



IIMC CASE RESEARCH CENTER (IIMCCRC)

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RXPRISM'S REPBOTS: TRANSFORMING PHARMACEUTICAL COMMUNICATION THROUGH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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The RxLab team was holding its quarterly review meeting in December 2017. The product under the spotlight was REPBOTS, the “Less-Rep to Rep-Less Selling Solution”, which was being prototyped and tested with three different pharmaceutical companies in India. The RxLab team was trying to identify impediments to the adoption and scale-up of the solution so that they could figure out the way forward.

The sales team had shared that about 80% of the health care professionals (HCPs) tested with had felt that REPBOTS was a novel approach. The on-demand aspect of the product was very useful. In the Indian context, many HCPs felt that the bots were more intelligent than the medical representatives (often referred to as ‘reps’) in terms of their subject knowledge, their ability to resolve problems instantly, and their competence at providing certain articles, files, or references to the HCPs.

The RxLab team reviewed a lengthy testimonial that highlighted what HCPs liked about REPBOTS.

Prof. Indranil Bose of the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta and Deepa Iyer developed this case study as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate the effective or ineffective running of an organization.

As a HCP, I liked this bot concept, especially because of the following reasons:

On-demand: *I have the flexibility to meet the bot at a time and place that is convenient for me. It does not affect my clinic time or bother me when I am with my patients. With a ChatBot in place, I truly do not miss a rep! The option ensures all my queries are answered to my satisfaction, with appropriate references and documents instantly.*

Byte-sized content: *Short content truly upholds the sanctity of my meetings because my time spent with a bot is not more than two minutes at a time, which is an extraordinary improvement when compared to the time that I spend with my reps despite arriving nowhere.*

Personalization: *The content is especially personalized to my needs over time. As I meet with the bots more and more, the content that the bots share gets refined, relevant, and targeted to my requirement. This, I later realized, is because the bots learn over time, which really makes me feel I am already in the AI era!*

Seeing no cause for concern, they then moved to a discussion around the revenue model and the benefits that the solution could give to the pharmaceutical companies, their customers.

Raju Muralidhar, Head of Sales, RxPrism, shared that they had projected benefits of a possible 90% reduction in promotional fees for brands willing to test and deploy REPBOTs over a full annual marketing cycle. If the brand typically spent US\$ 10 for every touch point via a human rep, they could do it at US\$ 1 per touch point using REPBOTs. The solution gave them access to the predictive intelligence of the REPBOTs platform, which would help them plan ahead instead of react to what happened in the past. REPBOTs also offered campaign management facilities, and companies could also benefit from the content creation facilities of RxPrism as a separate service. However, Muralidhar noted that while the C-suite audience were excited with this figure, they seemed tentative in terms of committing to a large-scale deployment, which would involve large numbers of their reps working alongside REPBOTs.

Arul Bala Kathiresan, Director of Healthcare Solutions at RxPrism, noted that the move to rep-less selling could be a slow process. He said:

“Complete rep-less selling would possibly be 4-5 years into the future. Pharmaceutical companies want to be doubly sure that REPBOTs takes care of all regulatory and legal aspects. Initially, human reps need to be involved as they need to collect HCP consent.”

Shaikh Ahmad Shahid, Director of HealthCare Communication at RxPrism, agreed that this would possibly be the case. He additionally pointed out that in all the trials they had conducted, HCP

uptake was positive compared to earlier data gleaned using human reps. This was especially the case for brands that were in a decline phase. Therefore, maybe, this could be one lever they could use to gain immediate traction.

Maruthi Viswanathan, Founder and CEO at RxPrism, glanced around the table. He asked:

“What do you think we can change or sharpen in the marketing, the solution, and the approach to get one enterprise to move from pilot and test to commitment? To get them to partner with RxPrism for a large-scale country-wide deployment?”

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