsible for “X”. While at company “X”, I was in charge of “X” or accomplished “X”. I chose to further my career by leaving this company and going to work for company “X”.*
- *Repeat until you are at your most recent position.*

Appointment with a Pharmaceutical Sales Representative

Before you meet with a representative, see the Research Section to find out how to set yourself apart. Your objective is to present yourself as a prepared professional interested in learning more about pharmaceutical sales. You want to learn from them and ask their advice. The most important thing is that the representative likes you. Rapport is the single most important factor in your success. They can talk with many qualified people, but they will not refer people they do not like. The sales representative does not have the authority to hire you, but he/she can definitely *influence* the hiring manager. Treat this like an

actual interview; be at the top of your game. You must have performed your company research, developed a quality resume, have the right attitude and wear the right attire.

Remember that most people like to talk about themselves, so during the appointment be sure to ask some of the following questions:

- What do you enjoy about your job?
- What is the biggest challenge, in your opinion?
- How did you break into pharmaceutical sales?
- What is your career background?
- What is the typical career path for a pharmaceutical sales representative?
- Tell me about your typical day, territory, and call points.
- How do you sell against your competition?
- What trade associations do you participate in? What pharmaceutical-specific media do you review?
- What attributes do you think are needed to do this job?
- Where do you see the industry going in the next 5 years?
- Will you forward my resume to the hiring authority? Can I contact you every couple of weeks for a job opening update?
- Who else do you know that I could meet with?
- Do you have a business card?

Materials from Representative

To show you are interested in what they sell, see if they will give you a promotional piece and product monograph for each drug. Also, when you both hit it off and you get an interview with the hiring manager, be sure to get the inside track on the hiring manager's personality and needs.

Referral Programs

Most pharmaceutical companies have a formal referral program in place to encourage employees to keep their eyes open for other talented individuals in the industry. A finder's fee or bounty is paid to a company employee for the referral *and hiring* of the candidate. Candidates referred in this manner have a higher job placement ratio than non-referred candidates. Hiring managers prefer to hire from internal referral programs because of the perceived stamp of approval on the referred candidate. This being said, know that your desire to break into pharmaceutical sales can benefit an existing sales representative. Keep this in the back of your mind when contacting a pharmaceutical sales representative.

Thank You Notes

Thank you notes must be written the same day of the appointment. Either a letter or an email will work. The note should thank the pharmaceutical sales representative for their time, express enthusiasm about the pharmaceutical industry and the opportunity to work within the industry, demonstrate your knowledge of the company (products, potential growth), and provide next-step information with contact numbers.

Six Different Ways to Break into Pharmaceutical Sales

1. Job Postings (Internet and Newspaper)

A few years ago, a large number of pharmaceutical sales job postings were found in the Sunday newspaper. However, due to the growth of the Internet, this method of job posting is now online rather than in print. Companies are posting more and more job openings on the Internet. Yes, you still find job postings in the newspaper, but the trend is moving toward the Internet. In the later part of this chapter, we will provide you with several top Internet job-posting career boards.

Regardless of how you find the job opening (Internet or the newspaper), we strongly suggest that **you pick up the phone and ask to speak to the hiring authority responsible for the job posting.** Ask to speak to the hiring manager for that job posting or at least try to reach someone in human resources. The purpose is to stand out from your competition by being persistent and patient with a positive attitude. In today's market, the hiring authorities are receiving HUNDREDS of resumes a week for one or two job postings. You want the hiring manager to dig for your resume and bring it to the top of the stack. Once you have established contact with the hiring authority, make sure you have your "90-second commercial" rehearsed and ready to go.

2. Job Boards/Career Boards

Nothing has had more impact on the job search market in the last few years than job or career boards. Job boards have changed the way companies find people and the way people find jobs. However, job boards are only one small piece of the puzzle. You must combine searching job boards with the other techniques presented in this book to have a thorough job search.

Resume Exposure and Resume Risk

One word of caution about posting your resume on any major job board: if a hiring manager can see your resume, so can your existing employer. **Posting your resume on job boards maximizes both your resume exposure and your resume risk.** Resume exposure is beneficial as long as the right person is viewing your resume. Resume risk is allowing the wrong person to view your resume, such as your current employer. If you are currently employed and are concerned about the confidentiality of your job search, think about "blind posting" your resume. A blind-posted resume should NOT have your real contact information, but rather an alias email address. Also, the name of your current company is removed from your resume, but the important job performance information is still contained.

Resume Key Words

Before you register, or submit your resume to a job board, make sure your resume contains the right key words to break into pharmaceutical sales. Key words are extremely important on your resume, because hiring authorities use these key words to search the resume database contained on job boards and their internal recruiting software.

The most important key word or combination of key words for your job search is **pharmaceutical sales** (most people include this in the objective if they do not have

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Secrets of Breaking Into Pharmaceutical Sales

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actual pharmaceutical sales experience). The following key words should be included on your resume: sales, ranked, quota, award, increased sales, placed, territory, promoted, and developed.

Some of the better job boards or career sites include:

- www.monster.com
- www.headhunter.net
- www.hotjobs.net
- www.medzilla.com
- www.careerbuilder.com
- www.vault.com
- www.collegerecruiter.com

3. Newspaper

Newspapers are still a good source to find job opportunities. Most of the large pharmaceutical companies will post their job postings in the Sunday paper two to three weeks before the actual interview.

One downside to this type of job posting or advertising is that your competition is also applying to the same posting. Due to the large number of interested applicants, some of these interviews turn into “cattle calls” with two to three hundred candidates applying for one or two positions. Pharmaceutical companies will bring in several hiring managers and interview candidates all day. In most cases, the candidates will go through three to five interviews in one day with multiple hiring managers. Only the top candidates will be brought back for the final round of interviews.

*In order to advance to the to the next round, you **must** be prepared.* With so many managers reviewing your resume, be ready for all types of questions. Maintaining a positive, upbeat attitude through this barrage of questions is extremely important. Before you interview for any of these job postings, we strongly suggest that you role-play with the questions and answers provided in this book, know your resume, and perform your research on the company (i.e., company size, products, and product uses).

The “cattle call” interview is not the only type of interview process that results from newspaper job postings. Your resume will typically be received and reviewed by a hiring authority and, if your resume is selected, you will be contacted with in a few days to set up a phone screen or a face-to-face first round interview. Again, if you want to stand out from your competition, we suggest that you communicate with a hiring authority. Do not just send your resume and wait for the phone to ring or an email to appear on your computer.

4. Recruiters (Headhunters)

Recruiters are an excellent way to maximize your resume exposure and limit your resume risk. Most recruiters will know of several pharmaceutical or medical sales positions with multiple companies in your area. Unlike human resource managers from one company, who work a very limited number of jobs, recruiters can work several jobs from multiple

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companies. Most pharmaceutical/medical recruiters are contingency recruiters, which means they do not get paid unless you accept a job that they presented to you (in contingency recruiting, the hiring company pays the recruiter's fee). Therefore, it is in the recruiter's best interest to place you as quickly as possible. Recruiters also bring industry knowledge, territory knowledge, and resume expertise to the table for your benefit. It is not uncommon for a recruiter to work with the candidate to "spiff-up" or improve their resume and coach the candidate through the interview process. We recommend that you get to know several recruiters in your area. Set up interviews with the recruiters, meet them, and build professional working relationships with them so you can trust them with your resume and career.

How do I get a recruiter to work for me?

The answer is very simple. Return calls quickly and help them help you. If you are presented with a position that does not interest you, politely tell them that you do not want your resume submitted for this opportunity rather than stringing the interview process along. If you really want to move to the top of the recruiter's list, give them names and numbers of other people who might be interested in this position. I suggest you develop a "friend network". A friend network is your group of friends who are open to hearing about other career opportunities. Gain their permission to share their names and numbers with recruiters. Sharing these names and numbers with a recruiter motivates them to be a great source in return. Who do you think the recruiter is going to call first when he/she has another to fill?

Where do I find recruiters?

Ask a pharmaceutical sales representative for the names of recruiters that he/she knows, (use the techniques presented earlier in this section on how to find pharmaceutical sales representatives). Odds are that most pharmaceutical representatives have worked with or know somebody who has worked with a recruiter.

Internet

Go to an Internet search engine (YAHOO, MSN, AOL) and type in or try different combinations of the following keywords: pharmaceutical, medical, headhunter, recruiter, search firm, executive search, sales, plus your city and state.

Job/Career Boards

Use the job/career boards to find recruiters as well as job postings. Identify the name of the recruiter posting the job and contact them. The majority of positions found on job boards are posted by recruiting firms. Do not just reply to the job posting; pick up the phone and ask to speak to the recruiter handling this opening. If this recruiter is not located in your area, ask the recruiter for the name of a recruiter they trust in your area.

Phone Book

Look under employment or staffing.

5. Pharmaceutical Company Website Submission

Blindly submitting your resume to a company website in response to a job posting is not very effective and usually results in disappointment. Hiring authorities receive hundreds

of resumes a day from all over the world. The odds are not in your favor that a hiring authority will actually review your resume. Most resumes are automatically scanned and processed directly into the database with thousands of other resumes. If you choose to submit your resume to a company website, we suggest that you go one step further and initiate contact with a hiring authority regarding the receipt of your resume.

Direct to Company

Another strategy is to contact the company directly and ask to speak with a local sales representative. Tell them who you are and what your intentions are. Most of the time you will be directed to a human resource manager, but that is not your goal. Your goal is get the name and contact number for the local sales representative or hiring manager in your area.

6. Resume Distribution Services

This is a relatively new area in job searching, but if used correctly it can maximize your resume exposure to the right people. Resume distribution services usually require a small fee to use their services. In most cases you can send your resume to recruiters or specific companies in a matter of seconds over the Internet. You do not have to spend hours scouring the Internet for recruiters and contacting them. The resumes are usually sent directly to a recruiter's email box and/or a human resource manager's email box. In most cases, the receipt of resumes is viewed positively because talent is delivered free of charge to their email box, thus making their recruiting work easier.

Here is a listing of a couple of these sites:

www.resumezapper.com

www.resumblaster.com

www.resumeaction.com

Resumes, Cover Letters, and Brag Books

Summary

In this chapter, we will instruct you on the proper format and content of a proven resume. The resume is probably one of the most important components of your pharmaceutical sales job hunt. You've heard that a picture is worth a thousand words, but a good resume can be worth *thousands of dollars*. Therefore, the resume must accurately and concisely articulate who you are, what you have accomplished and what your desired position is. The resume should be clear, concise, factual and truthful.

There are dozens of great resume guides and books on the market. However, our discussion focuses on the ideal pharmaceutical resume. Generally speaking, most resume creation rules apply to pharmaceutical resumes, but we are going provide you with the tools that will give your resume a competitive advantage.

What Gives your Resume a Competitive Advantage?

Accomplishments, Accomplishments, Accomplishments!

Accomplishments are crucial to a great resume because they articulate your professional performance or results. Hiring managers use your past performance as a key indicator to predict your future performance (i.e., if you were a quota buster in your last position, you will most likely be a quota buster in your next position). Accomplishments should be objective, quantitative, and measurable. Hiring managers like to see “dollars, numbers, and percents” on your resume. Start each accomplishment with an action verb. Also, use bullet points to set off your accomplishments. Do not bury your accomplishments in paragraph form. Here are some examples:

- Increased sales 50%, resulting in \$60,000 additional revenue
- Increased customer base 200% in 6 months
- Quota Buster May 2001, June 2001, August 2001
- Earned the Pinnacle Award 2000 for top sales in the country
- Earned the Rookie of the Year award for 2000
- Earned Hawaii trip for biggest sale in 2000

Accomplishments articulate results and results get you hired!

How a Hiring Manager “Reads” your Resume

The section will walk you through the way a hiring manager reviews or “walks through” your resume. Create a resume that is consistent with the hiring manager’s resume expectations (in format and content presentation). Resumes that are difficult to read usually do not get read.

The hiring manager is going to start at the top of your resume and take the following path:

1. **Name and Location Verification:** Ensuring you are not a duplicate candidate. Just like in real estate, location is everything (companies do not want to incur relocation expenses because they want the ideal candidate to be local and familiar with the area).
2. **Objective:** The hiring manager will *briefly* read your objective.
3. **Most Recent Position:** This is a very important component of the resume because it contains the most recent, pertinent, and relevant information on the resume. Expect the hiring manager to focus their questions on your most recent position.
4. **Education Verification:** If the hiring manager is serious about hiring you, they will verify your degree and date of graduation. Your graduation date is the starting point for your business career. *A four-year degree is required to interview for a pharmaceutical sales position.*
5. **Remaining Positions:** After reviewing your current position, the hiring manager will review your remaining positions in reverse chronological order, starting with your graduation date and your oldest position moving forward to your most recent position. Within each position, the hiring manager is looking at a track record of performance. Your responsibilities should reflect an increase with each position. The hiring manager wants to hire a proven performer who will meet or exceed their sales numbers.

Building your Resume

There are three primary formats of resumes: functional, chronological, and hybrid. In pharmaceutical sales, the **chronological** resume is the most widely used and accepted. The chronological format is preferred because the hiring manager can quickly get a snapshot of your career. Yes, the 10-second rule is true with hiring managers. Your resume only has 10 seconds to impress the hiring manager.

We will walk through each component of the resume and provide you with building instructions followed by examples.

We have also provided two resume templates and two sample resumes. One resume template is for an individual already employed in corporate America and the other is for a recent college graduate.

Name and Contact Information

This is the easiest section of your resume, but it is very important that you prevent “typos”. We cannot stress the importance of accurate contact information (i.e., the correct spelling of your name and correct phone numbers and email address). Double-check this information, especially your phone number. Without the right phone number, the hiring manager **cannot** talk to you about the job opportunity.

Including your work phone number is a judgment call. If you **do** include your work number, you need to be prepared to talk about your career at work or at least be able to set up a time to discuss the opportunity at a later time away from work. If you have more than one phone number at which you can be reached (home, mobile, pager, work), include them as well.

Objective

Keep the objective short and to the point!

Indicate the job title and industry you desire with this career move, but do NOT be too specific or limiting. If you are too specific in your objective, you could eliminate yourself from being considered for other opportunities. This holds true especially for the recent graduate.

Poor Example: *"I want a pharmaceutical sales job that will leverage my education and synergize my strengths with company strengths; thus allowing me to maximize company profits in the largest medical center in the country."* This is true, but overly fluffy and the hiring manager will see right through this objective statement.

Good Example: *"I am seeking a pharmaceutical sales position with an industry-leading company."* This objective statement indicates that you want a sales position with a top company and does not contain any fluff or limit you to a specific location. Sometimes simplicity is the best way.

Education

Education Overview

A four-year degree from an accredited university or college is required to work for a pharmaceutical company.

If you do NOT have a degree, do NOT put a graduation date. If a potential employer is serious about hiring you, they will do a background check. Background or employment checks usually include, but are not limited to, the following: degree verification, criminal record, personal and professional references, and sometimes a driving record check. Save everyone some time and be honest about your degree.

If you do not have a degree, think about using the word "present" on the graduation date. This will indicate that you have NOT received your degree, but you are working on obtaining one.

GPA and Class Rank

Only include your grade point average (GPA) and class rank if the hiring manager will view them positively. GPA is only part of the hiring manager's decision process. Definitely include your GPA if it is above a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale). If the hiring manager is concerned about your GPA, they will ask for a transcript. If your GPA is below 3.0, the decision to include it is yours. However, the omission of the GPA will raise a red flag in the hiring manager's mind and will usually result in a specific question about it

The same holds true for your class rank. If it is worthy of recognition, include that in the Accomplishments section.

College Employment, Summer Jobs, and Internships

We understand that most recent college graduates can have several college jobs, summer jobs, or internships on their resume. Try to limit your resume to one page.

If you are already in the corporate world and you have had one or two jobs, consider dropping the oldest non-relevant *summer* position on your resume. Again try to limit your resume to one page.

Employment History

The job description portion of your resume should contain the following information: Company name, location of corporate headquarters, dates of employment (mm/yy – mm/yy format), company description, job description, position title, position description, and position accomplishments. The format of this information can be found in the sample resume outline.

Company Name

Use the complete corporate name complete with Inc., Corp., or L.L.C.

Location

Use the official headquarters city and state of your employer (do not indicate your current location unless it is the same as the corporate headquarters). If you have worked for your employer in different locations, indicate that in your position description.

Examples: Chicago, IL and Houston, TX

Dates of Employment

This information must be correct and should contain the month and year. The dates of employment are the only information your former or present employer can legally provide to the reference checker, so make sure it is correct!

Example: 11/99 – 12/2000, 11/99 to present

Company Description

This is basic company information. Describe the financial size of the company and the products or services they provide to their customers. This information will help the hiring manager better understand your previous/current employer.

Examples:

- \$50 million national medical laboratory and disease management company focused on the introduction of new diagnostic testing technology directly to clinicians
- Fortune 500 manufacturer of integrated telecommunication optical routers
- Fortune 1000 Enterprise-level, Internet-based, medical management software start-up company

Position Title

Indicate the title your company has given you. Do not alter the title.

Examples: Account Executive, Sales Representative, and Regional Manager

Position Description

Bottom line: just tell the hiring manager what you were paid to do. Make sure you answer the following questions:

- What was your basic job function?
- What product/service did you deliver (internal or external customers)?
- Who did you deliver your products/services to (internal or external customers)?
- Include the names of external customers. Sometimes hiring managers are asked to find candidates working for specific companies or candidates who have significant contact with specific customers.
- What was your scope of responsibility/territory?

Examples:

- Responsible for the sale of all Internet web development services in South Texas. Major accounts included X Company, Y Company, and Z Company.
- Internal coordination with all technical personnel, Solution Partners, and Engineers to insure the integration of the solution and address the customer's design automation requirements over multiple locations worldwide. Reported to the Director of Technical Sales Support.
- Directly responsible for all aspects of business development, practice development, client/project management, team participation, and relationship building. Reported directly to the CEO.

Position Accomplishments

Please review the section on “What gives your resume a competitive advantage?” in this chapter.

Information that Should NOT be on your Resume

The following information should **NOT** be on your resume:

- Availability
- Charts
- Current salary
- Desired Salary
- Desired location
- Reason looking
- References
- Weaknesses

Mistakes and Myths on a Resume

- **Lying on your resume**
If the employer is going to hire you, most likely they will validate the information. Lying on your resume can lead to termination down the road.

- **Not proofreading the resume three times or having a friend proofread the resume**
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Let someone else behold your resume. You want to be a manager someday, not a manger.
- **Wrong contact information**
Big mistake. All the work to get your resume together and the hiring manager can't reach you. What a tragic loss!
- **Using all the right buzzwords but including no factual documentation**
Hiring managers can see through most smoke screens. Add numbers and concrete facts to your resume. Dollars, numbers, percents, accomplishments, awards, and achievements will set your resume apart from others.
- **Missing employment dates**
No employment dates on your resume is a huge RED flag to a hiring manager. "What is this person trying to hide from me?" So you have moved around. Don't try to hide it. Just have good reasons for your job changes.
- **Sloppiness**
In most cases, it's not what you say but how you say it. Say it on clean, crisp paper! Dot your "i" and cross your "t".
- **Colored paper gets you noticed**
The color of your resume will NOT affect how the hiring manager views your resume. Use standard white 20 lb. paper.
- **I look great, so I am going to put my picture on the resume!**
This is a big "No-No" in the pharmaceutical industry. Image is important, but having your picture on the resume is not done in the pharmaceutical sales industry.

Corporate Resume Template (Blank)

NAME
Address
City State Zip Code
Phone number 1
Phone number 2
Email Address

OBJECTIVE:

EXPERIENCE:

Company Name **Corporate Headquarters** **Employment Dates**
Company Description

Position Title
Position Description
Accomplishments:

- Accomplishment 1
- Accomplishment 2
- Accomplishment 3

Company Name **Corporate Headquarters** **Employment Dates**
Company Description

Position Title 1 **Employment Dates**
Position Description
Accomplishments:

- Accomplishment 1
- Accomplishment 2
- Accomplishment 3

Position Title 2 **Employment Dates**
Position Description
Accomplishments:

- Accomplishment 1
- Accomplishment 2
- Accomplishment 3

EDUCATION:

University Name **Location** **Graduation Date**
Major Degree GPA
Minor Degree GPA
Accomplishments:

- Accomplishment 1
- Accomplishment 2

Corporate Resume Template (Complete)

John Doe
22 Twain Street
Chicago, IL 12345
Home 555-456-7890
Mobile: 444-456-7890
John@mail.com

OBJECTIVE: I am seeking an entry-level pharmaceutical sales position with an industry-leading company.

EXPERIENCE:

ISP.com **Chicago, IL** **5/01- present**
Start-up Internet Service Provider focusing on providing web hosting, web design, and broadband connectivity to the Chicago market.

Regional Sales Manager

Responsible for the sale of broadband connectivity to Fortune 500 clients in the Chicago area, reported directly to the Vice President of Sales.

Accomplishments:

- Sold largest deal (\$600,000) in company history to Cabletron
- Quota buster for 6 straight months in 2001 (averaged 110%)

Copier Sales Inc. **Chicago, IL** **4/97 – 5/01**
CSI is an industry-leading manufacturer of high volume color copiers and scanning equipment.

National Account Manager

Dallas, TX

7/99 – 5/01

Responsible for the sale of all products to national accounts. Reported to the Vice President of Sales. National accounts included: AX&X, Xell, King Oil, Blinko's, and Copy World USA. The territory consisted of Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Kansas.

Accomplishments:

- Ranked #1 in high volume color copiers in 2000 (1 out of 345 sales representatives)
- Quota buster 150% in 1999 (1 million quota)
- Earned Pinnacle Award 1999 (top 1% of sales force)
- Increased sales 30% in first quarter of 1999
- Reduced outstanding invoices from 90 days to 30 days in 1999

Sales Representative

Tulsa, OK

12/97 – 7/99

Responsible for the sale of color copiers and scanners to medium-sized companies in the Tulsa metro area, reported to the Oklahoma District manager.

Accomplishments:

- Quota buster at 101% of quota (\$500,000 quota) 1998
- Number 1 out of 12 sales representatives in the district
- Earned Rookie of the Year award for 1997

EDUCATION:

Texas University

Austin, TX

12/97

Bachelor of Science in Biology

GPA 3.2

Minor in Spanish

GPA 3.0

Accomplishments:

- Academic Scholarship 1996, 1997
- Social Fraternity Treasurer 1997
- Marketing Association Chairperson 1996
- Funded 50% of education through various summer jobs

Recent College Graduate Resume Template (Blank)

NAME

(Permanent) Address
City State Zip Code
Phone number 1
Phone number 2
Email Address

(College) Address
City State Zip Code
Phone number 1
Phone number 2
Email Address

OBJECTIVE:

EDUCATION:

University Name	Location	Graduation Date
Major Degree		GPA
Minor Degree		GPA
Accomplishments:		
• Accomplishment 1		
• Accomplishment 2		

EXPERIENCE:

Co-op	Company Name	Corporate Headquarters	Employment Dates
	Company Description		

Position Title
Position Description
Accomplishments:

- Accomplishment/Project 1
- Accomplishment/Project 2

Summer	Company Name	Corporate Headquarters	Employment Dates
	Company Description		

Position Title
Position Description
Accomplishments:

- Accomplishment/Project 1
- Accomplishment/Project 2

Summer	Company Name	Corporate Headquarters	Employment Dates
	Company Description		

Position Title
Position Description
Accomplishments:

- Accomplishment/Project 1
- Accomplishment/Project 2

Recent College Graduate Resume Template (Complete)

John Doe

22 Twain Street
Chicago, IL 12345
Home 555-456-7890
Mobile: 444-456-7890
John@mail.com

1492 Columbus Street
Austin, TX 09876
Home 512-456-7890
Mobile: 512-456-7890
John@mail.com

OBJECTIVE: I am seeking an entry-level pharmaceutical sales position with an industry-leading company.

EDUCATION:

Texas University	Austin, TX	12/97
Bachelor of Science in Biology		GPA 3.2
Minor in Spanish		GPA 3.0
Accomplishments:		
• Biology Club		1995,1996,1997
• Academic Scholarship		1996,1997
• Social Fraternity	Treasurer	1997
• Marketing Association	Chairperson	1996
• Funded 50% of education through various summer jobs and co-op programs		

EXPERIENCE:

Co-op **Consumer Products Inc.** **Fayetteville, AK** **5/97 – 7/97**
CPT is a Fortune 100 global manufacturer of consumer cleaning products and snack food.

Marketing Intern

Worked with the Director of Marketing to produce a national advertising campaign and website integration.

Accomplishments:

- The campaign received the highest pull-through rating in company history, resulting in a .25% increase in nationwide sales
- Received the “Hustler” award for the hardest working co-op student

Summer **Northwestern Book Sales** **Smithville, VA** **5/96 – 7/96**
Northwestern Books is a million-dollar national reseller of educational books to the home-based customer.

Sales Representative

Responsible for the sale of educational books in the Northwestern part of the Chicago Metro Area.

Accomplishments:

- Ranked #2 in total sales - \$200,000 in 3 months
- Received the “Most Improved Salesperson” award

Summer **Top Blend Coffee House** **Los Angeles, CA** **5/95 – 7/95**
Small, privately-held coffee house specializing in the sale of imported blended coffee.

Cashier

Worked with customers to ensure correct product delivery and cash exchange. Verified the register “cashed out” correctly at the end of each day.

Cover Letters

The cover letter is used to introduce your resume and thank the hiring manager for reviewing it.

Cover letters are important but not required in the pharmaceutical interview process. Cover letters do not have as much impact as a well-written resume, but are part of interview etiquette. You will not get an interview based solely on your cover letter, but a poorly written letter can eliminate your resume from consideration. The cover letter should express interest in the position, illustrate some knowledge of the company and opportunity, and it must be concise and to the point.

Here are several points that should be included in the cover letter:

- Address the letter to an individual (Do not use “Dear Hiring Manager”)
- Use the correct spelling of the hiring manager’s name
- Limit the main body of the letter to 100 words or less
- Try to personalize the cover letter (if possible, use a reference name in the first paragraph).
- Mention company-specific information, such as a recent press release or product name
- Apply for a specific position, not just any open sales position

Cover Letter Template

Date

Sender's Name
Sender's Address

Hiring Manager's Name
Hiring Manager's Title
Hiring Manager's Address

Dear Hiring Manager Name,

I am responding to your Chicago pharmaceutical sales position (job number xyz 1987) that was posted on "major career board."

OR if you have a contact name:

At the request of Referral Name, I am forwarding my resume for the open Chicago sales position.

I am very enthusiastic about becoming a pharmaceutical sales representative with COMPANY NAME. After reviewing the article in last month's *Fortune* magazine about your company's existing product offering and the pending FDA approval of DRUG NAME, I did some research and discovered an sales opening in the Chicago market. I would like my resume to be considered for this position.

I am interested in interviewing with you at your convenience. I will contact you tomorrow to follow up.

Sincerely,

Sender's Name

Resume and Cover Letter Distribution Protocol

Email

Based on the general acceptance of email as a form of communication, the pace of doing business today, and the mobility of the hiring manager, we suggest that resumes and cover letters be sent via email. Email is preferred because it can easily be forwarded to others within the company or tracked for future review. The hiring manager does not want to create paper files that have to be filed, stored, or carried. Also, the email should contain your resume as a Microsoft Word attachment. We do not recommend cutting and pasting your resume into an email. This is because the formatting is lost and your important information does not stand out from the rest of the resume.

Faxing

We have found that most hiring managers tolerate faxes, but prefer email.

US Mail (a.k.a. or just like snail mail)

If you are going to use this method, be aware that the processing time of your resume will be greatly delayed. The reasons for this are as follows:

- Postal delivery time could take 1 to 3 days. This is too long in recruiting time. They might have already interviewed your competition during that time.
- Processing of the resume takes even longer, as someone will have to manually scan in the resume for digital processing.

Priority Mail

This is a nice touch and is impressive, but expensive. This delivery method is a judgment call. How much is your career worth? The downsides to this are twofold:

- The hiring manager may be out of the office and cannot receive the document.
- The document has to be electronically processed again.

Brag Book

We highly suggest that you create a “brag book”. The “brag book” must provide concrete factual data on the representation of your accomplishments.

Examples include: sales documentation that shows yearly achievement against quota, letters of recognition, sales awards, project excellence awards, or even large commission pay stubs (if you have a received a trophy or plaque, take a picture or Xerox a copy of the award and include that in your book). Be careful about including yearly reviews. The “areas of improvement” section could open up a can of worms.

The book should be in a binder or spiral-bound cover. Your resume should be the first page of the book, followed by your most recent accomplishments. Do not forget to make several copies of this book, because you might have to leave several copies over the course of your interview process.

Profile of a Pharmaceutical Sales Representative

What does a pharmaceutical sales representative look like?

Summary

In this chapter, we will illustrate the profile of an ideal pharmaceutical sales representative in terms of basic requirements, career path, career development, compensation expectations, and a snapshot of an average day in the life of a pharmaceutical sales representative.

Basic Requirements

- **Four-year degree**
A four-year degree from an accredited university or college is required to become a pharmaceutical sales representative. Pharmaceutical companies prefer candidates with degrees in life science (such as biology) but, generally speaking, all four-year degrees are considered. Your receipt of a four-year degree represents your ability to learn and master new information and shows that you have the discipline to complete a goal.
- **Excellent track record of success**
An excellent track record of success in your professional career shown through accomplishments is an extremely important quality that hiring managers look for in you and your resume. Your success (accomplishments) must be documentable and articulated on your resume. Your accomplishments illustrate initiative, creativity, and drive to get the job done. You must show that you have achieved or surpassed your objectives, goals, and quotas.
- **Professional image**
Professional image is important for a pharmaceutical sales representative because you are representing a respected multi-million dollar company. Expectations have been set over the years that pharmaceutical sales representatives have a professional image, so you must meet or exceed existing expectations.
 - *Men*
We suggest the “IBM look”. The IBM look is conservative and traditional in a dark blue, black, or charcoal single-breasted traditional suit; white button-down shirt with a button-down or straight collar; and a silk tie. Regarding grooming, it is highly suggested that men are clean-shaven (no facial hair) and have a short, fashionable hairstyle.
 - *Women*
We also strongly suggest a traditional and conservative look such as a dark blue or black skirt suit, white blouse, hose, and closed-toe shoes. Hair should be groomed professionally. Make-up should accent the face and not overpower it. A pharmaceutical sales person’s image should be classic and fashionable, but not too trendy. Jewelry should be kept at a minimum.

- *Men and Women*
Absolutely no cologne, perfume or scented hand lotions should be worn during the interview. Remember, you are interviewing for a job in corporate America, not a date!

- **Clean driving record**

You must have a clean driving record to drive a company car for a pharmaceutical company. If you have trouble getting driving insurance or are considered a high-risk driver by your current insurance company, working for a pharmaceutical company might be difficult. A clean driving record is important because pharmaceutical companies lease company cars from a third party. In most cases the leasing company has the liability for the car; therefore, they want safe drivers.

- **Desire**

How badly do you want to get into pharmaceutical sales? Your desire can be demonstrated in the mastery of the following areas: company research, attention to your professional image, resume knowledge, interviewing skills, positive attitude and follow-through.

- **Personality match with your manager**

This is a difficult aspect to determine. You must feel comfortable enough with your boss to trust your career to them, and you must be able to work *for* and *with* the hiring manager. Your personalities must “click” with each other.

- **Personality traits**

The ideal pharmaceutical sales representative will be: self-motivated, goal-oriented, knowledgeable, personable, professional, positive, accountable, teachable, persistent, ethical, a team player and trustworthy. When interviewing, you must exude these traits (this will happen if you have adequately prepared for the interview).

The interview questions and answers contained in this book are grouped around the core types of personality traits the hiring manager is looking for: motivation, sales ability, planning your work and working your plan, judgment and evaluation skills, stress management, teamwork, and general business discernment.

Career Path

The typical career path is based on your ability to perform, your desire to advance, and the competencies you have developed in your career. In order to advance your career, you must consistently meet or exceed your goals and/or quotas, impress the right people, and directly or indirectly inform your superiors of your desire to move into the next position. The typical career path for a pharmaceutical sales representative is outlined below.

- **Sales Representative**
Field sales representatives are responsible for the motivation of a physician to write prescriptions for the sales representatives' drugs. In most instances you will work in a team co-promoting your product with several other sales representatives.
- **Specialty or Hospital Sales Position**
Specialty and hospital sales representatives are usually selected from the regular sales force based on achievement and accomplishments. These representatives usually sell only a few drugs to a limited group of target physicians.
- **District Trainer**
In addition to normal sales activities, the top field sales representative will be asked to assist in the training of other sales representatives. This also includes new sales representatives.
- **Assistant District Manager (informal title)**
This position usually requires taking on some of the district manager's reporting and managing tasks. Some pharmaceutical companies have designed specific courses to train new district managers.
- **District Manager**
The district manager has total responsibility for the profitability of his/her area and for the performance, development and advancement of their sales representatives.
- **Corporate/Manager Support Positions**
The corporate support positions typically remove you from the "field" and into the company's corporate headquarters or home office. The responsibilities are more strategic in nature and less sales-focused.

Career Development (Training and Education)

When interviewing for an entry-level sales position, the hiring manager understands that you are not an industry expert on pharmaceuticals. At one point in the hiring manager's career, he/she was in the same position you are right now. The difference is that he/she has received extensive training and education from the company.

The typical training session for the recent hire is two to three weeks at corporate headquarters. However, before you leave for your training class, you will start your training at home under a "home study" program. While in training, your employer will teach and test you on the following types of information: human anatomy, disease states, company products, competitive products, indications, contra indications, and customer profiles. You will also receive training on sales techniques, computer software, and internal corporate reporting (i.e., expense reports). Once your initial new hire training is complete, you will ride with existing field sales representatives to observe how they present their products and manage their day and clients. Your district manager will ride

with you several days a quarter and evaluate your performance. Your training will never stop!

Bottom line:

Pharmaceutical companies understand your lack of knowledge, and they spend tens of thousands of dollars on new hire training and education. They would not have hired you if they did not think you could handle the responsibility. They want you to be the best sales representative!

Entry-Level Compensation Expectations

This is a difficult question to answer because of the differences in company compensation policy (Base Salary and Bonus/Commission), location of the open position (cost of living varies throughout the country), the types of products being sold, and benefits packages. As a rule of thumb, an entry-level pharmaceutical sales position can be broken down as follows:

Entry-level Position

Base Salary: \$34,000 to \$47,000*

Bonus/Commission: \$10,000 to \$25,000* (paid quarterly)

Company car: Worth \$10,000 in personal savings

Benefits: Vary with each company, but are usually generous and top-notch

Vacation: 1 to 2 weeks for first year

* These are averages for ENTRY LEVEL positions and should not be considered absolutes. Existing pharmaceutical sales representatives receive increases in base salaries and different commission plans annually.

A great resource for this information is www.salary.com

Obstacles to Overcome

What if I do NOT have any sales experience?

This is a great question. Yes, there are sales representatives in the pharmaceutical industry without the ideal profile, but they have had to reposition or rethink what they could bring to the table.

Here are a few strategies to overcome this hurdle:

- **Develop personal relationships with existing pharmaceutical representatives**
This is perhaps one of the best ways to overcome your lack of sales experience. A referral from a pharmaceutical sales representative to a hiring manager about your character, accomplishments, and desire to break into pharmaceutical sales is a great method to receive a phone screen. Also, as the sales representative knows both you and the hiring manager, they will be better able to position you in front of the hiring manager based on the hiring manager's hot buttons.

- **Capitalize on your “transitional skill set”**
A transitional skill is a skill that can transition to different industries. Just because you do not get paid to sell does not mean that you cannot sell. Focus on how you convinced co-workers or managers to take a particular course of action. Do you have a track record of delivering products and results on time? Illustrate to the hiring manager how the same desire to get the job done will work with your desire to meet your sales goals. Perfect these stories and use them in the interview process.
- **Leverage your current position knowledge**
This is a great strategy if you are a medical professional (nurse, technician) who possesses the product knowledge and who already has personal relationships with physicians. Pharmaceutical companies want to hire people who can quickly master their product and influence the individuals with prescribing power (i.e., physicians, surgeons).
- **Reposition your resume**
Try repositioning your resume for a pharmaceutical sales position, not just a marketing position for a large company. Focus your accomplishments on your ability to sell or meet your goals. Articulate how you directly influenced an increase in company profits or reduced costs in the accomplishment section of your resume. Highlight any awards or special recognition you received for performance excellence.
- **Great attitude/rapport**
This is the great equalizer in overcoming your lack of sales experience. If the hiring manager really likes you and your attitude, you have greatly increased your chances of moving into a sales position.

What if I am a recent college graduate?

The competition to break into pharmaceutical sales at the recent college level is extremely high. Only a few of the larger pharmaceutical companies recruit sales representatives directly out of college. We strongly recommend that you use every strategy in this book and properly prepare for the interview. The pharmaceutical interview process is probably the biggest series of exams you will take so don't just “wing it” and hope that your winning smile will land you the job.

As a recent college graduate, you have several advantages in breaking into pharmaceutical sales. Here are just a few:

- **Interview schedule**
Some major pharmaceutical companies recruit directly from college campuses! Do what it takes to secure an interview and adequately prepare for the interview. Many times the rosters fill up very quickly and only 10 to 15 people will get an interview out of a campus of 15,000 students. So, what do you do?

IDEA: This is an idea to get an interview when the schedule is full. This technique landed a friend of mine with a job at Xerox job. Determine when the last interview is completed. Arrive 30 minutes before this interview has concluded. Be dressed and mentally prepared for an interview. When the last candidate has left the interviewing room, knock on the door of the room (the pharmaceutical manager will be doing paperwork) and introduce yourself.

Sample Script

“Hi, I’m (your name). I really want a career with your company, but because of the sign-up process I could not get on the interview schedule. I feel that my strengths would allow me to outperform the other people interviewed and feel it would be worth your time to interview me. Do you have a few minutes to talk with me?”

This needs to be said with confidence, but not arrogance. Remember, he has to like you, so be friendly and smile. If the interviewer is adamant about not interviewing you right now, do not push the situation. Inquire if he would be able to schedule an interview at his convenience. This is very impressive and shows that you do not let obstacles stand in the way of success. This will really set you apart from some of the other candidates.

- **Career Center Resource Center**

Another valuable resource is the extensive amount of information at most career centers. Take the time to get to know your career counselor and ask them for assistance.

- **Resume preparation**

Indicate your specific desire to break into pharmaceutical sales as your objective. Limit your resume to one page. Illustrate your accomplishments with each of your summer jobs. Remember you are going against other college graduates who have similar work experience. Illustrate any life science course that you have taken.

- **Summer job/internships**

At graduation, it is too late to select your summer jobs, but if you are not graduating this year, try to secure internships with medical or pharmaceutical companies. An outside sales position (not retail) with a large company that can provide you with sales training would be great experience. Look in the classifieds.

Working for a physician’s office for a summer or a part-time basis during the school year may be a good idea. This would be especially good during your junior year. You would meet and get to know the representatives from all the companies and even meet their managers occasionally. You could create a wonderful contact list this way.

You want to indicate to a future hiring manager that you have wanted to work in the medical/pharmaceutical industry for a long time and that you have taken steps to make this a reality.

Typical Day and Schedule Requirements

Summary

In this chapter, we will discuss the typical day for a pharmaceutical sales representative.

Like most sales positions, the “typical” day for a pharmaceutical sales representative does not exist. Due to the nature of their clients (physicians with medical emergencies), a pharmaceutical sales representative must be flexible, resilient and capable of changing their schedule.

That being said, the sales representative must have a daily, weekly and monthly schedule of doctors to call on. Most pharmaceutical companies expect their sales representatives to make 8 to 10 sales calls per day, depending on doctor density and territory size (doctor density is the number of doctors in a given territory. Doctor density will be greater in a metro area with a large medical center than doctor density in a rural area.)

Types of Sales Territories and Travel Requirements

Sales territories fall into three general categories: metro, rural, and regional.

- **Metro and immediate surrounding areas**
The metro and immediate surrounding areas usually do not require overnight travel because of the high doctor density. Day trips out to the surrounding areas are not uncommon for a metro sales representative.
- **Rural territory**
The rural territories almost always require one to two nights of travel per week because of the low doctor density. Rural territories will require the sales representative to travel between several cities.
- **Regional territory**
The regional sales representative will cover multiple states and will require two to four nights a week of overnight travel via car or airplane. Despite the territory, pharmaceutical companies are looking for the sales representative to manage their travel schedule to maximize their call ratio.

Typical Day of an Excellent Sales Representative

The typical day can be broken down as follows:

Time	Activity
7:45-8:30 AM	Breakfast meeting in physician's office
9:00 AM	First call of the day. Most doctors do not start seeing patients or sales representatives before 9:00 AM
9:00 AM to Noon	Sales calls, hopefully 5-6 calls
Noon to 1:00 PM	Set up luncheons or speaker programs* (catered luncheons)
1:00 PM to 2:00 PM	Doctors are making their rounds at hospitals Catch the doctors between calls
2:00 PM to 5:00 PM	Sales calls
7:00 PM to 9:00 PM	Set up speaker programs or entertainment (dinner, theater)
Weekend	Entertainment, sporting events

The tasks in **BOLD** represent activities of an excellent pharmaceutical sales representative

* Speaker programs are sponsored by pharmaceutical companies and feature an industry leading-physician who will promote the advantages of the company's drug.

Anatomy of a Sales Call

The typical sales call lasts less than two minutes and is made standing up. Yes, that's right, less than two minutes. This is the primary reason hiring managers are looking for candidates who can sell themselves clearly and concisely.

In this two-minute time period, the pharmaceutical sales representative will have to influence the physician to prescribe his/her product and receive the doctor's signature for samples they have brought to the office (this is where the terminology "sample dropper" originated). The trick is to use the samples to gain access and, with a question, engage the doctor in a brief discussion about your product rather than just asking for a signature for samples. The successful sales representative uses the latest clinical studies, abstracts, magazine reprints or quotes from other doctors to solicit an opinion from the doctor about their product.

Unlike most sales positions, a pharmaceutical salesperson will never walk out of the doctor's office with a signed purchase order agreement. Your goal is to get the doctor to write prescriptions for your drugs. Unfortunately, the results of your efforts are revealed in monthly or quarterly reports 30 to 45 days after the current month.

One more piece of information: as a pharmaceutical sales representative, 80% of your sales calls will be made while standing, so wear comfortable shoes!

Research

Summary

In this chapter, we will illustrate the importance of thorough research and provide you with the research tools to help you gain the advantage over your competitors, such as: where to start your research, which medical professionals to speak with, financial website listings, industry resources, and a list of career websites. Bottom line: if you take the necessary time to perform your research, you will be able to command confidence, knowledge, and poise during the interview.

The majority of candidates interviewing will only go to the company website for their research. This is a great place to start, but your search should not stop there.

Thorough research and the ability to incorporate your research into an interview will demonstrate two critical attributes to the hiring authority. The first quality is your desire to break into pharmaceutical sales. Desire is an important and usually difficult quality to measure. However, in this instance, your desire can be quantified by your ability to freely communicate your research throughout the interview. The hiring authority will interview several candidates, some with backgrounds better suited for pharmaceutical sales, but most candidates lack the desire or cannot communicate their desire for the position. In essence, they fail to go the extra mile. Capitalize on their lack of desire and blow away the hiring manager with your knowledge. The second quality is the demonstration of your “repeatable track record”. The hiring authority will naturally assume that if you have done your homework for the interview, you will repeat the process and do your homework if you are hired.

Where do you Start?

1. Company Website

This is an excellent place to start. Pharmaceutical company’s websites provide you with a wealth of information, but do not stop your research here. While on the website, look for the following information:

- **Corporate headquarters**
This is good general information and is used with other search tools.

- **Senior management**
Senior management should have a successful track record of developing and growing companies.

- **Current products and indications**
Five essential aspects to learn about each drug:
 - **Indication:** Where product is used
 - **Mechanism of Action:** How it works
 - **Efficacy:** How effective is the drug?
 - **Side Effects:** Best learned from promotional piece

- **Dosing:** How packaged (i.e., pill strengths)
- **Life of the drug:** How long has the drug been on the market?

The best way to learn about the five essentials is to obtain a copy of the promotional material used to sell the drug. A promotional piece is usually a one-page glossy handout. You can obtain this information from a sales representative or you can download a “package insert” from the company website. Please remember that you do not have to become an expert on the drugs for the interview. Just have a good working knowledge of this information. Also, make sure you know how to pronounce the drug’s name. Ask a pharmacist if you do not know.

- **Research and development**

Another key area of interest is the drug pipeline. The drug pipeline is the future or lifeblood of the company. You can click on the “Research and Development” and “Partners” links to obtain this information. Key discussion information to what the drug is used for and in what therapeutic category it is used will be found there.

- **Press releases**

Press releases are an excellent source for recent company news, such as results from a clinical trial or the launch date for a new drug. Often new clinical studies on a drug recently released will appear. This is wonderful to know before your first meeting with a representative.

- **Annual report**

You do not have to be an accountant to see if a company has been profitable. Look at the growth and profitability of the company over the last two or three years (track record). Also, take the time to review their SEC filings and 10-Q reports. You want to see a track record of increased profits, recent company acquisitions, and amount of dollars spent on research and development. If the annual report is not listed on the website, you can contact the company for a copy of last year’s annual report. If you are intimidated by annual reports, ask an accounting friend for some assistance.

To help you start your search, we have provided you with a list of all the major pharmaceutical companies with their web addresses in Appendix A.

2. Clinical Studies

Companies perform clinical studies to understand the efficacy of their products. Pick up the key points of the main clinical study for each drug. Ask the pharmaceutical representative for a copy of the data sheets. If the representative is a close friend, ask them to help you break down the paper (understand the data) and highlight what is most important. If you do not have any assistance, focus on the following pieces of information found on the front page of the study:

- **Title:** At top of page
- **Journal Name/Date:** Date will be month /year

- **Author:** Use last name of first person listed as the author
- **Objectives:** Goal of trial
- **Methods:** Number of patients, dose of drug used, and what the drug was compared to (i.e., another drug or placebo)
- **Results:** Results of trial
- **Conclusions:** Clinical applications based on results

Interview information: You only need to know the journal, date, and results.

Sample Interview Script

In an interview, you might say, “The results of the CURE trial that appeared in the August 2001 New England Journal of Medicine were very impressive, showing a 30% reduction in MI, revascularization, and stroke when used after acute coronary syndromes. This should really boost sales.”

3. Competitors

Learn who your competitors are from the representatives. Most importantly, understand the competitive advantages of their drug and how the representative sells it against the competition.

4. Medical Professionals

Pharmaceutical Sales Representative

Again, speaking with pharmaceutical representatives in your local area is a great source of information. The following pieces of information should be obtained from the representative:

- **Drug information:** It is recommended that you learn the drugs, the five aspects, and the clinical study (above) before talking to the representatives. You want a copy of the clinical studies, promotional pieces, and product monographs.
- **Manager information:** Get this once you have secured an interview. You want to know the manager’s personality, their hiring criteria, and management style.
- **Competitive information:** You need to know the names of the competing drugs and how to sell against them.

Pharmacist and Hospital Pharmacist

Much like the pharmaceutical sales representative, the pharmacist earns a living working with drugs on a daily basis. Pharmacists earn advanced medical degrees and are required to stay current with recent clinical drug information. Since the pharmacist is a non-biased third party and is not receiving a paycheck from a pharmaceutical company, they can provide you with non-biased competitive drugs information, which can be critical in your presentation to the hiring manager.

5. Online Financial Sources

We recommend that you use online resources to supplement your research. We have listed several financial institutions that provide free information about the large public pharmaceutical companies.

- **YAHOO home page (finance/quote):** www.yahoo.com is a great source to review the entire company. In most cases, you can review the company website, stock market price chart, corporate officers and recent press releases. Here is how to use this free feature:
 1. Go to the Yahoo home page: www.yahoo.com.
 2. Select the Finance/Quote link (blue letters near the top of the page).
 3. Enter the ticker symbol (box at the top of the page), i.e., PFE for Pfizer. If you do not know the symbol, select the “symbol lookup” link.
 4. Under the “more info” portion of the first table, select the profile, chart, or research links.

You will find a tremendous amount of free information here.

- **Hoovers Online:** www.hoovers.com offers an exhaustive amount of information on individual companies. This site also provides subscription services for more in-depth research. This is a very easy site to use. Type in the company name at the top of the screen and press the “enter” button.
- **Edgar Online:** www.edgar-online.com provides both free and subscription services, as well as easy access to corporate filing information such as SEC filings and 10-Q reports.
- **Dunn and Bradstreet:** www.dnb.com is primarily used for business-to-business purposes and is a pay service site. The reports from this site provide great insight into the company’s most recent financial reports that might not be reflected in last year’s annual report.

6. Industry Information

The following are excellent sources of information:

- **Physician’s Desk Reference (PDR):** www.pdr.net is a compilation of every major drug manufacturer and products they produce.
- **Pharmaceutical Representative:** news magazine for pharmaceutical sales representatives.
- **American Druggist:** available at most medical libraries.
- **New England Journal of Medicine:** available at most medical libraries - only good if study appears in this journal.

7. Websites

- www.medzilla.com Company information and career site
- www.pharmrep.com Pharmaceutical sales representative magazine
- www.Phrma.org Industry news and searchable database
- www.hirehealth.com Pharmaceutical Sales Job Board
- www.go2pharmsales.com Pharmaceutical Sales Job Board

8. Consumer Media Publications

An amazing amount of medical and pharmaceutical news is published every day. However, the majority of this information goes unnoticed because you have not created or raised your pharmaceutical or medical “awareness factor”. Raising your awareness factor is easy to do if you pay attention to the business news you normally absorb. For some people, this may require a different group of reading materials. News sources that you might want to consider reading include: your local newspaper, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Time*, *Forbes*, and *Fortune*, to name a few. Do not be afraid to cut out or copy articles and place them in a folder for later use in an interview or discussion with a medical professional.

9. Company Matrix and Product Matrix

Below is a Company Matrix and Product Matrix to be used for your interview preparation.

Company Information Matrix:

	Company Name	Company Name
Company Size (Revenue)		
Number of Divisions		
Senior Management Names... i.e. President, VP of Sales		
Recent Stock Price		
Recent Press Release		

Product Information Matrix:

	Drug Name 1	Drug Name 2	Drug Name 3
Correct Pronunciation			
Indication: Where the product is used			
Mechanism of Action: How it works			
Types of Doctors that they visit			
Efficacy: How effective is the drug			
<i>Side Effects:</i> Best learned from promotional piece			
Dosing: How packaged (i.e. pill strength)			
Life of the drug: How long has the drug been on the market?			
Competitive Products Not mandatory but great information			

Future Products “Drug Pipeline”

Use the same chart as above and know the top 3-5 drugs in the companies pipeline

The Interview Process

Summary

In this chapter, we will outline the typical interview process and provide you with tips on how to succeed in each of the interview steps.

Congratulations! You have successfully networked your way to the interview stage of becoming a pharmaceutical sales representative. Your ultimate goal is secure this position, but your short-term goal is to be selected for the next round of interviews.

What Occurs During the Interview Process

- **Initial phone screen**
The phone screen is typically a short 20-to-30 minute phone call with either a recruiter or human resources individual (however, with some smaller pharmaceutical companies, your initial phone screen can be with the hiring manager). The questions are standardized and your goal is to secure a first “face-to-face” interview with the hiring manager. Make sure you have correctly set up the phone time (consider time zone allowances) and that you have your resume in front of you and are in a quiet place. Avoid distractions such as barking dogs or personal conversations. Do not “click over” if you have a second phone line. You can also disable call waiting temporarily.
- **First interview**
The first interview is usually with the hiring manager or the district manager (your future boss). The interview will probably last between 45 and 60 minutes. The district manager will usually walk through your resume (per the resume chapter of this book) then move into general questions and answers. The hiring manager is determining if you have the minimum skill set to get the job done and to determine if the two of you can work together. Do not forget to bring a couple of copies of your resume and brag book. You might have to leave both documents with the hiring manager.
- **Second interview**
The second interview will be with the hiring manager, and possibly an immediate peer and will typically last between 60 and 90 minutes. The questions will focus more on business development analysis and will be presented in a “Situation, Action, and Results” format. Sample questions are found in the question and answer chapter of this book. Again, bring copies of your resume and brag book.
- **Final interview**
The final interview will be with the hiring manager’s immediate boss and other senior managers. In some instances, you will travel to the corporate headquarters to meet with several senior-level managers. The environment at corporate headquarters is conservative and professional. The questioning in most cases will not be as in-depth as before, but do not let your interviewing guard down. Again, bring copies of your resume and brag book.

- **Offer stage**
The offer should be in writing and should indicate your base salary, vacation, and commission plan. When negotiating your entry-level position, the only area of flexibility is the base salary. Commission plans and vacation time are set at the corporate level and are difficult to negotiate. For entry-level sales positions, sign-on bonuses are vary rarely extended. Interviewing etiquette suggests that you have one week to consider the formal written offer. However, we recommend an almost immediate response (with in 24 hours) because the more time you delay your decision, the less decisive you appear to the hiring manager.
- **When you are not the chosen one**
Unfortunately, this happens too often. Do not worry or get too disappointed. You know that you have put your best foot forward. Stay positive and keep on pursuing your dream of breaking into pharmaceutical sales. We recommend that you maintain contact with the hiring manager on a monthly basis in case another opportunity becomes available. Remember, many people who are in this business got in on the second try.

When do you Discuss the Compensation Package?

You should not bring up the compensation package until later stages in the interview process. You should already have a pretty good idea of the compensation package prior to the interview process from the job posting, recruiter, or referrer.

Preparing for the Interview

Remember, he who interviews best gets the job.

You must cover all of your bases prior to the interview. You must be prepared. Hopefully, you will have some knowledge about the personality of the interviewer from one of his/her local pharmaceutical sales representatives, physicians, or pharmacists prior to the interview. You should already have performed your company research, rehearsed your 90-second commercial, role-played with the interview questions provided in this book and you should know your resume inside and out. Also, after you go on an interview, immediately write down the questions they asked and your responses. Add these questions to your growing list of interview questions for the next interview.

Questions to Ask the Hiring Manager

At some point in the interview process, you will have the opportunity to ask questions of the interviewer. Make sure you have a handful of questions ready to go prior to the interview. Here are a few suggestions.

- How long has the position been open and why?
- Tell me about the position in terms of: territory (geography), travel requirements, territory financial performance, annual quota, and team members.
- Who would I be calling on? (Who are my call points?)
- Tell me about the training program.

- Other than the products I found in my research, what other products are in the pipeline?
- How will my performance be measured?
- What sales awards are available with your company?
- What is the career path for a top-performing sales representative?
- Describe your management style.
- What attracted you to this company? What is your next career move?
- Based on last month's press release...How will "BLANK EVENT" affect the company, and this position? (This question can only be asked if you have done your research and you have read the actual press release.)
- **Killer question to be asked at the end of the interview:** What is your idea of the ideal candidate? (This question will flush out the hiring manager's needs and allow you the final opportunity of matching your skill set to his/her needs. Overcome any potential objections and ask for the job!)
- When do I start?

Closing the Interview

When you feel the interview is complete, you must "**CLOSE**" the hiring manager. You must speak directly to the hiring manager and tell them that you **WANT THIS POSITION!**

Example: *"Based on our discussions today, I feel very comfortable with you, the company, the products, and the described position. I want to work for your company! When are the next steps? When do I start?"*

Follow Up: Thank You Notes

Any interview or phone screen is NOT complete until you have written a thank you note and sent it to the interviewer (a handwritten note is strongly suggested). If you perform this final step, you will be ahead of 50% of your competition. Therefore, it is important that you secure a business card from the hiring manager during the interview. We suggest that you ask the hiring manager for a card while you are handing him/her your resume. If the hiring manager does not have a business card, write down his/her name immediately (make sure you get the correct spelling of their name). If you only have a phone screen, ask the interviewer for their contact information at the beginning of the interview.

If the hiring manager will not be able to receive the handwritten note in a timely manner (due to travel or other reason), then send them a thank you message via *email*. Whatever method you choose to communicate is acceptable, but it is **imperative that you send this note within 24 hours of the interview.**

Note: If you interview at a hotel, you can leave a thank you note at the front desk.

Also, think about carrying a box of thank you cards and stamps in your car, so that you can write these notes immediately following your meeting. Remember, it is the little things that will separate you from your competition.

A handwritten note is less formal and does not require the hiring manager's address and title. Remember, keep it professional yet personal. If you decide to send a formal letter, remember to use the appropriate format (include all contact information).

Here are several points that should be included in the thank you letter:

- Address the letter to an individual (do not use "Dear Hiring Manager")
- Use the correct spelling of the hiring manager's name
- Thank the hiring manager for the interview
- Restate one or two of the hiring manager's needs (that you uncovered during the interview) and apply your accomplishments to these needs
- Tell the hiring manager you want to take the next step in the interview process
- Make sure you use correct spelling!
- Limit the main body of the letter to 100 words or less

Sample Thank You Notes

Sample 1

Dear [*Hiring Manager*],

I wanted to drop you a quick note to thank you for our interview today. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about the [*Location*] sales position.

In our conversation, you said that you are looking for a sales person with a proven track record of sales and great relationship development skills. My record speaks for itself: I exceeded my sales quota in 2001, was Rookie of The Year 2000 and was asked to attend one my largest customer's Christmas party. I know I can achieve similar accomplishments for your company.

I am very interested in this opportunity and I look forward to moving along in the interview process.

Warmest regards,

[John Doe]

Sample 2

Dear [*Hiring Manager*],

I enjoyed our meeting yesterday. I appreciate the time you set aside to discuss the sales position in [*Location*].

As I mentioned in the interview, I have worked with physicians in several different capacities for 6 years. As [the senior lead] for [*Medical Service Company*], I bring the proven skill of communicating with many physicians and the respect of several local physicians. I am confident that my industry connections could benefit both of us.

Based on our conversation, I am excited about the opportunity of working with [*Company*] on your team. Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

[*Jane Doe*]

Conclusion

Whew...that is a lot of information. Incorporating these strategies into your pharmaceutical sales job search may take awhile, but remain positive and persistent. You will like the results.

In summing up: BEFORE your interview (phone or face to face), follow these steps:

- Memorize your “90 Second Commercial”
- Know your resume! Be prepared to walk through the resume with the hiring manager.
- Practice your answers to the questions provided in this book. Role-play with someone.
- Learn the company and its products
- Contact or ride with a pharmaceutical representative
- Maintain a positive self-presentation (phone interview or face to fact interview)
- CLOSE the hiring manager (Tell him/her you WANT this job!)
- Follow up with an immediate note or phone call.
- Remain positive and persistent when awaiting the results of your interview

You now know the *Secrets of Breaking into Pharmaceutical Sales*. Use these secretes to the best of your abilities and get a pharmaceutical sales position!

Appendix A: Pharmaceutical Company Listing

Pharmaceutical Company Information Table

The intent of this section is to provide you with a starting point for your company research. After reviewing the content of these web sites, we feel that they will provide you with more information than we could possibly provide in this book. These companies are listed in alphabetical order.

Company Name	Web Site
3M	www.3M.com
Abbott Laboratories	www.abbott.com
Akzo Novel N.V. Organon Incorporated	www.organon.com
Alcon	www.alconlabs.com
Allergan	www.allergan.com
ALZA corp.	www.alza.com
Alliance Pharmaceutical Corp.	www.allp.com
American Home Products Corporation	www.ahp.com
Amgen Incorporated	www.amgen.com
ARIAD Pharmaceuticals, Inc.	www.ariad.com
Astra Zeneca	www.astrazeneca.com
Atrix Laboratories Inc.	www.atrilabs.com
Avant Immunotherapeutics	www.avantimmune.com
Aventis	www.aventis.com
Aviron	www.aviron.com
BASF Knoll Pharmaceutical Company	www.knoll-pharma.com
Bausch & Lomb	www.bausch.com
Bayer	www.bayer.com
Bayer Corporation	www.bayerpharma-na.com
Baxter International Inc.	www.baxter.com
Bertek Pharmaceuticals Inc.	www.bertek.com
Biogen, Inc.	www.biogen.com
Boehringer Ingelheim Corporation	www.boehringer-ingelheim.com
Bristol-Myers Squibb Company	www.bms.com
Caleb Pharmaceuticals Inc.	www.caleb-pharm.com
Cephalon, Inc.	www.cephalon.com
Chiron	www.chiron.com
ConvaTec	www.convatec.com
Dow Hickam Pharmaceutial USA	www.dowhickam.com
Duramed Pharmaceuticals Inc.	www.duramed.com
Eisai Inc., USA	www.eisai.com
Eli Lilly and Co.	www.lilly.com
Elan Corporation, plc	www.elancorp.com
Fielding Pharmaceuticals Co.	www.fieldingcompany.com
Fischer Pharmaceuticals	www.dr-fischer.com
Forest Laboratories	www.frx.com
Fujisawa	www.fujisawa.com
Gate Pharmaceuticals, USA	www.gatepharma.com
Genentech	www.genentech.com
Genzyme Co.	www.genzyme.com/pharm
Gilead Sciences	www.gilead.com
Glaxo-Wellcome PLC	www.glaxowellcome.com

Hoechst	www.hoechst.com
Hoffmann-LaRoche, Inc.	www.roche.com
ICN Pharmaceuticals, Inc.	www.icnpharm.com
Immunex Co.	www.immunex.com
Incyte Pharmaceuticals	www.incyte.com
Janssen Pharmaceutica, Inc.	www.janssen.com
Johnson and Johnson	www.jnj.com
Knoll Pharmaceutical Co.	www.knoll-pharma.com
Kos Pharmaceuticals, Inc.	www.kospharm.com
KV Pharmaceuticals	www.kvpharma.com
Merck	www.merck.com
MGI Pharma Inc.	www.mgipharma.com
Mission Pharmaceutical Co.	www.missionpharmaceutical.com
Monarch Pharmaceuticals	www.monarchpharm.com
Monsanto	www.monsanto.com
Neurotran Pharmaceuticals, Inc.	www.neurogen.com
Novartis	www.us.novartis.com
Novo Nordisk A/S	www.novonordisk.com
Nycomed Amersham plc	www.amersham.co.uk/
Onyx Pharmaceuticals	www.onyx-pharm.com
Orchid Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals LTD.	www.orchidpharma.com
Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceuticals	www.ortho-mcneil.com
OSI Pharmaceuticals, Inc.	www.osip.com
Otsuka America Pharmaceuticals, Ins	www.otsuka.com
Pfizer Incorporated	www.pfizer.com
Pharmacia & Upjohn	www.pnu.com
Procter & Gamble	www.pg.com
Purdue Pharma L.P.	www.pharma.com
Roche	www.rocheusa.com
Rhone-Poulenc Rorer Inc.	www.rp-roter.com
Roxane Laboratories, Inc	www.roxane.com
Sanofi-Synthelabo Pharmaceuticals	www.sanofi-synthelabous.com
Schering-Plough Corporation	www.schering-plough.com
Sankyo Co. Ltd.	www.sankyo.co.jp/
Schein Pharmaceutical	www.schein-rx.com
Schering	www.schering.de
Schwarz Pharma	www.schwarz-pharma.de
Searl	www.searlehealthnet.com
Shire Pharmaceuticals Group	www.shire.com
Sigma Tau Pharmaceuticals	www.sigматаu.com
Solvay	www.solvay.com
Takeda Pharmaceuticals America Inc. USA	www.takedapharm.com
TAP Pharmaceuticals	www.tap.com
Taro Pharmaceuticals	www.taropharma.com
UCB	www.ucb.be
Zeneca	www.zeneca.com

Gift #1: Pharmaceutical Sales Interview Questions & Answers

Version 2.8

“He who interviews best gets the job!”

(He who PREPARES BEST for the interview GETS the job)

By Pat Riley, President of 10 Abbott Street L.L.C

www.10abbottstreet.com

www.pharmaceuticalinterviewquestions.com

Table of Contents

HOW THESE QUESTIONS WERE COMPILED	59
PHYSICAL PRESENTATION	64
PHARMACEUTICAL MARKET PERCEPTIONS	65
<i>Why are you interested in pharmaceutical sales?</i>	65
<i>Why are you interested in our company? What do you know about our products?</i>	65
<i>What is your perception of a typical day for a pharmaceutical representative?</i>	65
<i>What do you think is the most challenging aspect for a pharmaceutical representative?</i>	66
<i>What is your strategy for overcoming this challenge?</i>	66
<i>How do you get to meet with a doctor who does not see pharmaceutical representatives?</i>	66
<i>Why do you think you would be good at pharmaceutical sales?</i>	67
<i>How do you think you would get a physician to switch to your drug?</i>	67
<i>How would you approach someone who had used your drug, had a bad experience with it and stopped using it?</i>	68
<i>How many sales calls do you think a representative makes per day?</i>	68
<i>How do you get past the gatekeepers?</i>	68
<i>What can you do for us that someone else can't? or Why should I hire you?</i>	69
<i>What is your approach when you are trying to influence a thought leader?</i>	69
<i>What important trends do you see in our industry?</i>	69
DRIVE AND DETERMINATION	70
<i>In your current position, what goals have you accomplished? Not accomplished?</i>	70
<i>What makes you out-perform your competitors or team members?</i>	70
<i>Tell me about when you've postponed action on goals you needed to accomplish.</i>	70
<i>What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?</i>	71
<i>Do you like to win or hate to lose?</i>	71
<i>Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?</i>	71
<i>How do you balance your competitive spirit with a team mentality?</i>	71
SALES ABILITY	68
<i>How do you create value when your product is the same as your competitor's product?</i>	68
<i>What sales approach works best/least for you?</i>	68
<i>Sell me this product (pen, product brochure, desk)</i>	68
<i>How did you turn around a "hostile" relationship into a sale?</i>	69
<i>Tell me about the sales process. What is the most important phase of a sales process?</i>	69
<i>Tell me about your current customers and current products.</i>	74
<i>How have you helped increase sales/profits?</i>	74
<i>What do you consider your most significant accomplishment and why?</i>	74
<i>Describe four personality profiles (driver, amiable, expressive, and analytical).</i>	74
STRATEGIC PLANNING SKILLS	76
<i>You are given a territory and a list of physicians to call on. How would you organize and prioritize your call schedule?</i>	76
<i>How do you plan your activities?</i>	76
<i>What were your goals? How did you set and achieve them?</i>	76
<i>What do you do when your schedule has to be altered?</i>	77
JUDGMENT AND EVALUATION SKILLS	78
<i>Sales are flat in your territory and you are working a full 40-hour workweek. I tell you that a great time to see your customers is early morning or on Saturday or Sunday. What is your response?</i>	78
<i>Tell me about the last time you took a "risk".</i>	78
PRESSURE MANAGEMENT	79

<i>Tell me about a time when you were pursuing an activity in the presence of adversity.....</i>	79
<i>Tell me about a situation where you gave your all and you were not successful.....</i>	79
<i>What are some of the obstacles you have had to overcome in your current position?</i>	79
<i>What are the highest-pressure situations you have been in recently?.....</i>	79
<i>When was the last time you lost your temper?</i>	80
<i>How do you relax and relieve stress?</i>	80
TEAMWORK.....	81
<i>What is the most significant contribution you have made to your employer?.....</i>	81
<i>What do you value more: team or individual success?</i>	81
<i>Have you ever interacted in a group where your ideas were shot down?.....</i>	81
<i>Have you ever had to work with or for someone who was difficult to get along with? How did you handle them?.....</i>	81
<i>Tell me how you have had to modify your behavior in order to accomplish a goal.....</i>	78
<i>Tell me about your last manager.....</i>	82
<i>Have you ever had a situation where you and your boss (or coworker) did not agree?.....</i>	82
<i>How did you resolve the problem?.....</i>	79
GENERAL BUSINESS DISCERNMENT (BUSINESS SAVVY).....	84
<i>If you inherited a very successful sales territory, would you add or change anything?.....</i>	84
<i>How would you build a virgin territory? Tell me your thought process.</i>	84
<i>Do you consider yourself entrepreneurial? Why or why not?.....</i>	84
<i>How do you gain access to a decision maker?.....</i>	84
<i>Tell me about a set back in your career plan?</i>	85
<i>Who do you consider the mentor in your life? Who has had the most influence on your life and why?</i>	85
<i>How would they describe you?</i>	85
<i>How do you keep up with current events?.....</i>	85
FINAL NOTE	86

How these Questions were Compiled

These are some of the most often-asked interview questions from some of the top pharmaceutical and *Fortune 100* companies. The answers below should NOT be regurgitated verbatim during the interview process. Our intention is for you to craft your own personal answers addressing these questions. The answers and thought processes presented in this document have brought tremendous success to the candidates who have taken the time to study, practice, and apply their own answers to these questions. Again, we cannot stress the importance of practice (i.e. role-playing and applying your life answers to the interview questions). Formulate answers before you go into the interview so that you can communicate clear, concise responses.

After reviewing hundreds of questions, we have boiled down the interview process into 9 core competencies. Under each competency we try to give you the hiring manager's THOUGHT PROCESS and map this thought process logic into a SAMPLE ANSWER.

We have also noticed that hiring managers are asking more situational questions. Industry slang for these types of questions are called “**Situation, Action, Outcome**” questions. The hiring manager will describe a situation for you and ask you how you would handle the situation. The hiring manager is looking at your ACTIONS and the OUTCOME. For instance, the hiring manager might ask, “How would you develop a virgin territory?” You should provide your answer in terms of ACTIONS (i.e. I developed and launched a direct mail campaign). OUTCOME: The results were above industry average. Now quantify your results (i.e. We closed an additional 30% new business).

Tips for Interviewing:

- KNOW YOUR RESUME: Be able to explain anything and everything on it. Your answers could lead to other questions.
- LISTEN carefully to the questions so you stay on target with your answers.
- Phrase your answers in terms of **Situation, Action, and Outcome**.
- The right answer is the one the interviewer wants to hear.
- Work to make the “connection” with the hiring manager. You must come across as amiable, winsome and likeable.
- ***DON'T FORGET TO CLOSE THE DEAL. ASK FOR THE JOB!***

Physical Presentation

Image is extremely important. Your physical presentation must be positive, clean, and conservative. The “IBM look” is still the way to go for an interview with a pharmaceutical company. No facial hair, no perfume or cologne. A dark suit with white shirt and conservative red tie works well for men. Dark business attire (skirt and jacket with a white blouse) works best for women.

Pharmaceutical Market Perceptions

Why are you interested in pharmaceutical sales?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at your interest level and knowledge of the pharmaceutical industry. He/she wants to make sure that you have an awareness of the challenges involved in the industry and is attempting to determine your motive for seeking this position.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I have a friend in the pharmaceutical industry and she has said positive things about her job and the industry. This is a growth industry that is based on continued advances in technology and an increased need for the products (do not say, “I am a people person and I want to help people”). I am looking for a career, not a job, and the challenges of the industry appeal to me.*

Why are you interested in our company? What do you know about our products?

THOUGHT PROCESS: Again, the hiring manager wants to see if you have done your homework on the industry and the company. He/she is assessing your understanding of the industry and company products. The interviewer wants to know that you are making a well-thought-out career move. Show the manager that you have made the effort to learn about his/her company.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *After much research on the industry, I have targeted your company as the company that I would really like to have a career with. “{Name the Company}” has an outstanding track record and good management. The importance of a company is based on R&D. The future can be expanded for “{Name of Company}” within R&D’s participation for undertaking growth. I understand your company has some great products in the pipeline and this will provide evolution and expanded opportunities within “{Name of Company}”.*

* Note: After this answer, you may be asked about your knowledge of the company’s R&D.

What is your perception of a typical day for a pharmaceutical representative?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your perception of what the representative does every day. They are also examining your work ethic (working early, late) and commitment to getting the job done. The more you can parallel what you are currently doing to the pharmaceutical representative’s day, the better off you are. Show them you have done research and have spoken with someone in the industry.

*Note: If you can, ride with a representative.

This is a selling position—

Do NOT answer, “THIS IS A PUBLIC RELATIONS POSITION”

Do NOT answer, “DROP SAMPLES AND HAVE DIALOGUE WITH PHYSICIANS.”

Your interview is dead with either of these answers

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I have an idea of what a typical day is like for a pharmaceutical representative and I think it parallels some of what my normal day is like. As a*

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representative, I would see as many of my assigned physicians as possible and sell them on why they should use my drug over the competition. I know some physicians are difficult-to-see, so I would try to catch them early (6-7AM) in the hospital or after hours, like I have to do with some of my customers. Some days I would utilize a lunch to reach difficult to see physicians. After 5:00 PM, I would enter my calls in the computer (or after each call) and pick up e-mails. At night, I would look over pre-call planning for my next day. I don't know if you entertain physicians like I do with my customers currently, but I would do some entertaining at night (restaurants) or on the weekends, (golf, hunting, fishing)-whatever it takes to beat my numbers.

What do you think is the most challenging aspect for a pharmaceutical representative?

THOUGHT PROCESS: Again, the hiring manager is really trying to determine if you know the true challenges a representative faces daily. They are also trying to determine if you have the skills to meet these challenges.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Well first of all, I think it's probably getting quality time with the physician to impact prescribing behavior. Another challenge I think you would face is that there are physicians that don't see representatives. You would have to be creative in finding a way to gain access to them.*

If you are currently in sales and face these obstacles in your present job, be sure to add this to your answer.

What is your strategy for overcoming this challenge?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for a creative thought process you have applied repeatedly to overcome these two challenges. Think “**Situation, Action, Outcome**” in your current job. Since you stated that you do these things in your current position, on the previous question you should have given some good examples. In pharmaceutical sales, you need to bring something of value to each physician. This needs to be something above and beyond samples. Companies don't want just a sample dropper! When you bring value to a physician your selling time increases, and they lower their guard. The value items could be scientific information or funding for continuing education.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *In order to impact a physician, I would have mapped out his needs (value needs). If the physician were technical in nature and interested in the latest developments in a specific disease state, I would present an idea from a technical reprint, referencing the reprint, and engage the physician on his thoughts. I would hope a technical selling conversation would ensue. Out of this discussion, I would close for commitment based on a scientific rationale.*

How do you get to meet with a doctor who does not see pharmaceutical representatives?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your thought process, people skills, and an attitude of not being afraid to try different approaches until the physician is seen. Two general approaches:

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1. Catch the physician in the hospital. This involves developing relationships with hospital personnel through product in-services and always bringing food to hospital personnel. Many times you can ask the director of a department to introduce you to the physician. If this is successful you can catch him on a weekly basis in the hospital.
2. Determine what is of value to the physician. This could be continuing education, a hobby (golf), or something that benefits his business (i.e. bring in a management/coding expert). Even if you catch the physician in the hospital, you need to bring value to the physician to develop a productive relationship. Think Situation, Action, Outcome.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I would try to talk with the physician in the hospital. I think they may be more relaxed in the hospital than they are in their office. This would involve developing relationships with nurses in the hospital through product in-services and catered events. Then I would learn the physician's schedule and introduce myself to him in the hospital. If the physician was a very hard-to-see physician, I would have one of the nurses introduce me to him. In my current position, I end up catching a lot of my contacts at the Starbucks on the first floor of their building.*

Why do you think you would be good at pharmaceutical sales?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking to see if you can translate your sales experience and overcoming obstacles into a pharmaceutical sales experience.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I enjoy and am good at overcoming obstacles daily and have a successful track record to prove it. I also have a successful track record of working in similar sales situations; therefore, I would have a successful track with this new opportunity.*

*Note: Be prepared to give an example of an obstacle you have overcome. (See our overcoming obstacle question on page 75, "What are some of the obstacles you have had to overcome in your current position")

How do you think you would get a physician to switch to your drug?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for sales skills and your strategic process in dealing with physicians.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *First, I would NOT expect the physician to make a sudden change to my drug if he is happy with the drug he is currently prescribing. I am going to have to start small and expand his usage (nibble away market share). I would determine what influences his behavior: reprints, speaker programs, peers, and formularies. I would use a combination of the appropriate tools to gain physician agreement on my drug's effectiveness. After this, I would get a commitment from him to use the drug on a specific patient type. After the physician has tried my drug on this patient type, I would get him to notice the success on this patient when the patient comes back in for a follow-up visit.*

When the physician admitted efficacy, I would then gain commitment for use in other patient types. This is comparable with my current business.

How would you approach someone who had used your drug, had a bad experience with it and stopped using it?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is determining your ability to handle objections, gain product confidence again and defuse someone who is angry. Think **“Situation, Action, Outcome.”**

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I have, unfortunately, experienced the same thing in my current position. I would calmly listen to the customer and empathize with him (I would basically allow let him/her to vent. I have found that once they have vented, they are more willing to listen to what I have to say). Next, I would try to understand everything I could about this bad experience. If possible I would try to determine the cause of the problem without putting my company at risk. Most of the time, product problems are usually the result of improper use or application. Once I feel the customer is listening, I would start talking about the benefits of this product if was used properly, therefore gaining his/her confidence in the product again. I would also speak with his physician to get the real picture.*

How many sales calls do you think a representative makes per day?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is determining if you have a realistic idea of the number of sales call you need to make per day to be successful.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Based on what I have learned from my friends in the pharmaceutical industry, I would expect this number to be between nine to eleven calls per day.*

How do you get past the gatekeepers?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your rapport-building skills and creativity in solving people challenges. You need to make friends with everyone in the office. Use your creativity and initiative.

Think **“Situation, Action, Outcome”**.

You should do this everyday. Cite an example from your resume.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I find this very common, especially when I am dealing with CIO’s or managers. First, I find something of value to the gatekeeper (business needs, books, food, etc). I find that one they get used to seeing the human side of me. they let their guard down. This usually works. If I absolutely cannot get past the gatekeeper, I find out the decision maker’s schedule and catch him/her outside the office. This could be at a Starbucks or the gym. If I have done my job right, then the gatekeeper will welcome me into the office with a smile and access to the physician.*

What can you do for us that someone else can't? or Why should I hire you?

THOUGHT PROCESS: When you get tough questions like this, go back to the basics. Focus on your (sales history) track record. If you have a track record of learning a new product and achieving success, I would communicate that you plan to duplicate your historical results based on sales skills, people skills, and work ethic.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I can assure you that I am the one you need to hire.*

I bring three attributes to you:

- 1. Sales skills: (elaborate)*
- 2. People skills: Nobody can develop rapport like I can*
- 3. Work ethic: I will do whatever it takes to exceed the numbers. My successful track record is a result of these three talents. These talents will allow me to outperform any other candidate you are looking at. Close for the Job! (THIS MUST BE SAID WITH CONVICTION!)*

What is your approach when you are trying to influence a thought leader?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking to see if you understand what a thought leader is and the potential impact he/she can have on you and your product. The hiring manager is also looking to see how you would approach an extremely technical, knowledgeable and influential physician. The typical sales approach does not work on these physicians because they already know more about the drug than most sales representatives. So how do you sell a product to a physician who knows more about your product than you? Remember these thought leaders are extremely technical and influential so your presentation needs to specifically address the doctor's specialty. Don't let your presentation stray into areas other than his specialty or outside your product knowledge. Your best bet is to phrase a question so that the logical answer is favorable to your drug. You do this by basing your question from a recent scientific finding or report (these reports are the physicians second language) in your sales presentation. Present a scientific idea and ask him his thoughts on this. Phrase the question so the answers match the benefits of your drug.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Use a re-print from a medical journal and ask a question about how your product would interact according to the Doctor's interpretation. If this is sound observation, the doctor will eventually sell himself or herself on your product.*

What important trends do you see in our industry?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your ability to do research and really understand the changes that affect the whole industry.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *One change that I see affecting the industry is Medicare offering prescription benefits to eligible patients. This would create a national formulary in which the government would bid out the pharmaceuticals. Since the government is the largest purchaser of drugs, this would hurt profit margins and research funding.*

Drive and Determination

The hiring manager is looking for an individual who has high standards (exceeds quota) and actively pursues any and all activities to meet or exceed these standards. The hiring manager is looking for a “Can Do” attitude.

In your current position, what goals have you accomplished? Not accomplished? Why?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for a track record of accomplishments on your resume. History tends to repeat itself. Focus on the accomplishments on your resume. Make sure that your accomplishments are positive. If you did not meet your goals, be truthful and upbeat. Do not bash your manager or company. Explain quotas and objectives to help clarify your situation. Stress your work ethic and the positive results you have attained.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *In my current position, I have not only met my goals, but I have exceeded my goals. Please see my resume or my “brag book”. (A brag book is a compilation of your positive accomplishments, awards, letters of recommendations, or Xerox copies of plaques. This brag book should be left with the hiring manager). If you did not meet your quota, explain the situation. The market shifted from small contracts to large multi-state contracts. The negotiations for these contracts were at a national level. Therefore, my ability to negotiate price and delivery were removed from my control. If my company won the contract, than I could meet my numbers. However, if we lost the national contract, I was unable to meet my numbers.*

What makes you out-perform your competitors or team members?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at your: work ethic, people skills, creative problem-solving, and sales skills.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I work hard and I work smart. I plan my work and work my plan.*

Tell me about when you’ve postponed action on goals you needed to accomplish. What were your reasons?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at how you set priorities. The ranking of priorities should be based on business logic, so that sales goals will be exceeded.

Think: **“Situation, Action, and Outcome”**

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I had planned to work my smaller accounts one week, but Monday I got a call from an extremely upset major account that was having billing issues. This account had just signed an order agreement two days before and I realized that if we did not clear this up, they would back out of the agreement. I postponed my calling and spent a day and a half solving the problems, which resulted in a satisfied customer and protected the completed order agreement.*

What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking to see what motivates you. These answers are different for each person.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I am motivated by financial rewards and a sense of personal achievement. I would like to receive more responsibilities as my skill set grows.*

Do you like to win or hate to lose?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking to see what truly motivates you. The joy experienced in winning or the fear of losing. It does not matter which one motivates you as long as you beat your numbers.

Think: **“Situation, Action, Outcome”**.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Remember a situation where you won a deal and tell the manager what motivated you. Or you can use a team example. In high school I was on a soccer team that had a built a great tradition of winning year after year. (Kind of like Notre Dame football) Our coach instilled in us a combination of both. We loved to win, but we hated to lose even more.*

Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?

THOUGHT PROCESS: Don't be afraid to say that you are money-motivated. You want a sales position, right? But top sales people are money motivated. You do not want to come across as a money-hungry person, but money *does* motivate you.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I think you need to balance the importance of a balanced career with obtainable financial rewards. If we were not money-motivate, we would not be in sales.*

How do you balance your competitive spirit with a team mentality?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your ability to work on a team and share your successful ideas WITH the team. However, you still need to meet your numbers and be competitive individually.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I would look to my resume and point out my successes, but also inform the hiring manager that I was on a team that was highly ranked amongst other teams. Our team was successful because of unselfish attitude and because we shared ideas. Eight heads are better than one.*

Note: If you have a background that is heavy in team sports, this is a great example.

Sales Ability

The hiring manager is looking for your ability to listen to varying customer needs and articulate a well-thought-out answer in a clear and concise manner. When speaking to a physician, you have only a minute or two of his/her time. Therefore, your answers must be short and concise. (i.e. no rambling answers). This holds true for the interview as well.

How do you create value when your product is the same as your competitor's product?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at your sales skills. How do you determine the customer's needs and show the customer how your product meets those needs better than your competitors (SPIN Selling).

SAMPLE ANSWER: *You must know the needs of the person you are selling. When you know their needs, you must have a thorough knowledge of your product and your competitors. Then you must show how your product meets those needs better than your competitors (SPIN Selling).*

Note: This could prompt a question regarding how you determine the physician's needs.

What sales approach works best/least for you?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking to see that you have developed your sales skills and also wants to see your sales style. He wants to see that your results were planned and that your results were not just a fluke. Bring your answer back to the accomplishments on your resume. The hiring manager is looking to see what in your personality prevents you from dealing with certain personalities.

What type of personality type intimidates you?

Do you get offended easily if someone is rude to you?

BEWARE: the manager is attempting to gain insight into personality traits

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I have read "X author" and have implemented his methodology into the sales process. You can see the results on my resume.*

Well, to be perfectly honest, I have a difficult time with extremely territorial gatekeepers. Sometimes they feel that my presence will threaten the status quo in their office. Some territorial gate keepers are easy to spot, others are not. I just have to respect their place in the office and work with them to gain access to the physician.

Note: This may prompt a question about a time you dealt with this type of person. How did you do it?

Sell me this product (pen, product brochure, desk).

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking to see if you know the sales process. Apply the SPIN sales process. You should ask "Situation, Problem, Implication, Needs" questions, incorporate trial closes, overcome objections, use assumptive closes and ask for the sale. Don't forget to up-sell your complete line of accessory products.

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SAMPLE ANSWER: *What do you use your pen for? What type of paper are you using? So what I hear you saying is...So what I hear you saying is that you want two boxes? Did I mention our accessory line that works nicely with your pen?*

How did you turn around a “hostile” relationship into a sale?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at your conflict resolution skills, tenacity, and your ability to find common ground with others in this situation.

Think: **“Situation, Action, Outcome”**.

SAMPLE ANSWER:

SITUATION: *I inherited an account that had our equipment in it ten years ago. The equipment, billing process, and the sales representative were horrible and now the clients will not return my calls. He said he would never buy another piece of “ X “ equipment.*

ACTION: *First of all, I did not take it personally but listened, and let him know I understood his ill will toward our company. Over the next several months, he opened up to exploring how our company had changed for the better. He allowed me to explore his account’s needs and demonstrate our solutions.*

OUTCOME: *Ten months after taking over the account, I sold \$\$ worth of equipment to this client.*

Tell me about the sales process. What is the most important phase of a sales process? (i.e. preliminaries, investigation, demonstrating capability or closing)

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your understanding of the entire sales process:

- Opening the call
- Understanding the situation
- Probing for problems
- Exploring implications
- Probing for needs
- Matching product attributes to needs
- Overcoming objections
- Closing

SAMPLE ANSWER: *The sales process that I learned is “ X “. This involves OPENING the call, UNDERSTANDING the situation, PROBING for problems, EXPLORING the implications of the problems, GAINING agreement on needs, DEMONSTRATING how our products meet needs, and CLOSING for the business. I think that IDENTIFYING THE CUSTOMER’S NEEDS and SHOWING HOW THE PRODUCT BEST MEETS these needs is the most important phase of the sale. You can close all you want, but if you don’t know the needs and demonstrate how your product meets these needs, then the customer will say “no” until the cows come home.*

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Tell me about your current customers and current products. Why were they customers and how did you close them? Give examples.

THOUGHT PROCESS: This answer is going to be resume-specific. It would be good to have a combination of cold calls and set accounts to call on. In pharmaceutical sales, you are calling on the same physicians over and over. So if you have a set number of accounts to call on in your current position, the key is to show that you have increased sales in these accounts. You are looking to leverage long-term business relationships and increase market penetration within each account.

SAMPLE ANSWER: I am currently calling on 10 large accounts and I am responsible for increasing business in each of these accounts by 20% this year. They are current customers who have implemented our products in their mission-critical infrastructure. By understanding their situation and probing for needs, I was actually able to increase product sales by 35% in each account (it is ok to refer to your resume at this point).

How have you helped increase sales/profits?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at your ability to analyze your territory and identify areas where there is additional business potential. Also, the hiring manager is looking for the attitude that there are always more sales to be made, even in accounts that look tapped out. Also, can you work smarter and harder?

SAMPLE ANSWER: I inherited a territory that had revenues of \$1.5 million annually. This account looked tapped out, but by thinking outside the box and identifying needs that our solution could meet, I was able to increase revenue above the quota to \$2.5 million-- that was 40% above quota.

What do you consider your most significant accomplishment and why?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is trying to understand what you consider to be a significant accomplishment. Your answer should include all of your core competencies such as selling skills, creative strategies, tenacity, and the ability to overcome obstacles. These should all culminate in the outcome of a big sale.

SAMPLE ANSWER: I inherited a large potential account that did not care for our company or product and the previous salesperson. I took the account over from this poor position and quickly built rapport with everyone I came into contact with, solved the existing delivery and product issues, and identified their unmet needs. This resulted in a \$2.3 million order after 11 months of work.

Describe four personality profiles (driver, amiable, expressive, and analytical). Which personality profile describes you? Which profile type do you enjoy working with the most? Which personality types do you NOT like dealing with?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your understanding of the different personality types and your ability to adapt to each style with positive results.

Be sure to let your personality come through when answering this question.
A common personality trait that seems to be found in most successful pharmaceutical representatives is the person who is amiable, but he/she is also a driver in the sense of setting goals and staying focused on those goals.

SAMPLE ANSWER: I really think I am a combination of these types. I guess you would say I am amiable in the sense that I am able to work with all different personality types and enjoy it. I think this is a key to my success. On the other hand, I see some of the driver traits in me. I find myself setting goals and attaining these goals. The personality type I find the most difficult, which I occasionally run into is a very apathetic person. This is a tough personality type because, regardless of what you do with them, they do not care and they are very difficult to impact.

Strategic Planning Skills

The hiring manager is looking for someone who can plan and organize a plan of action to meet a specific set of goals.

You are given a territory and a list of physicians to call on. How would you organize and prioritize your call schedule?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager wants to determine that you set your priorities based on the greatest return on time invested. You should organize your territory based on calling on the customers with the greatest sales potential. He is looking to see if you know the “80/20” rule. Eighty percent of your business comes from 20 percent of your customers. Your goal is to find the 20 percent as quickly as you can. After the 20 percent has been contacted, you move down the list and work on developing new clients.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I would analyze my territory and determine the accounts that have the greatest sales potential. I would quickly work to determine the most profitable 20 percent of my clients. Once they have been contacted and I feel comfortable with my relationship with these clients, I would then work the rest of my customers and develop new clients.*

How do you plan your activities?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at your organizational skills as well as your scheduling skills. He/she wants to determine that you have thought out a plan to exceed your goals and that you are working your plan.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I work with my boss to determine both short and long-range goals. I then plan my schedule every Sunday evening for the following week. This involves pre-call planning for each person I plan to see, the best time to see them and my goal for the outcome (if in pharmaceuticals). I try to have nine to eleven good calls each day. I determine planning from the notes of previous sales calls. Of course, I also evaluate where I am in the relationship to my goals on a regular basis.*

Note: This may prompt a question of how many sales calls you think a representative makes a day.

What were your goals? How did you set and achieve them?

THOUGHT PROCESS: If your background is non-sales, you will have to relate this to your own work or personal experiences and the goals. These goals need to be as measurable as possible. If you *do* have a background in sales, the hiring manager is determining what your quota is and how it was calculated. They hope to see that you meet or exceed your quota.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Our goal last year was \$1 million, based on a 25% increase from the previous year. As you can see from my resume, I overachieved this number.*

This is a good time to refer to the brag book if it applies—to answer or illustrate how you did it.

Note: You must be able to explain how you did this because you will probably be asked.

What do you do when your schedule has to be altered?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for flexibility and your ability to handle change/stress. He/she is also determining how you set priorities. Physicians always have emergencies and cancel appointments. You need to be very flexible in order to catch the physician at the time that is best for him.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I had a client that had an emergency and needed to change his appointment with me (the network went down and he was the network manager). I was calm and patient and rescheduled the appointment. I used the time for paperwork and planning and went on with my other calls. This happens often in my business.*

Judgment and Evaluation Skills

The ability to evaluate a situation, evaluate all data, and determine alternate plans of action.

Sales are flat in your territory and you are working a full 40-hour workweek. I tell you that a great time to see your customers is early morning or on Saturday or Sunday. What is your response?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at your work ethic, sense of urgency, and the ability to receive constructive criticism.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Knowing that some of my top customers eat breakfast at 5:30 AM, you have the urgency to get up early and have breakfast with them. If I have a hospital in my territory that is closed to pharmaceutical sales representatives, and I know the doctor makes evening rounds, I could provide food for the physicians after 6:00 PM.*

Tell me about the last time you took a “risk”.

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is determining if you can get out of your comfort zone. The hiring manager knows that you and your numbers will grow when you get out of your comfort zone. Draw from your own experiences, but make sure your answer is not a “poor judgment” example.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *One of the greatest risks I took was going to work for an entrepreneurial internet-based company. I took the risk because it offered some great potential rewards. I put my all into it for “ X “ years. Unfortunately, it went out of business because of funding.*

Example 2: In college I ran for an office. I put a lot of time and effort into it, but I did not get elected.

Example 3: I poured a ton of money and time into starting a business but after three years of work and sweat we had to shut the doors.

Pressure Management

Tell me about a time when you were pursuing an activity in the presence of adversity. What was the outcome?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your long-term goal vision and the tenacity it takes to get it done. A “No” is an obstacle, not the end result.

Think: **“Situation, Action, Outcome.”**

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I inherited an account that had removed all of our equipment two years earlier because of personality conflicts and service issues. They distrusted my company when I walked into the account. After many setbacks (elaborate), I turned the account around and now they are one of our biggest customers.*

Tell me about a situation where you gave your all and you were not successful. Why not? What happened?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for tenacity and emotional resilience after a defeat.

Think: **“Situation, Action, Outcome.”**

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I was selling capital equipment to a school district. I was the highest price vendor with a price-sensitive customer. I put numerous hours into demonstrating my solutions and creating the proposal. They loved my product and agreed it best met their needs, however, the account had a tight budget and was forced to buy the less expensive product.*

What are some of the obstacles you have had to overcome in your current position?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager realizes that everybody has obstacles to overcome. He/she is determining if you perceive these obstacles as a temporary challenge and can think “outside the box” strategically to overcome them.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Your answers will depend on your own experiences. These obstacles could be the pricing of your product, delivery difficulties, product shortages, or a product recall.*

What are the highest-pressure situations you have been in recently?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your situational perceptions of stress. How do you handle stress and how do you think (otherwise) under stress?

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Occasionally, I need to be in two places at the same time because of crisis situations and this can be stressful.*

Note: This may prompt a question- How did you handle it?

When was the last time you lost your temper? What happened? What was the outcome?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your trigger points, threshold of patience, and the result of your anger. He/she wants to determine how and where you direct your anger. They do not want to hire a short-tempered loose cannon to represent the company in front of an arrogant physician.

Think: **“Situation, Action, Outcome.”**

Note: We all get angry, but how you *handle* your anger is what the hiring manager is looking for in the answer. How do you release your anger?

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Well I really don't get mad very easily, but one time I had an upset customer who did not understand the problem and called my supervisor, which resulted in an intense meeting with my Vice President. I was angry because we were providing free technical service over and beyond the call of duty for this customer. I regained my composure and calmly met with my customer. The outcome was that in the customer realized the extent of our commitment to his company. He then apologized for his behavior and now we have an even stronger relationship that has resulted in new business.*

How do you relax and relieve stress?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for healthy behavior and your true interests. Do not answer, “I do not have any stress” or say that you relax with an alcoholic beverage.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *This is personal and different for each person. I run, I play racquetball; I work out, spend time with family and friends, etc.*

Teamwork

The ability to work with different personality types and draw from each member's strengths to reach a common goal.

What is the most significant contribution you have made to your employer?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is attempting to assess the special qualities you would bring to the company.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I feel that the most significant contribution I have made to my company is developing profitable business relationships built on trust with my customers. The cornerstone of these relationships is an intimate understanding of my customers' business. Most of the ideas of how to meet my customers' needs result from the constant exchange of ideas between teammates and myself.*

What do you value more: team or individual success?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at your ability to work individually to reach a team goal. You must be strong in both areas. Remember, nobody wants someone they have to baby-sit and nobody wants to carry someone else's load.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I currently work on a team and enjoy it, but I manage it like it is my own.*

Have you ever interacted in a group where your ideas were shot down?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your flexibility, negotiation skills, assertiveness, and your ability to handle conflict. He/she wants the assurance that you do not receive the rejection of your ideas or suggestions personally, but you are able to remain calm and negotiate your way through it.

Think: "**Situation, Action, Outcome.**"

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Once I was involved in a group that was creating and designing marketing plans for new territories. I presented several ideas that were immediately shot down by my peers. I calmly and empathetically listened to their opinions. I then discussed the benefits of my ideas and how combining some of their ideas with my own would be of the greatest benefit. This approach ended up helping everybody.*

Note: If this is your example, you'd better be prepared to explain the ideas.

Have you ever had to work with or for someone who was difficult to get along with? Tell me why. How did you handle them?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at your ability to be flexible, and to adjust your style of interaction with different personality types as needed.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *A fellow team member of mine felt the advertising dollars should be spent in a different way than I felt they should be spent. I separated the problem from*

the person and we gained agreement on our common goals. We were able to reach an agreement that met all of our needs. The result was that we split the dollars according to client size.

Tell me how you have had to modify your behavior in order to accomplish a goal.

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your personal flexibility to achieve a common goal. Adjusting interaction style as needed to work with different personalities is a must. Sacrificing morals is not acceptable behavior modification.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I modify my behavior on each call, depending on the personality of my client. I think this is one of the keys to my success.*

Tell me about your last manager.

Did you like him/her? If I was your manager, what is the best way to coach/mentor you to success? What qualities should a successful manager possess? Describe the relationship that should exist between the supervisor and those reporting to him or her.

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking to see if he/she can work with you. The hiring manager is also looking at your perception of authority, your willingness to learn, how you handle criticism, and how you like to be managed. The hiring manager needs to know how to manage each of his/her sales representatives and provide the support and/ or tools to help them meet their goals. The relationship that should exist between the manager and sales representative should be open, honest, encouraging, and accountable on both sides. Be careful how you answer this question. Again, no former manager bashing allowed!

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I liked my manager and we had a positive working relationship. We had similar thought processes on how to run my territory and how to best manage me. The best way to manage me is to give me all the tools (training, funding) necessary to be successful. Then, let me run my territory in a way that exceeds expectations. I would like a manager who periodically rides with me so he/she can understand my accounts and provide open constructive criticism. I view my territory as my own business and take accountability for its performance. I feel the successful qualities in a manager are as follows: high expectations, openness, honesty, excellent communication skills and the ability to assist me in my career development and goal attainment. I want an open and candid relationship with my manager.*

Have you ever had a situation where you and your boss (or coworker) did not agree?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at your conflict resolution skills and your ability and willingness to share your ideas in a group that may disagree with you.

Think: **“Situation, Action, Outcome.”**

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Please see the question and answer below.*

How did you resolve the problem?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for your ability to negotiate, find common ground and produce a solution.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *In a district meeting with my manager and peers, we had a finite amount of entertainment funds and we had to decide how we were going to divide the money. The meeting got pretty emotional, because some of my peers felt they deserved more funding than others. First of all, I listened patiently to everyone's opinion with an open mind. After gathering my opinion, I approached this situation by separating the issue from the people. I suggested that we come up with an objective set of standards to base our funding distribution. We all brainstormed ideas from which to choose. We agreed to base our distribution on: account potential, under-performing accounts, and accounts impacted by which entertaining. Based on this, we divided the funding up in a fair way. Everyone was not happy, but we all agreed that this was the best way to solve the problem.*

General Business Discernment (Business Savvy)

The hiring manager is looking for someone who has the ability to understand the current business situation and identify potential business opportunities based on customer needs.

If you inherited a very successful sales territory, would you add or change anything?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for the attitude that there is always more growth potential in a territory. You want to continue to penetrate the market, so you have to get more from your customers.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *I would get to know the customers and understand their needs and make adjustments accordingly. Even a great territory has room for more market growth.*

How would you build a virgin territory? Tell me your thought process.

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for a thought process based on business logic. Possibly, the manager is thinking that if you understand the “big picture” of a territory, then you are more likely to take ownership of the territory. This is Marketing 101.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Well, first I would determine the market potential. Second, I would determine the largest potential customers to target that have the potential to exceed my quota. Third, I would develop a strategic plan of action against each account. I would work my tail off executing my “plan of action”. I would evaluate my monthly sales results and make adjustments to my action plan to assure my expectations were exceeded.*

Do you consider yourself entrepreneurial? Why or why not?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for someone who has an entrepreneurial spark but not a flame. The hiring manager is also looking for someone who will take ownership of his territory and run it like it is his own company.

SAMPLE ANSWER: *Yes, I have considered starting my own company, but I have rejected this thought. Currently, I run my territory like it is my own business but I don't have the financial risk.*

Second example: I have been part of a risky Internet start-up, and I have evaluated the risk and instability of being an entrepreneur. Based on my analysis, I decided not to take the risk. I would rather have a challenging career in a stable industry.

How do you gain access to a decision maker?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking at your thought process, creativity, and tenacity. You should illustrate the following in your approach:

1. Understand needs of the office staff
2. Find creative ways to meet those needs without asking for anything in return.

3. This sets you apart because you bring value and it is also the beginning of the relationship.

Note: Of utmost importance is that the people (gatekeepers etc) must like you. Show them your human side.

SAMPLE ANSWER: I had a situation in which my phone calls were not being returned until two days later (this often resulted in lost business). After several attempts to correct this problem, I was able to secure a 20-second face-to-face meeting with the client. Two weeks after this meeting, I used the “Donut Principle”. I brought donuts to the entire Human Resources Department to build rapport. The result was a better relationship resulting in quicker turnaround times and more opportunities for business.

Tell me about a set back in your career plan?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for resilience, open-mindedness, and flexibility. The hiring manager is also looking for an optimistic, upbeat perspective on this difficult situation.

SAMPLE ANSWER: I had a career goal of getting a four-year degree and working for a Fortune 100 company. I did this, and then I wanted to move to a riskier, more lucrative, start-up venture, but it went bankrupt. I know my work ethic and transitional skill set will benefit any pharmaceutical company.

Who do you consider the mentor in your life? Who has had the most influence on your life and why? How would they describe you?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking to see what person helped shape you into the person you are today. Go back to the big three: sales skills, personal skills, and work ethic. Just make sure your mentor is worth emulating.

SAMPLE ANSWER: These answers are different for each person. Be able to name a person or a relationship (a coach, dad, mom, political leader, former boss, etc). This person has taught me the value of having good work ethic, integrity, loyalty and competitive spirit. People would describe me as: gregarious, hard working, and honest.

How do you keep up with current events?

THOUGHT PROCESS: The hiring manager is looking for a well-rounded person. You either keep up with events or you do not. This is a hard area to fake.

SAMPLE ANSWER: I listen to news or read the newspaper. (Be able to cite examples)

Final Note

We have worked hard to develop a comprehensive list of questions and well-thought-out answers. We strongly encourage you to study these questions and apply your life experiences to these questions.

HERE IS OUR LEGAL DISCLAIMER: IN NO WAY, SHAPE, OR FORM DO WE GUARANTEE YOU AN INTERVIEW OR A JOB.

We wish you the best of luck in your interview process and do not forget:

- “He who prepares best for the interview gets the job!”
- Go out and get your Pharmaceutical Sales Position!

DON'T FORGET TO CLOSE THE DEAL!

**TELL THE HIRING MANAGER YOU WANT THIS
JOB!**

Gift #2: Four Examples of PROVEN Pharmaceutical Sales Resumes that Resulted in Job Offers!

Provided by Kevin Donlin, President of Guaranteed Resumes
www.gresumes.com

The following four resumes are from actual candidates who are now pharmaceutical sales representatives. Their personal and former employment information has been purposely altered.

As you can see, these resumes follow a slightly different format than the one presented in *Secrets of Breaking into Pharmaceutical Sales*, but the focus is still on quantifiable, documentable ACCOMPLISHMENTS (Kevin's resumes incorporate a PROFILE section at the top of each resume, containing accomplishments).

Jane F. Doe
1234 Street Drive • City, ST 12345
888-123-4567 • janedoe@email.net

OBJECTIVE

Position in **pharmaceutical sales** where nine years of top-ranked sales experience will add value.

PROFILE

- Strong background in **sales**. Experienced in all aspects of consultative selling, from lead generation and cold calling to needs analysis, closing and post-sales service.
- Consistent **top producer**. Exceeded sales quotas for eight straight years, producing up to 124% of plan while ranking #1 among five reps as Senior Sales Professional (1992-present).
- Exceptionally **persistent** and competitive. Despite #2 market position, converted 95% of 375 corporate accounts from market leader, X Company. Later recruited by X Company.
- Excellent **communication** skills. Experienced building and maintaining rapport with oncologists, urologists, CEOs and other busy professionals.
- Highly **adaptable**. Continually master new product information and technology through regular seminars. Work well independently and with teams.

EXPERIENCE

Senior Sales Professional: Y Company, Charlotte, NC (1992-present).

Provide sales and client service for this distributor of mailing, shipping and other business systems.

- Handle all aspects of consultative selling in three-county territory. Call on top management, purchasing agents, office managers, etc., in health care, furniture and other industries.
- Sales cycle includes cold calling, appointment setting, needs analyses, presenting equipment demonstrations, closing, installation, user training and post-sale tracking.
- Recognized as Sales Rep of the Year for eight consecutive years, reaching 124% of quota for 2000. Opened and currently manage more than 375 accounts, with such clients as X Company and Y Company, as well as two major hospitals.
- Attend corporate training seminars and trade shows to maintain strong working knowledge of product features and benefits.
- Devise innovative marketing and advertising strategies to promote company and products.
- As a result of persistent follow-up, converted long-standing X Company customer, resulting in largest single sale in nine years — \$140,000.

Sales Professional: X Company, Charlotte, NC (1991-1992).

Provided sales and service to commercial clients for this distributor of Canon copiers.

- Established solid sales base through cold calling, telemarketing, customer relations, effective demonstrations and ability to master new product knowledge.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts: Business Administration, Major College, Charlotte, NC (1991).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **President:** Charlotte Chapter, Business and Professional Women's Org. (member since 1997).
- **Computer skills:** Windows, Word, Works and Internet research; familiar with Excel.

OBJECTIVE

Pharmaceutical Sales position, where sales and communication skills will add value.

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

- Achieve consistent **sales** results with skills in networking and lead generation. Use consultative sales ability to define and fill client needs.
- Twice ranked in top 10 of 200 sales reps statewide for revenue at X Company; consistently in top 50. Met or exceeded quota every month since October 1997.
- Proven **communication** skills. Articulate in person and in writing. Able to quickly establish rapport with clients and prospects. Experienced making sales presentations.
- Highly **organized**; able to prioritize time and projects for efficient efforts.
- **Computer** skills include Mac and PC; Word 6.1, Lotus 1-2-3, Lexis-Nexis, Westlaw, Internet navigation and account management software.

EXPERIENCE

Account Executive/Outside Sales Rep: X Company, Edina, MN (1997-present).

Open and manage accounts providing financial services to businesses and individuals.

- Experience includes cold calls, networking and direct mail. Generate numerous referrals as a result of exceptional client service.
- Requires strong communication skills and attention to detail.
- Finished in top four of statewide business loan promotion (February 1999).
- Regularly book \$2 million in monthly revenue for loans and other services.
- Within two months, established national account with high-tech client, resulting in lucrative, long-term business.
- Cited by managers for ability to work independently and succeed in fast-paced settings. Described as “a natural in sales” by supervisor.

Legal Secretary: Minneapolis-area law firms (1995-1997).

Budgeted time and resources to attend law school evenings while working for X Company

HR Assistant: Y Company, Milwaukee, WI (1994).

Worked with VP of Human Resources to serve 200 employees.

Financial Assistant: Z Company, Edina/Minneapolis, MN (1992-1993).

Worked with clients, consultants and service centers in dynamic, fast-paced environment.

- Supported most brokers of any assistant. Succeeded with superior skills in communication and by handling multiple projects effectively.

EDUCATION/TRAINING

- JD (in progress): Benjamin Franklin College of Law, St. Paul, MN (1995-present).
- BA: Political Science and Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Madison (1992).
Active as President and Treasurer of Delta Chi Theta sorority.
- Worked throughout school to self-finance 100% of both degrees.
- Professional sales training: TCF Bank (1997-present).

John F. Doe
1234 Street Drive • City, ST 12345
888-123-4567 • johndoe@email.net

OBJECTIVE

Pharmaceutical sales, where skills in **communication** and **client service** will add value.

PROFILE

- Outstanding **communication** skills; articulate in person and in writing. Experienced giving presentations to groups of up to 1,000 people. Managed up to 20 staff.
- Highly **organized**. Experienced handling multiple tasks while managing two ticketing systems and sales staff at X Company Box Office.
- Proven **client service** skills. Exposed to industry-leading practices at X Company. Able to quickly establish rapport and working relationships.
- Increase **sales** by rapidly learning and using technical information. Consistently met sales quotas by turning product features into saleable benefits at X Company.

EXPERIENCE

Supervisor: X Company, Minnetonka, MN (1998-1999).

Managed daily operations for high-volume retailer of science-oriented educational products.

- Consistently met personal sales quotas, using up-selling and thorough product knowledge. Calculated and set sales goals for staff and store. Supervised up to 20 staff.
- Trained and developed employees, delegating tasks for maximum efficiency.
- Noted for ability to sell highest-priced items (\$600-\$1,000) by educating clients and providing exceptional customer service. Established loyal, profitable clientele.

Manager: Y Company, Santa Fe, NM (1994-1998).

Oversaw customer service and operations of two ticketing systems. Promoted twice.

- Working independently, handled and accounted for large sums of money (\$25,000+).
- Trained and supervised sales staff. Worked efficiently with team members.
- Budgeted time and resources work while attending school full-time.

Intern: Z Company Orlando, FL (1996).

Nationally selected to participate in highly-acclaimed program. Trained thoroughly in human relations and customer service.

- Learned and led 55-minute presentation on film animation. Required ability to quickly master technical information and tailor programs to specific audiences.
- Attended weekly business seminars on Disney corporate strategies.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts: Theatre (emphasis in technical/design studies and administration), University of New Mexico (1997). Major GPA 3.7; Overall GPA 3.5.

OTHER FACTS

- Well-traveled, with knowledge of French.
- Computer knowledge includes Windows, Macintosh, HTML, Word, PowerPoint, Excel, FoxPro, basic CADD and Internet navigation.

OBJECTIVE

Position where nine years of **management** and **sales** experience will add value.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Led sales group to achieve 105% of quota in 1999 for X Company. Also led territory to finish above plan in 1998 (only district among five to do so).
- Consistently meet quotas, producing steady sales increases since 1995. Sold 104% of quota in 1996 and 103% in 1997; also helped sell most VASOTEC in X Company history. Ranked 19th out of 85 reps by physicians for selling skills (1996).
- Cited for initiative and sales skills by supervisor at X Company. Found buyers and sold remnant steel, turning lost assets into revenue stream.
- Top salesman in training class at X Company . Also directed setup of national account with X Company. Volume sales leader for December, 1992.

SALES EXPERIENCE

Managed Care National Accounts Manager: A Company, Valleyville, WI (2000-present).

Contact and educate directors and other decision makers with goal of placing products on formulary.

- Call on leading HMOs (Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Medica, HealthPartners), Medicare and Medicaid.
- Responsible for sales and marketing operations involving 110 accounts in 10-state territory.
- Consistently bridge gap between institutional and clinical sides of business.
- Led successful efforts to add company's first two branded products to HMO formulary.

Sales Representative: X Company, Edina, MN (1995-2000).

Successfully handled 235 clients in territory. Educated doctors on new product benefits.

- Served as district point person for all hypertension products. Also mentored new sales reps.
- Worked to develop nephrologist advocate to speak on cardiovascular topics.
- Served on Managed Care Executive team. As senior Sales Rep in group, headed all major programs and made quarterly presentations to all district reps on new product information.
- Clients included cardiologists, rheumatologists, osteopaths, internists, nephrologists and neurologists.
- Rapidly promoted to Senior Representative. Cited by supervisor for training new sales reps.

Sales Representative: Y Company, New Brighton, MN (1993-1995).

Used skills in sales and negotiation to help manage shipments on short notice to buyers.

- Turned lost assets into revenue stream by matching buyers with remnant steel.
- Promoted to handle \$35-million X Company account.

Area Sales Representative: Z Company. Minneapolis, MN (1991-1993).

Successfully managed and developed sales territory of small and large business clients.

- Required effective skills in communication and cold calling. Cited for consultative sales skills.

EDUCATION/TRAINING

- **MBA: Management**, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN (2000).
- **BA: Communications**, Merriam College, St. Paul, MN (1991).
- Certificate: Dale Carnegie Public Speaking (1994).
- Computer skills include PowerPoint, Word, Excel, Lotus and Internet research.

Gift #3: Learn How to Create a Keyword/ASCII Resume to Upload on the Internet

Provided by Kevin Donlin, President of Guaranteed Resumes www.gresumes.com

Once you've written a scannable resume, it's very easy to convert it into a keyword format for use on the Internet. You can do two important things with your keyword résumé:

1. Send it by e-mail to employers who have requested your résumé.
2. Upload it to employment websites, where it can be seen by employers and recruiters around the world (a list of these sites is given below).

To create a keyword résumé, follow these directions:

- Open your original résumé in your word processor (if you've already created a scannable résumé, use this).
- Save the résumé as text only; this will turn it into a plain text (ASCII) format, suitable for use on the Internet. Now close the résumé.
- Open it up again and add a keyword section.

Example keywords: manager, managing, management, BS Computer Science, mainframes, programming, programmer. See example keyword résumés in Appendix II for more details.

The example keyword résumés on the following four pages include one from Bill Davis that resulted in about 100 e-mails from recruiters and employers. Sally Jones' keyword résumé was seen by an employer who immediately flew her across the country for a job interview.

Here's how to upload your keyword résumé to employment sites on the Internet. Your résumé will then be available to thousands of recruiters and employers!

Follow the directions at each site to copy and paste the text of your keyword résumé into their résumé databases.

www.flipdog.com

www.hotjobs.com

www.headhunter.net

www.recruitersonline.com (click on Job Seekers)

www.mrinet.com (click on Resume Resources)

www.monster.com (click on Resume)

www.joboptions.com (click on Post Your Resume)

www.collegerecruiter.com

www.pharmacychoice.com

www.rxinsider.com

www.pharmaceuticalinterviewquestions.com

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You'll have to create a user account at each site, but there's no charge for this. Just follow the instructions at each site and your résumé will be online in minutes.

Bill Davis
142 E. 9th St. * Enid, OK 74105
(918)777-0000 * bd@tulsa.net

KEYWORDS

software developer, client/server software, C, PowerBuilder, SQL, HEAT, RoboHelp, ERWin, Windows NT/95, UNIX, FORTRAN, Assembler, Motorola 6800/68000 Assembler, software development, bug, debug, debugging, GUI, HTML, product development,

SUMMARY

Seeking a software development position, where more than two years' experience developing and deploying client/server software will contribute. A skilled problem-solver, experienced in complete software development lifecycle. Extensive training in C language. Willing to relocate.

PROFILE

- * Charter member of Production Support Team. Clients, benefiting from our efforts, said: "Now I feel like my concerns are being addressed in a timely and effective manner."
- * Leadership experience as System Test Team Lead and Production Support Team Lead, as needed.
- * Created help desk solutions for Product Support Team. As a result, turnaround times improved to less than two days from up to three weeks or longer.
- * Worked on three releases of Style-It software; helped manage product development lifecycles from design and development to testing, deployment and support.
- * Eager to learn new technologies. Skilled at solving software bugs. Supervisor said: "If there was a software development 'dream team,' Bill would be on it."

EXPERIENCE

Software Developer/Consultant: Style-It, Enid, OK (1995-present).
As a Team Developer for this consulting firm, helped design, develop and implement distribution system for DONE, a client/server software package.

- * Managed object library and base code for DONE. In charge of executable creation and releases of DONE software.
- * Developed and supported transaction-creation process for contract-pricing provisions; did same for credit allocation interface (between distribution and accounting) and distribution.
- * Executed unit tests to ensure proper GUI and coding standards.
- * Created online help document to aid developers using base object library.
- * Assisted in designing, modifying and testing prototype for video rental system in PowerBuilder.
- * Supervisor said: "Bill worked under very high-pressure circumstances with an unmanageable workload, yet never complained or failed to deliver."

COMPUTERS

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* Software: PowerBuilder 4.0/5.0, SQL Server 4.2/6.0, HEAT for Windows, RoboHelp Help Authoring, ERWin for PowerBuilder and others.
* OS: Windows NT/95 and UNIX.
* Languages: SQL, C, FORTRAN, Intel Assembler and Motorola 6800/68000 Assembler.

EDUCATION

BS: Computer Systems Engineering, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR (1995).

TECHNICAL TRAINING

Includes PowerBuilder Effective GUI Design, SQL, Transition to Client/Server, Advanced HTML Authoring and 2/3 Tier Architecture Seminar.

(Pharmaceutical Sales) Sally Jones

Sally F. Jones
Rochester area, Minnesota
(612) 999-1111

SUMMARY

Six years of success in pharmaceutical and biotech sales. Creative, with a natural ability to identify customer needs and fill them to our mutual benefit. Will relocate to Carolinas.

KEYWORDS

sales, pharmaceutical, pharmaceuticals, bio-tech, biotech, medical, salesperson, sales rep, sales/marketing

SALES EXPERIENCE

Sales Consultant: Baker Pharmaceutical, Minneapolis, MN (1995-present). Market leading antibiotic, NSAID and vaccines to more than 500 physicians in metro Minneapolis area.

- * Ranked among top 10 sales consultants regionally for sales of Refen and Agentin.*
- * Won respect and credibility among key physicians and office staff through my enthusiasm and creative selling skills.*
- * Rated "exceeds expectations" by district manager on 1996 performance evaluation.*
- * Created and led well-received speaker programs in territory.*

Oncology Medical Rep: Chiron Corporation, Minneapolis, MN (1995).

Promoted more than 12 different protocols of Preukin for treatment of renal cell carcinoma; marketed Ardia for treatment of hypercalcemia. Handled other generic chemotherapies. Territory included Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota.

- * Led district in mitomycin sales within first two months of employment.*
- * Created and led speaker program for Twin Cities Oncology Group.*
- * Quickly developed rapport with leading oncology doctors and staff in Minneapolis metro area.*
- * Attended tumor board conferences at key hospitals.*
- * Excelled in training classes of Proleukin and Aredia; scored 40 out of 43 on exam.*

Medical Rep: Davis Pharmaceuticals, Fair Park, KS (1991-1995).

Marketed leading heart medication, antibiotic and LHRH agonist to more than 500 physicians.

- * Ranked #1 in district; achieved 112% of quota, exceeding regional and national averages.*
- * Qualified for President's Club (top 10% individual achievement of quota).*
- * Consistently achieved quota for four years in three territories.*
- * Selected as specialty representative to sell Zolex for treatment of prostate cancer and endometriosis.*
- * Received "turnaround territory" distinction for excellent sales performance.*
- * Praised for outstanding service by key physicians.*

Previous sales experience included work for Campbell Sales and

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Dow Chemical (1986-1991).

EDUCATION

*BS: Consumer Economics (Dean's List), University of Alabama,
Columbia, MO (1985).*