

## What's the Real Impact of PhRMA Code Changes on Convention Marketing?

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The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) updated its voluntary Code on relationships with US healthcare professionals effective January 1, 2009. Like the 2002 edition, this Code addresses interactions with respect to marketed products and related pre-launch activities.

The 36-page document is focused on 15 rules. The main changes are:

- A complete ban on free meals for doctors when the meals have no educational value.
- A complete ban on taking doctors to entertainment or recreational events, such as golf and baseball games
- A complete ban on non educational gifts, such as pens and coffee mugs.

### 2008 Study Results

Marketech undertook a study last fall at six conventions where 856 health care professionals (HCPs) were interviewed to ascertain their perceptions of the changes before they took effect. In summary:

78% strongly disagreed that promotional products influenced their prescribing or recommending habits.

63% indicated that sponsorships did not really influence their decision to visit specific exhibits.

63% visit exhibits primarily to learn about the exhibitor's products.

75% indicated there would be NO CHANGE in their decision to visit a specific exhibit when promotional items are no longer given out.

We also learned that 47% of those interviewed get their information about a specific product on the internet and 35% at symposia. When asked about the value of specific face-to-face interactions on a weighted average basis, they rated them as follows:

- Symposia
- CME live sessions
- Exhibits at conventions
- Rep calls on HCPs
- Association social events

### 2009 Update

A portion of this study has been continued in the first six months of 2009, since the implementation of the PhRMA Code changes. In that time we have interviewed 550 HCPs at four events. What have we learned?

When asked about PhRMA initially, 14.1% did not know what the PhRMA Code was.

85.8% responded that changes in the PhRMA Code has not impacted their visitation to exhibits at medical conventions.

14.2% responded "yes", the changes in PhRMA Code have affected their visitation to exhibits at medical conventions.

When asked about how the new Code has affected them, responses ranged from "it's crazy" and "there is more to eat, which is great for me" to "I don't come here for the gifts" and "I never understand why people stand in line, I come here for the information". We also heard "I think it's good because I'm sure some people lose sight of what's important, although I could use a really

good pen.” and “exhibits are too serious, gifts made it fun.” (See Verbatim Addendum at the end of this paper for additional comments.)

Although we have not measured perceptions of changes to the Advamed Code which will become effective as of July 1, 2009 and puts similar restrictions upon those in the medical device industry, we can assume that they would be similar.

### What does this mean for us in convention marketing?

- Remember as we plan our events, HCPs visit our exhibits for the education and they expect to learn something new as a result of the time invested (or at least have you help them recall something they have learned in the past.)
- They want to be valued and a gift doesn't always do that. Acknowledging, recognizing and including them in dialogue creates this positive environment.
- Without the traditional promotional products, we have to aggressively engage to get convention attendees to enter our exhibits.
- We have to create an experience for our visitors so they remember our differentiators and product messages. Our interactives, e-details and challenges help create that experience along with our staff's involvement.

- We need to measure every element of our exhibit, including the impact of sponsorships to assure that they are resonating and attracting with our target audiences.

### How were these studies conducted:

Both surveys were administered face-to-face with attendees who visited the exhibit area of each of the medical conventions selected. Respondents were selected at random during the exhibit hours, then were screened as US-based professionals. Trained interviewers asked the questions and recorded the responses on behalf of the respondents.

US-based respondents were selected at random and we strove for a fair balance of ages and gender, cross-discipline and multiple roles. A paper survey was used. No incentives were offered for participating in the survey.

In the Fall 2008 survey, 858 professionals were interviewed at six healthcare conventions. A variety of therapeutic disciplines were included: immunology, osteopathy, thoracic surgery, general practice, cardiology, and hematology. The 2009 survey was conducted with 550 professionals at four events in primary care, diabetes, endocrinology and clinical oncology

#### ABOUT MARKETECH

Marketech, Inc. was founded in 1985 to specialize in staff training, strategic exhibit market planning, measurement and consulting. The staff comes from multi disciplined backgrounds. All of our programs are marketing oriented, because exhibiting is a marketing communications tool utilized to achieve higher organizational objectives. Our main office is in Westboro, MA.

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## Addendum - Verbatims

It's crazy!

Gifts don't matter to me.

I was not aware of it.

There is more to eat which is great to me.

I'm still here.

This is my first show, so everything is great.

You don't have much desire to go anymore. You still come of the information, but it's not fun.

I don't come here for the gifts. I never understand why people stand in line. I come here for the information.

It's ridiculous. Senators and congressmen take gifts all the time!

I think it's good because I'm sure some people lose sight of what's important, although I could really use a pen right now.

I could really use a pen though.

It sucks! I didn't bring a pen and I really need a pen. I need to write things down and I don't have a pen.

I visit booths based on their educational value, not their gifts.

I really do need a pen. When you come to these things, you think you can get one here.

Not really, the gifts are nice, but if you need the knowledge, you need it.

Less likely to visit the booth. I'm not as eager to go from booth to booth. I just go where I need specific information.

It's nice that they don't give gifts. Although I miss the pens. I hope the money that companies spent on gift giving go to more cost savings to patients who can't afford expensive medicine.

I think the PhRMA code is ridiculous. The gifts were not affecting the doctors' decision making about what to prescribe.

I think it's better without the gifts. It's just a bunch of stuff that I don't need. It's better like this.

Exhibit too serious, gifts made it fun.

It's stupid. A pen is not going to change how I prescribe.

It hasn't affected me but I do miss the gifts.

I think it's nice to not have to carry a bunch of worthless stuff. But I really like the laser pen from last year.

I don't care about not getting pens. But they took away the cholesterol testing. That is just silly.

Nice to get the goodies, but we'll still visit the floor without them.

I like to get "toys."

It's actually improved my visitation to the exhibit floor.

I like to visit tradeshow to get information. When I'm at work, I'm too busy.

I think it's good to not have the free stuff. There are so many people in the world that need things more than us.

I liked the giveaways; we're like kids, we like our incentive.

That is what I came for, it will affect my visitation in the future.

It's made it a little boring; we can sort out false advertising and won't be influenced by a pen or bag.

Would like to see more educational tools for patients, something stellar.

I like to get giveaways.

Giveaways are fun not necessary.

Used to getting little perks and used them with my students.

Fun to get trinkets and liked 1-1 dinners in the past.

Spend less time.

More information now.

Not as good now.

Not as fun; not as educational; makes me less inclined to come or stay. We will probably leave in about 10 minutes.

Knew about the new rules, just didn't know what they were called.

I spend less time in the hall; we are like children, we like the freebies.

The rule makers should have to abide by the rules too!

Open to learning; irked that government takes billions from lobbyists but I can't even get a pen.

If there is a product I liked or was interested in, before I would have something with the name on it so I could remember. Now there is no link.

I'm very disappointed. More programs more everything in the past...very different this year.

It's less provocative, not as fun.

Doesn't impact me visiting the hall or not, but I want to send a petition to get rid of it.

Upsetting, but doesn't impact me visiting the hall or not, just not as fun; used to be a stress reliever.

Very much. Everything is food, food, food, more education now-that's good, but the attractively is gone.

Not as good now.

Not the major incentive...CME and education is...but takes away the enthusiasm a little...is disappointing.

No reminders. hat is GLP-1? I don't know and now they can't give me anything as a reminder.

Too many restrictions that are not warranted. You need to take care of the people who prescribe your medication.

More information now.

Can use pens in office and /or give pens to patients...it is nice and convenient...doesn't make me biased one way or another.

I want to spend less time in here now.

Feels like another drug rep in the office ... it's not as much fun.

No more things to get.

No more pens; the experience isn't the same.

Not fun.

Yeah, was the most fun about coming; part of fun of meeting people.

Would like to get pens; other things too.

It sucks; how are we supposed to know about products without it?

I like getting stuff, but wouldn't stop me from coming to the exhibits (items for patient education materials).

The Novo rep lent me a pen.

But I still like getting pens. I won't come to the exhibits as much now.

People may come more often if there's an incentive.

I miss the pens.

I was surprised; but no, it doesn't affect whether I would visit the floor; it's kind of dumb though-do they really think a pen can influence?

No-because I volunteer to help in other countries-Yes-because money is not spent for this and can

be used for other things (like donations).

But I had the philosophy of it - a pen would not influence me; the lobbyists in Washington have more impact on my decisions than a pen from Novo would.

Most important things are the log books and literature that you give me.

Don't miss free pens.

Nice to get things, incentive to visit booths.

Can't get free pens.

Less incentive to visit booths.

I don't go to every booth, just the ones that interest me.

More about information, less about stuff.

Told wife not to come for trinkets for the kids.

Will spend less time here.

In a better way, not as crowded.

There is nothing to inspire you; if I'm in the meeting I'll come to exhibits.

Less likely to visit exhibits that are not "purposed."

We look for booths for drugs we already use—we don't know xxxxxx drugs so would not have stopped without Passport.

Used to spend more time when got goodies; better now—spend more time in lectures; Lilly had a book relevant to our trials, so went there.

Feels different, more quiet; guess it's a good thing; doesn't affect my decision to visit—would come anyway.

Less interesting; nothing much to talk about in exhibit part, probably more to talk about in Medical Affairs.

I visited less; less inclined to learn about things on the exhibit floor.

I like it better—crowding was awful to get pens—more professional now.

All information available from internet, on line.

Been a lot more brief.

Could use a pen.

Less fun stuff.

No more long lines.

Not as fun!