

## DRUG DETAILER SIZED UP DOCTORS' DISPOSITIONS

Drug reps are carefully trained to target a physician with tactics suitable to his or her personality, according to a recently published article co-authored by a former Eli Lilly and Co. detailer, Shahram Ahari, MPH. He says detailers come armed with an array of techniques aimed at changing the physician's prescribing behavior. Here are the tactics Ahari used with physicians, depending on their disposition.

PHYSICIAN	TECHNIQUE	HOW IT SELLS DRUGS
<b>Friendly and outgoing</b>	Frame everything — samples, lunches, etc. — as gesture of friendship. Rarely mention drugs.	Lean on “friendship” to leverage more patients to rep’s drugs. Ask physician to change prescribing as a personal favor.
<b>Aloof and skeptical</b>	Bring journal articles that specifically address physician concerns; play dumb and have doctor explain significance of study.	A humble approach works best with physicians who pride themselves on practicing evidence-based medicine.
<b>Mercenary</b>	Closely associate resource expenditure with an expectation. “So, doc, you’ll choose Drug X for the next five patients who are depressed and with low energy? Oh, and don’t forget dinner at Nobu next month. I’d love to meet your wife.”	The closest drug repping comes to mere commercial exchange; tact is required.
<b>High-prescribing</b>	Make strong personal connection with these physicians; something to make rep stand out from the crowd.	Highest prescribers are “every rep’s sugar mommies and daddies.”
<b>Prefer competing drug</b>	Understand why using alternative. If physician desires attention, lavish it. Frame drug to capture a different market niche than competitor or hammer away at general superiority.	Wears down physician resistance by asking for prescribing explanation for different types of patients.
<b>Acquiescent</b>	Many physicians believe they can outsmart reps by agreeing to obtain samples, but it does not work. “There is no such thing as a free lunch.”	Detailed prescribing data lets drug rep know when physicians are lying and will ask doctors to explain their previous acquiescence.
<b>Hard to see</b>	Detail the staff, lavish them with food and gifts, and ask them to discuss the usage of a drug.	The drug rep wins just by learning what drugs are preferred and why, providing ammunition to debate the hard-to-see physicians on the rare occasions when they meet.
<b>Thought leaders</b>	Groom them for the speaking circuit and monitor their allegiance through prescribing data and eagerness to give next lecture.	Outstanding speakers could be elevated to national circuit and given satellite telecast continuing education programs.

SOURCE: "FOLLOWING THE SCRIPT: HOW DRUG REPS MAKE FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE DOCTORS," BY ADRIANE FUGH-BERMAN, MD, AND SHAHRAM AHARI, MPH, PLOS MEDICINE, APRIL.