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Where do  
**SALES  
AIDS**  
come from?

**6** Slowdown in blockbuster market

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Where do

# SALES AIDS

come from?

The detail aid is one of the most valuable tools pharmaceutical representatives have to sell medications to physicians and other healthcare professionals. Also known as a sales aid or visual aid, the detail aid has been and continues to be vital in helping representatives foster engaging and productive dialogue with customers.

For those who are unaware or who are new to the industry, the sales aid is a booklet or brochure composed of the following elements: key messages about the product's efficacy, supportive clinical data with illustrative charts and graphs, pragmatic usage guidance (dosing and administration), and information pertaining to the product's tolerability and safety. Sales aids also incorporate creative elements such as imagery, headlines, tag lines and branding logos.

Sales aids are used by pharmaceutical sales representatives to educate physicians and other healthcare professionals about a new medication or to remind them about an existing brand. New sales aids often are developed for in-line brands at various points in the product life cycle, such as when the brand attains new treatment indications, when new data are available to support the brand or when competitors are introduced into the market.

The process of developing a detail aid typically involves the following six steps: market segmentation analysis, establishing the positioning theme, developing and testing key selling messages, creative concept development and testing, developing and testing the black-and-white detail aid, and final detail aid testing.

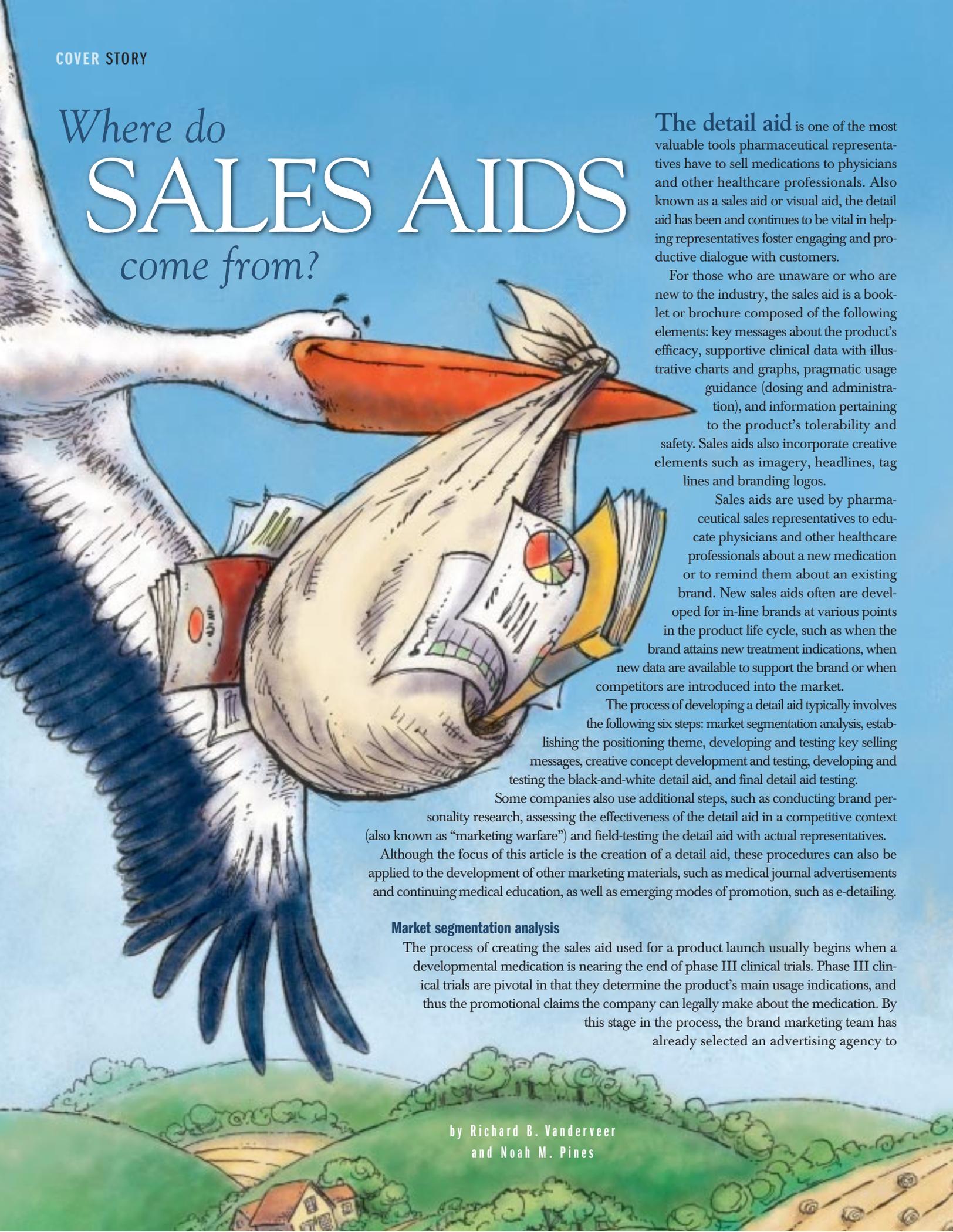
Some companies also use additional steps, such as conducting brand personality research, assessing the effectiveness of the detail aid in a competitive context (also known as "marketing warfare") and field-testing the detail aid with actual representatives.

Although the focus of this article is the creation of a detail aid, these procedures can also be applied to the development of other marketing materials, such as medical journal advertisements and continuing medical education, as well as emerging modes of promotion, such as e-detailing.

## Market segmentation analysis

The process of creating the sales aid used for a product launch usually begins when a developmental medication is nearing the end of phase III clinical trials. Phase III clinical trials are pivotal in that they determine the product's main usage indications, and thus the promotional claims the company can legally make about the medication. By this stage in the process, the brand marketing team has already selected an advertising agency to

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serve as the primary designer of its promotional materials, such as the detail aid, the journal ad and continuing medical education. In addition, the company typically engages a marketing research organization to conduct a market segmentation analysis, a crucial step in producing the detail aid.

The goal of market segmentation analysis is to determine whether groups exist within the customer population that are different enough and large enough that the pharmaceutical company will need to tailor its promotional approaches to each group. Segmentation is also useful in examining whether certain groups exhibit a greater inclination to use the medication than others.

Segmentation analysis often entails a two-step process involving qualitative and quantitative primary marketing research to evaluate whether discrepancies exist in terms of physicians' attitudes and opinions, product utilization behaviors, or demographic characteristics. Companies typically conduct qualitative research first to explore the existence of these segments and to identify the key disparities among segments. They then conduct quantitative research involving multivariate methodologies to verify the existence, size and characteristics of these segments. The results of this research indicate whether segments exist that are different enough and large enough to warrant an approach tailored to each segment's specific needs – or whether a broader or more uniform approach would be more effective.

### Establishing the positioning theme

The next step in the process involves establishing the brand's positioning statement. This statement, which typically consists of one to three brief and simple sentences, specifies the unique place that the company would like its brand to occupy in the mind of its target customer audience. Ideally, the place the brand occupies in customers' minds is one that will lead them to prescribe it appropriately and preferentially over alternative, competing medications. The positioning statement is crucial because it serves as the basis for all subsequent marketing communications, and it is kept internal – confidential – to the company. Although segments may exist in the customer population, most companies maintain only one positioning statement per brand.

To develop this statement, the marketing research agency

typically will first conduct a series of exploratory focus groups with physicians who are high prescribers within the therapeutic area, often including those who are key opinion leaders. The physicians are shown a realistic profile of the medication and instructed to suggest several statements summarizing the unique advantages the medication offers relative to others in its competitive set. Advertising agencies with more experience in the therapeutic area often can bypass this initial step and develop several alternative positioning statements without the input of physicians or key opinion leaders.

The next step in the process involves testing these potential positioning statements using qualitative focus group research. During these focus group sessions, physicians are again shown a realistic profile of the product and then asked to respond to the various alternative positioning statements. Specifically, the physicians are queried with regard to the credibility, appropriateness, clinical relevance, uniqueness and motivational influence of each statement to determine which is most effective overall. During these sessions, physicians often recommend important modifications to the statements or identify parts of a statement that are problematic or inappropriate. Once the number of potential positioning statements has been narrowed to three or four, many pharmaceutical companies conduct quantitative research with a national sample of physicians to ascertain which positioning statement is most effective in terms of the aforementioned characteristics, especially motivational influence to prescribe.

### Developing key selling messages

Since the positioning statement represents the central theme for marketing the brand and is internal to the organization, the company then needs to determine how to effectively communicate this statement to customers; this is the function of key selling messages. These messages are intended to capture and convey the most advantageous aspects of the product, which are then used in developing subsequent marketing materials, including the detail aid.

The first step in the process of message development is for the pharmaceutical company and advertising agency to examine the product's label and produce a comprehensive inventory of all the claims that are likely to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Once this roster has

been generated, companies typically conduct a round of quantitative multivariate marketing research to learn which of these claims are most effective in causing physicians to prescribe the product. Various methodologies exist that pinpoint not only the most effective selling messages, but also which message combinations are most effective in driving utilization. Such processes are important as a way to pare huge lists of potential claims down to a manageable quantity of 20 to 30 messages.

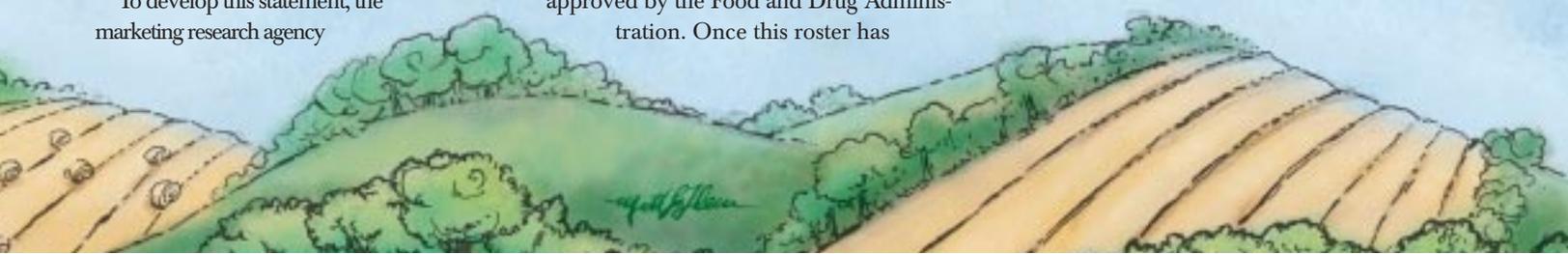
The second step in the process generally involves taking the list of messages and assembling them into a logical and compelling "story." This can be achieved through such methodologies as information architecture, which involves qualitative focus group research in which physicians assign the various messages to play specific roles within this story:

- *Attention-getters* get physicians' attention and make them want to listen to what the representative has to say about the product.
- *Benefits* describe the key advantages offered by the product to physicians and their patients.
- *Reasons to believe* substantiate the key benefits by highlighting important findings from the clinical data.
- *Obstacle handlers* proactively allay physicians' potential concerns about and objections to prescribing the medication.
- *Closes/calls to action* provide the physician with direction and impetus to act in terms of prescribing the medication.

The result of this research is typically an outline of key messages the advertising agency can use as the basis for constructing a black-and-white mock-up of the detail aid.

### Creative concept development

As noted earlier, detail aids not only contain key product messages and supportive information, but also creative elements such as images, headlines, tag line and branding logos. Once the positioning statement is finalized, the creative department within the advertising agency typically produces a series of potential creative concepts that visually support and convey the statement to physicians. The purpose of including such creative elements in the detail aid is to get physicians' attention or to help physicians remember the brand. Images can be extremely powerful in helping physicians



recall brands and keep them top-of-mind.

Once a set of creative materials is developed by the advertising agency, the marketing research agency will typically evaluate these materials using qualitative one-on-one interviews. Specific areas investigated by this research usually include the extent to which the imagery reflects the positioning statement, how eye-catching the imagery is, how motivating the imagery is, and whether there is anything potentially offensive or problematic about the imagery.

### Developing the black-and-white detail aid

Based on the message development research, the agency will construct a black-and-white detail aid mock-up. Testing this mock-up in black and white – without imagery – is critical, since physicians generally consider the words, graphs and charts to be the most important components of the detail aid. Black-and-white detail aid mock-ups are typically tested using one-on-one depth interviews with physicians. During the interview, the physician is presented with the mock-up in conjunction with a taped voice-over of a sales representative to simulate the way the aid will ultimately be presented to the physician. At the conclusion of this testing, the marketing research agency recommends any final changes to the content, flow or specific wording of the topics covered in the aid. Although many of the larger pharmaceutical companies elect to conduct black-and-white sales aid testing, some smaller companies skip directly to the final detail aid testing.

### Final detail aid testing

Using the combined input from the black-and-white detail aid testing and the creative concept testing, the advertising agency blends the most effective elements into a final detail aid, which is then tested in a manner simi-

lar to the black-and-white detail aid – presented to physicians using a taped voice-over of a representative. The goal of this research is to ensure that the detail aid is clear, flows well, includes all necessary information, and contains nothing problematic or offensive. This stage of research also is useful in fine-tuning the relationship between the imagery (as well as other branding elements such as the tagline and logo) and the wording to ensure that these components are consistent. This research also usually involves one-on-one depth interviews with a variety of physicians who may or may not be likely to use the product; it is important at this stage of the process to involve a sample of research participants who are mixed in terms of their potential intent to prescribe the medication, which helps to simulate the real-world environment sales representatives will face in detailing the product.

### Other types of research

Other types of research that contribute to the development of the detail aid are:

**Brand personality research.** The goal of this research is to develop the brand personality that is most consistent with the brand. It entails evaluating potential statements that communicate the human personality traits the brand encompasses. In pharmaceutical marketing, such traits often include intelligence, reliability or trustworthiness. The role of marketing research in this context is to ascertain which personality best compliments the brand's positioning statement and communicates a favorable human "feel" to the brand.

**Marketing warfare.** Once the final detail aid has been developed, many companies conduct marketing "war games" to ensure that the document is ready to be used in actual marketing. This research involves having real representatives con-

duct mock sales visits in front of actual physicians using their detail aid and the competitor's detail aid. This research helps illuminate the way physicians will react to the detail aid in a competitive context and can be extremely helpful in detecting the weaknesses in a detail aid. In addition, such research can be used for training purposes or in generating rebuttals to potential questions raised by physicians based on details by competitors' reps.

**Field testing.** As a final step in the process, some companies will give prototypes of the sales aid to representatives for actual use in the field. The reps then report how effective they find the sales aids to be, how they flow, where their strengths and weaknesses are, how physicians respond to them, etc.

Detail aids have long been one of the most effective promotional instruments sales representatives use in persuading physicians to prescribe their products. The extensive, systematic process companies employ in developing such brochures is largely driven by feedback from the physicians themselves through various types of marketing research.

Since this process is complex and involves sequential steps, it can take as long as nine months to a year to develop an effective detail aid. However, as companies are aware, an effective detail aid and a successful marketing campaign can pay hefty dividends in physician prescribing behavior. **PR**

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