



SkillsBenchmarker is a brand new, online, interactive selling skills performance management software tool. It is held on a secure server, with a field edition facilitating access and discussion on a remote basis between manager and representative



most senior sales managers are acutely focused on salesforce effectiveness and measuring return on investment, often the missing link is knowing how well representatives and front line managers are delivering sales messages at the customer interface compared to both their peers and competitors.

So three critical questions that truly reflective sales directors should ask themselves are:

1. Are we as good as we think we are?
2. Are we as good as we need to be?
3. How good is everyone else?

If we could answer these questions wouldn't representatives and salesforces be able to work smarter rather than harder? James Bohan agrees: 'At Activity Benchmarking, we have a proven history and expertise in developing metrics and key performance indicator-based solutions for pharmaceutical companies and our latest offering builds on the accompanied field visits which are an important part of a sales representative and field manager's working life.'

'SkillsBenchmarker is a brand new, online, interactive selling skills performance management software tool and is a logical extension of our expertise,' adds James. 'It is held on a secure server with a remote field edition facilitating access and discussion between manager and representative. Regular synchronisation ensures that the data are kept as up to date as possible.'

'Skills Benchmarker develops the selling skills of individuals, regions, teams and salesforces by identifying training needs at all levels

direct input or by data-feed from an existing company system into SkillsBenchmarker.'

But what sets this system apart from some other commercially available systems? Explains James: 'This is where we have real power. Skills-Benchmarker enables real time benchmarking of skills performance in real calls with real doctors and is not an artificial exercise. Indeed all the benchmarks that are created arise from real life situations, allowing the best possible comparisons to be made.'

#### Profiling the representative

SkillsBenchmarker also enables profiling of the representative against a number of parameters, including territory, region, salesforce, age, qualifications, length of experience in the Industry, visit history and disease/therapy area detailed. Although there is a library of pre-defined benchmarks, James comments: 'The profiling parameters can be aggregated to allow you to build customised benchmarks,' allowing companies to answer questions such as:

- How does a given twenty-five year old GP representative with two years' selling compare to others of similar age and experience?
- How does a given oncology specialist sales team compare to others in the industry?
- Do first line managers allocate their time activities optimally?
- What has been the impact of our training initiatives? And which should be terminated or continued?

• James Bohan



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# Salesforce empowerment

PharmaTimes Magazine sent Roy Carlisle to find out from James Bohan, UK General Manager at Activity Benchmarking, how the company's new SkillsBenchmarker will help provide a customised measure of representative performance across territory, across region and inter company.

In the UK, various surveys suggest that only 30% of doctors see representatives and for an average of three minutes only. Yet the numbers of representatives seems to be increasing all the time. So how effective is your salesforce at getting access to the customer? And how does it stack up against rival companies in the increasingly competitive healthcare arena?

Ask any Industry sales director what they think of their salesforce and they will probably say: 'They're pretty good,' and point to a number of metrics including selling skills as supporting evidence for this claim. However, while

and enabling benchmarking within a company, including between affiliates and, of course, with competitors. For example, Skills Benchmarker measures the efficiency of the input of first line managers, as well as providing the opportunity to provide a return on investment on the training function,' notes James.

So how does it work? 'Quite simply by capturing key data at representative level via intuitive and user friendly software that enables selling skills and competency scores to be entered on every field visit,' James points out. 'There are no restrictions as data entry can either be via

**Salesforce empowerment**

'SkillsBenchmarker offers the opportunity to compare, both internally and externally, the relative selling skill effectiveness of a given set of representatives. This permits more focused training and development objectives to be set, as well as comparisons of coaching and marking style amongst first-line managers. It will also enable a productive and interactive dialogue on relative selling skills performance between the representative and the first-line manager or training manager,' continues James. 'Clearly this means that by facilitating the creation of mutually agreed training objectives based on real life selling situations, continuous improvement in sales force effectiveness and sales must follow.'

But if this is indeed the route to empower the salesforce, is the system easy to use and how much training is required? 'One of the key considerations in developing SkillsBenchmarker was to ensure that it is easy to use and doesn't require the long days off road for familiarisation that are necessitated by some CRM-type offerings. Our belief is that we have achieved this by the intuitive nature of the software, which is further enhanced by the animated help on every page,' James replies. 'SkillsBenchmarker is able to generate a range of bespoke, password-protected reports – from an overview at senior

Meanwhile, the regional business manager view facilitates benchmarking of skills progress at regional team and individual level, which in turn offers potential for motivation and assessment with a diary function to aid allocation of manager and trainer time in the field plus overviews of activity and visit schedules...



management and training functions, to more detailed analyses at first line management and individual representative levels.'

**Skill sets by company**

According to James, the senior management level gives an overview of skill sets by company, region or specialist sales team, which can be displayed as timelines with internal or external competitor comparisons, while summaries of first line management activity and management schedules can also be viewed. The training function level goes into more detail by enabling – for example – selling skill scores of those representatives who have attended training courses to be benchmarked against those who were non-attenders, as well as picking out general areas in the sales team which need further development.

Meanwhile, the regional business manager view facilitates benchmarking of skills progress at regional team and individual level, which in turn offers potential for motivation and assessment with a diary function to aid allocation of manager and trainer time in the field plus overviews of activity and visit schedules. And finally, the individual level allows the representative to view their scores versus selected company and industry benchmarks, and allows truly meaningful comparisons to be made against those of similar age, experience and job role.

Concludes James: 'We are truly empowering the salesforce by enabling benchmarking of both internal and external selling skills. We really are saying do what you're doing now, but do it better! SkillsBenchmarker will help sales teams to find out where they rank based on real life, real time selling situations. And in real life, if you don't know where you're starting from, the direction of your next step does not matter.' ▲

Contact James Bohan at Activity Benchmarking Ltd.  
E mail james.bohan@skillsbenchmarker.com  
Tel +44 (0)20 8582 0389 Fax +44 (0)20 8582 0383