

# COVID-19: An Era For A New Ecosystem

*The end of the current sales forces?*

## NEED FOR CHANGE

For several years, **Life Sciences companies** have been insistent that the industry needed a **new working model**. However, the uncertainty of its success fostered apprehension in firms, causing none to take the initial step to implement this new model.

Nevertheless, the **COVID-19 crisis** has forced this **inevitable change**. They must embrace the “**new normal**” for which leaders must be responsible for in ensuring that the transition goes well, while tackling their usual activities. They must be the bearer of change to **inspire and guide** their employees in implementing personalised and suitable sales model for clients. This ascertains that companies are prepared for the long-term implications of the industry's restructuring and for the post-crisis recovery.

If MedTech firms want to be able to keep up with the changes, these challenges must be faced efficiently to allow for a smooth but **necessary transition**.

## OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

To cope with the effects of Covid-19, the French government activated the ORSAN plan (Plan Blanc). What does this mean for **Life Sciences industrials and healthcare professionals**? Quite simply, they are **no longer allowed to visit hospitals** in 2020 for face-to-face interactions with physicians, nurses, surgeons etc. This situation raises questions such as how Sales Reps are going to sell their products from now on? What kind of tools they have at their disposal to secure business? How managers will go about **client management** henceforth? What will the long-term impact be? How will MedTech companies ensure that Sales Force are performing with similar efficiency under the new circumstances?

To secure ongoing success Life Sciences companies need to manage the upstream expectations and the downstream challenges in an environment which has already began its transformation.

So far, too many companies are struggling to submit a cohesive plan to their Sales Reps to work efficiently from home. To facilitate efficient restructuring execution, **commercial capabilities, and capacities along with available resources must be improved**. In addition, it is necessary to make **comprehensive distance training materials and programmes** readily available to Sales Representatives, Health Care Practitioners, and intermediary suppliers.

It is the perfect opportunity for companies to reconsider their ways of working, redesign new processes and why not finally **reinvent their business model**, to fit this new environment.

**Interaction will still be necessary**; however, online content, remote participation and automated facilities will take precedence in addressing concerns before resorting to in-person meetings. This can be a great challenge, as face-to-face meetings were previously the norm and sales calls relied heavily on body language cues, limited distractions, transparency, and its interactive nature to expedite efficient meetings. Research indicates that

Pharma already counts on virtual outreach significantly more than on representative calls. *Geoffrey McCleary - PWC Director agrees that "If done right, most of these changes can stick after the stoppage. Companies will learn how to **deploy AI** and virtual tools more effectively and how to better use a now-hybridized field force more effectively and efficiently."*

**Digital technologies** can improve **interaction and communication** between clients, HCPs and Sales Representatives in respect to their needs. For example, the Orson Plan has limited the reach of Sales Reps to the healthcare industry for personnel such as doctors and institutional customers. An alternative solution could be using a mix of **digital tools** and promotional activities to improve its awareness. **Virtual interactions** should be relevant and "to-the-point" to avoid overwhelming all parties. Consequently, it can be **customized** according to the preferences and/or necessary plans-of-action whether it is solely through virtual methods such as e-conferences, e-training, etc. or a combination of it and in-person meetings. By providing the proper means, like CRM, time management, monitoring and performance management tools, the switch to a new method of communication will be efficient and smooth, while also simplifying **virtual training** or sales activities.

MedTech companies can create a **long-term solution** to address the need of change in the industry through technologies like a **Multichannel Platform** where HCPs and Sales Representatives can interact with each other. Amongst several other functions, it allows for setting preferences, retrieving information, communication, monitoring activities – which can be accessed through a range of channels. Subsequently, it calls for the creation of "**best practice**" abilities to establish a **favourable edge** in all critical business operations, namely value-based healthcare, patient benefits, solutions & added services, cost on outcomes, etc.

The first step in overcoming these new challenges is to ensure that the manager and the team are prepared with the **right skill set and mindset** as they were uniquely born out of predicaments and contingency. Regional sales leaders must assume a new major function as transition agents and trainers by certifying that each client gets the **required sales model** implemented.

Secondly, it is necessary to **adapt the industry's approach** to match the above mentioned current, future purchasing protocols and decision-makers whereas control keeps on shifting from Health Care Practitioners.



## HOW CAN STRAMMER HELP?

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- ▶ New generation skills profiling
- ▶ Scenario planning and analysis
- ▶ Workforce & business support functions assessment, coaching, development, management
- ▶ Deployment
- ▶ KPI's to monitor progress & performance

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