

Keeping it fair in rare - What every pharma can learn from ultra-orphan sales incentive plan design and management

In ultra-orphan therapeutics, commercial models are often highly customized to the patient journey and are designed to handle several unique features: extended lead times to initiate a new patient, paying a commission for new therapy initiation, and components that focus on retention.

Examining each of these features to understand how sales incentive plans are designed and managed in ultra-orphan markets can provide ideas on how to design and manage plans in many other markets.

Articulate clear milestones

In ultra-orphan, incentives offer very clear milestones related to the patient journey. For example:

- Commission payments for therapy initiation
- Milestone payments for x-months of retention
- Annual patient initiation goal for President's Club rankings

Provide clear goal posts

Crystallize the "goal post" milestones already embedded within your payout curve. E.g.,

- If you match baseline sales, you will earn your target
- If you achieve 120% of goal, you will earn 2x target

Keep the field focused through a well-maintained territory alignment

In ultra-orphan, most incentive plans are commission plans, where "territory" directly defines reps' commission potential.

In these situations, comments such as — "well, so-and-so has a bigger territory than me," can reduce motivation and cause continuous distraction.

Although more pronounced in commission plans, these dynamics occur in all sales forces.

Increase motivation through a fair playing field

Incorporate territory alignment balance checks into your standard IC health check. Example metrics:

- Workload
- Population
- Current business, and
- Overall market potential

Equity on these factors can remove perceptions of bias and re-focus the field on goal posts.

Reward based on factors that sales teams can impact

In ultra-orphan, it is not unusual to pay bonuses for patient retention. Commercial efforts do not stop with patient initiation, especially for products with strict infusion regimens. Reps need to work closely with patient support, MSL, and case management teams to support the patient post-initiation.

Incent the business that can be impacted

Segment your business into the "base" which carries over on its own, and the "high impact" portion where reps drive the biggest impact – consider paying earlier and more often for sales from "high impact" customers.



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