



APPLYING THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD AS THE CORNERSTONE OF BRAND INSIGHTS AND STRATEGY

How commercial teams can benefit from a more scientifically rigorous approach to insights generation

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Commercial leaders across biopharmaceutical companies of all sizes will invest millions of dollars each month on developing insights to inform their understanding of the market and their own brand ambition and to determine where to play and how to win. And it is no wonder: The pressure to succeed at moments of truth like launch has never been higher, and it is well understood that investing more upfront in insights and strategy will better position a brand once it hits the market. This has led to ever-growing insights budgets to invest in increasingly large-sample qualitative interviews with every form and segment of healthcare provider, institutional decision-maker, payer, patient, caregiver and patient advocacy group.

The voice of the customer is crucial, but too often the vast majority of insights investment is spent on deductive research and exploratory insights generation — going in with a broad question (or no question) and getting appropriately lackluster insights that inform a general point of view, but nothing deep enough that offers a brand the true opportunity to step up and do something different that matters in the market.

Unsurprisingly, there is a better way. By taking a more scientifically rigorous approach to insights generation, commercial teams can make their brand insights investment pay off by developing a deeper customer understanding and realizing potential cost savings.

The concept is relatively straightforward and something that our R&D colleagues in the industry

live by. It goes back to the simple concept of the scientific method, or what Stanford University characterizes as “systematic observation and experimentation, inductive and deductive reasoning, and the formation and testing of hypotheses and theories” (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scientific-method/>). We can break down the approach based on the three areas of activities associated with the scientific method.

Systematic observation and experimentation

Through systematic observation and experimentation, we leverage our experiences of the market landscape with customers, existing research, analogs, data and expert perspectives to continually inform and refine hypotheses. EVERSANA helps clients achieve this is by combining deep industry, therapy area and brand experience combined with data platforms like **ACTICS** by EVERSANA® that leverage proprietary artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies to observe trends and run experiments on a continuous basis.

Consider the example of a client team preparing to launch a new brand for the treatment of major depressive disorder (MDD) with a new mechanism of action and mode of administration that would involve new settings of care. Despite the extent of unknowns, we spent resources upfront cataloging insights from analogous launches, developing an understanding from existing customer relationships



and rolling research efforts — which allowed for a rolling, systematic cycle of learning that informed more targeted experimentation and insights.

Inductive and deductive reasoning

Next, we need to rebalance the mix between inductive and deductive approaches. Inductive, hypothesis-driven insights projects allow us to get to deeper insights, but it is the fear of experiments “proving us wrong” that appear to limit the willingness to entertain this approach. A mindset shift is required here, celebrating the insights that come from a disciplined experiment — independent of whether the results support or do not support a hypothesis.

Formation and testing of hypotheses and theories

Finally, we must develop the discipline and collaboration techniques to form solid hypotheses as commercial teams. Key questions to challenge our disciplined thinking include:

- ✓ *Is the idea or concept new enough that we have not tested it before?*
- ✓ *Is it meaningful enough to inform our brand strategic priorities?*
- ✓ *Do we believe we can reasonably test this hypothesis?*

The approach outlined above might seem daunting and a shift from the norm, but for those willing to accept the need to try a new approach and employ the scientific method in developing brand insights, the rewards can be enormous.

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