

IFPMA: Sales and marketing thermometer game

How hot is this issue?



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The following scenarios should be discussed in your groups. They have been developed for use in training sessions to enable debate about a wide variety of sales and marketing practices. Of course you will wish to consider whether or not there is a breach of any law, regulations or codes of practice but the main point of this exercise is to debate:

How hot an issue is this?

Is it a 'red hot' issue or do you feel quite 'cool' about the scenario?
That leads you to consider

- ✓ What level of response is needed? E.g. urgent corrective action? Disciplinary procedures? Individual re-training?
- ✓ What is behind the issue and how could it be prevented from occurring again? Revise internal policies? Commission a new training program? Is a new auditing or monitoring initiative focussed on this area justified?

Debate the scenarios and decide where on the thermometer scale you would place each issue.

Scenario 1

Sales are below budget but the marketing manager is extremely enthusiastic and was recently recruited from a major competitor!

Those very same competitors are making rather borderline claims about their products and getting away with it – there’s never been a complaint so it’s never been established whether the claims do in fact breach the code. You suspect that they probably would be in breach but nevertheless a defence could be constructed (perhaps a 70% chance of a breach being ruled if a complaint were made). The marketing manager decides to use similar claims.

You feel uneasy but accept that if you block the new campaign claims you will be putting our company at a commercial disadvantage and anyway you are not absolutely sure that the claims do breach the code. Where on the thermometer would you place this scenario?

Place this issue on the thermometer scale



Scenario 2

Company X has a good relationship with AAA - an asthma patient support group. They see the value of PR activities (press releases etc) to support their work. Company X agree to allow its PR agency to work with the patient group to highlight their treatment advice for asthma and the brand manager agrees to pay their account – up to a ceiling of £10,000 over 2 years.

The asthma treatment advice from AAA supports the role of Company X's asthma product, but this is not surprising because it is generally accepted to be the most effective and best tolerated treatment in its class. Because of adverse publicity in the press about the pharmaceutical industry AAA decide not to include reference to Company X support in any of the PR materials produced.

However Company X will be mentioned in AAA's annual report as one of the companies that has provided financial support and AAA will be listed on Company X's website as a patient support group they have supported with a cash donation.

Place this issue on the thermometer scale



Scenario 3

Two good quality studies support efficacy claims for Product X. A new, bigger trial now reports data that are contrary to the previous results and place Product X in a less favourable light compared with a major competitor. With the new results the balance of evidence does not now support the claims in the current promotional material.

The product team has decided to re-examine the new trial results – they run contrary to all expectations and the team is perhaps not unreasonable in suspecting that there may be some procedural anomalies that could invalidate the results.

The product team decides to take no action with respect to the current promotional material until the re-examination of the trial results is complete. A high workload means that this cannot be scheduled for at least 6 months.

Where would you place the scenario on the scale?

- a. Would this be a hotter issue if the new results seemed to suggest poorer tolerability rather than lower efficacy?
- b. New information: Two months later after a representative visit, one of the doctors who was involved in the new trial complains to a representative that the company is not being balanced in its promotional material. He accuses the company of hiding negative data.

Place this issue on the thermometer scale



Scenario 4

The only nominated signatory in your team is on holiday. The brand manager decides to re-use a detail aid used 3 years ago without the re-approval of the nominated signatory (There has been no change in dose or indication since last time). This is necessary because it is needed at an important international conference.

On her return the Nominated Signatory is asked to sign the re-approval certificate retrospectively. She refuses to do this because the item has already been issued - even through there is nothing wrong with it. Place this issue on the thermometer scale.

- a. Would your decision be affected if the Nominated Signatory had noticed that there is a mistake in the piece which was also in the original piece (key to one of the graphs is the wrong way round)

Place this issue on the thermometer scale



Scenario 5

At a major regional meeting, a very important Professor arrives with a partner who you know not to be his wife. He has paid for her air-fare and says he will pay for any extras in the hotel. He brings her to the Company X sponsored dinner and the restaurant staff set an additional place for her.

You later find he has not settled the hotel extras bill and he has emptied the contents of the hotel mini bar and not paid for it.

Your colleague suggests that in the circumstances we should 'put this down to experience'- we will know next time! We will not pursue him for payment this time.

Place this issue on the thermometer scale

