



Market Access Advisory Board Meetings

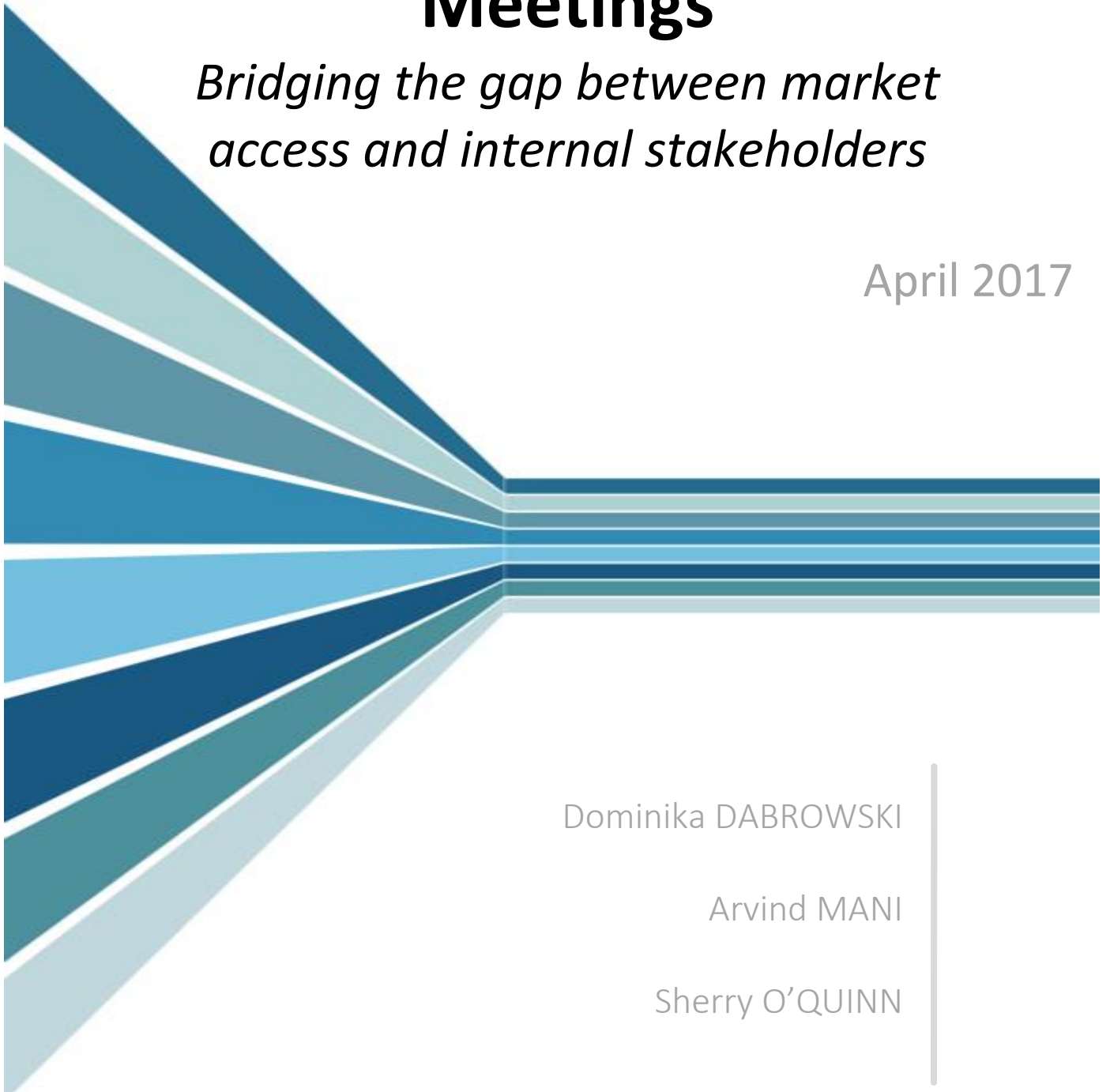
*Bridging the gap between market
access and internal stakeholders*

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Introduction

In many pharmaceutical companies, departments work independently of each other, in functional or therapeutic silos. Market Access teams often bridge the Clinical and Commercial silos, and as such, Market Access Managers play a critical role in the development and implementation of effective strategies that need to satisfy competing department objectives. The complexity and continuing evolution of the Canadian payer environment, from the increased demand for contract negotiations with payers, to changes to economic guidelines, coupled with conflicting priorities and timeline expectations for product listing by other departments, makes the Market Access Manager's role an increasingly challenging one.

One of the tools available to Market Access Managers that can help align these conflicting priorities is the Advisory Board Meeting. Advisory Board Meetings bring together key opinion leaders or subject matter experts and internal stakeholders for a brief but defined consultation. They not only provide an opportunity to gain expert insights and guidance directly from payers or their proxies to validate product market access strategies, but can also help support Market Access positions on timelines and payer expectations to other departments.

Undertaking an Advisory Board Meeting requires a significant investment of both time and budget. An average Advisory Board Meeting requires between 12-16 weeks to complete from start to finish. This article highlights a number of best practices that will help to ensure a successful meeting, and maximize the return on this investment. The three elements that these best practices consider are:

- 1) meeting organization (PLAN)
- 2) meeting presentations (PREPARE), and
- 3) advisor attendees (PARTICIPATE).

“Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.”
– Alexander Graham Bell

Plan

Although often overlooked, well planned logistics play an integral role in a successful Advisory Board Meeting. Understanding that details matter and, that timing is essential, will set your meeting apart. Some logistical considerations include:

1. PREPARATION TIME

Ideally, planning for an Advisory Board Meeting should begin at least 12 weeks before the desired meeting date. This allows for adequate time to prepare and internally review the meeting material, recruit the advisors, and organize the venue and travel plans for the attendees. Additionally, contracting the advisors often takes significant time, and should be factored into the timeline.

2. LOCATION SELECTION AND MEETING TIMING

The location of the Advisory Board Meeting, as well as timing of the meeting, need to be taken into account. Often, advisors prefer a location that is close to transportation, such as an airport, rather than somewhere more scenic, but further afield. Depending on the type of advisor, there may be a preference for a weekday, rather than a weekend meeting. The length of the meeting (half-day, full day, other) will dictate the need for overnight accommodation, additional meals, as well as travel arrangements.

3. A SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT FOR THE ADVISORS

Advisors are very busy individuals. Having a single point of contact with the advisors for all correspondence including contracting, meeting material distribution and payment, is a value add for them. Streamlined interactions allow for less confusion and better management of any issues that may arise.

4. ADVISOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is often said that it is the small things that set you apart, and the personal touch of a thank you letter, as well as timely payment of the honorarium will leave the advisors with a positive impression of your company, and often solidify a working relationship.

“If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else.”

– Yogi Berra

Prepare

A solid foundation of a successful Advisory Board Meeting is built on the thoughtful preparation of the meeting material. Investing the time, not only to develop and review the meeting material in collaboration with engaged company stakeholders, but also to prepare the moderator, presenters, and advisors, will ensure the meeting runs smoothly. The most productive meetings have the following key features:

The Material

1. THE AGENDA

A good agenda defines key topics for discussion and balances the amount of time dedicated to presentations (less) with time dedicated to advisor feedback (more). The agenda creates a solid foundation for the development of the discussion guide. Many agendas follow the formula of presentation of material, followed by discussion. Including break-out activities, where individuals and small groups work through potential issues or scenarios, can allow for individual thought, as well as building upon varied experiences in the room to provide enriched collective insights.

2. THE DISCUSSION GUIDE

The discussion guide clearly defines the topics and the questions to be addressed during the meeting and builds on the agenda. By taking the time to develop this tool, while acquiring input from internal stakeholders, you will have a comprehensive map by which the moderator can guide the discussions during the meeting to your specifications.

3. THE MEETING PRESENTATIONS

The meeting presentations should expand on the agenda and discussion guide topics. Outstanding presentations contain information that is simple, accessible and easy to understand. Presentations that have less text, are easily viewed from a distance, and that do not have distracting animation and complex diagrams or schematics work best. A successful presentation by an expert should not only be informative but also set the stage for insightful commentary from the advisors. An engaging presentation that initiates an interactive discussion with the advisors will get the conversation flowing and ultimately provide an atmosphere ripe for meaningful input from your advisory board members.

4. PRE-MEETING MATERIAL

Like meeting presenters, advisors need to be prepared prior to walking into the Advisory Board Meeting. The meeting organizer should consider providing the meeting agenda and relevant background materials one week in advance of the session. Pre-meeting materials vary depending on product lifecycle, but may include the product profile, pivotal clinical trials, and recent HTA recommendations, and listings for comparators.

The People

5. THE MODERATOR

A moderator who is prepared and understands the objectives of the meeting, is key to an effective meeting. One to two briefing calls with the meeting moderator in advance of the meeting is advisable. Providing the moderator with draft meeting material, including the discussion guide, and asking for their input early in the meeting material development can enrich the final product.

6. THE PRESENTERS

Presenters are important for setting the stage for the discussion. They need to work in partnership with you and the moderator, and have a clear understanding of what the advisory board members need to learn from the presentation. Presenters should include pauses and questions throughout the presentation to ensure that the material is engaging and to solicit a greater level of participation from the advisors. Including questions throughout the presentation (either verbally or in the slides) creates opportunities for engagement with the advisors.

A rehearsal meeting prior to the advisor board where all the presenters and the moderator come together to run through the presentations is imperative. This gives you a final chance to emphasize to the moderator and presenters the key objectives of the meeting, as well as make minor changes to the presentations, if required. It also allows all the presenters a chance to review their presentations and make any last minute modifications to their presentation style, or what they should emphasize.

7. NEW ADVISORS

In addition to providing the pre-meeting material to the advisors, in certain instances, such as when there are new advisors invited to a meeting, holding a briefing call with the core organizing team (moderator, organizer, key company contact) and the individual advisor can be helpful in building a working relationship. It allows not only for initial introductions to ensure the advisor is comfortable and motivated to provide honest and open feedback during the meeting itself, but can be context-setting with discussion of relevant background information, meeting objectives, the advisors' role and your expectations.

*“Great minds discuss ideas...”
- Eleanor Roosevelt*

Participate

The “success” of an Advisory Board Meeting will ultimately be measured by the value of the insights provided by the attendees and how those insights can be used to validate or improve upon your market access strategy. The most productive meetings have the following key features:

1. THE MODERATOR

A good moderator can be the difference between a good meeting, and a great one. The moderator should not only be acquainted with the meeting content and objectives, but should also be adaptable enough to explore discussion tangents. The moderator should be mindful of the participation styles of the advisors in the room (e.g. introverts/extroverts) and engage those individuals that haven't voiced their opinions, while tempering those whose voice is heard disproportionately. Additionally, a good moderator will intercede if they notice that timing of the presentation does not conform to the meeting agenda, and summarize key points throughout the meeting, confirming consensus or disagreement with the advisors.

2. THE ADVISORS

A small group of thoughtful advisors that are engaged and willing to provide honest feedback, not what the client "wants to hear", is essential. Having advisors with opposing points of view or differing perspectives can provide very robust outputs. Advisors should have a clear understanding of their role for the meeting, as well as the expectations for them. This will allow them to adequately prepare and think about the issues in advance instead of just "thinking on their feet". They may choose to do their own background research to supplement the background materials as well. The number of advisory board meeting attendees, as well as the mix of personalities and their expertise (e.g. clinical, HTA, regulatory, payer) need to be considered and will depend on the meeting's desired outcomes. The number of advisors will vary, depending on the scope of the meeting, from 4-5 up to 10-12. Limiting the maximum number of advisors allows everyone at the table to have a voice, while balancing the need for different perspectives or opinions.

3. THE PRESENTERS

Appropriate subject matter experts who can present succinct background information that stimulates the discussions are very important. At times, internal colleagues are sufficient to present the data during the meeting. At other times, external presenters can be seen as providing a more objective perspective. In either case, selecting presenters that are not only knowledgeable, but are also engaging, will keep the advisors stimulated and thinking about the issues being discussed.

4. THE INTERNAL ATTENDEES

Although necessary, the number of internal company stakeholders should be kept to a minimum. Most companies have strict rules on the number of internal attendees allowed to attend advisory board meetings, and if they are they should be silent observers.

Conclusion

In summary, the Canadian market access environment is evolving rapidly with increasing complexity and challenges. Consequently, there is greater pressure on Market Access Managers to understand payer expectations and deliver on competing internal and external expectations and timelines. By employing the best practices of planning, preparing, and participating, Market Access Managers can maximize the insights gained from experts at Advisory Board Meetings to gain internal alignment and optimize product market access.

About the Authors

Dominika Dabrowski is the Founder and Principal Consultant for DKDA Consulting Inc., where she specializes in payer research. Dominika has over 13 years of consulting experience in both market access, and health economics and outcomes research (HEOR). She has extensive expertise in acquiring insights and recommendations from payers and other key stakeholders. Over her career, she has successfully executed over 40 clinical, HEOR and payer advisory boards across various therapeutic areas and geographies for small and large pharmaceutical clients.

Before founding DKDA in 2015, Dominika was a Senior Project Manager at Optum in the global Market Access and Reimbursement group.

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Arvind Mani has more than 20 years of work experience in industry, associations (pharmaceutical and pharmacy), and consulting. He has an in-depth understanding of pharmaceutical industry issues and is continually looking for opportunities to shed light on emerging issues of importance to the pharmaceutical market access community (e.g. public and private payer product listing agreements, international experience with biosimilars, orphan drugs, etc.). Arvind has the ability to establish positive and constructive relationships with pharmaceutical stakeholders through a strong sense of integrity and trust.

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Sherry O'Quinn is a pharmacist with over 20 years of experience working in the government, hospital and private sectors. She has first-hand knowledge of public payer decision-making, pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance (pCPA) operations and approach to negotiations having led the negotiation of over 100 Ontario-specific product listing agreements and 20 pCPA negotiations. Sherry is known for her openness, respectfulness, and integrity in dealing with all stakeholders, internal and external. She believes in understanding all parties' perspectives and working collaboratively to reach feasible solutions.

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