

# Sepracor, Inc.:

# Achieving Sales Success

# with Tablet PCs

Toshiba Tablet PCs with Microsoft Windows XP Tablet PC Edition help sales reps slash paperwork and save time.

## COMPANY BACKGROUND

Sepracor Inc. is a research-based pharmaceuticals company that focuses on the treatment of respiratory and central nervous system disorders. The Marlborough, Mass.-based company relies on its primary care and specialty-oriented sales force of about 1,700 to make physicians aware of its products and to make drug samples available to doctors who request them.

The company wanted to equip sales reps with mobile technology that would enable them to be more effective at marketing drug products, communicate better with managers while on the road, and gather more information about prospective buyers. The solution Sepracor found—appropriately enough for a pharmaceuticals company—came in the form of a tablet.

## THE SALES CHALLENGE

In 2003, Sepracor knew it needed to find a mobile computing solution that would enable sales to work more efficiently and effectively in the field. In a highly competitive industry, having technology that can help boost sales and improve customer service is vital.

The sales people needed a single computer to carry, rather than rely on paper or multiple devices. They also needed a technology that would enable them to communicate more frequently with the corporate network, better manage their schedules, and download the most up-to-date product marketing materials electronically.

One area in particular that needed improvement was drug sample requests by physicians. This was a paper-based process that took a lot of time and invited risks such as sales representatives carrying around drug samples and not keeping accurate count of the products, potentially in violation of federal drug regulations.

Here's how the old system worked. A representative would make a sales call to a doctor's office and—if the physician wanted to receive a sample—the rep would fill out a paper card, which the doctor would sign. The rep would then ship the card overnight to a facility which would verify that the person requesting the sample was a real doctor. After the verification was complete, the sales rep would personally bring the samples to the doctor's office.

"We wanted to remove the paperwork and make the process

happen faster," says Joe McGrath, vice president of information technologies at Sepracor. "And because of federal regulations such as the Prescription Drug Marketing Act, we wanted to account for every product that goes out the door." Under the old system, Sepracor was spending a lot of money hiring inventory specialists to take frequent counts of its samples in the field to ensure accuracy.

## THE TABLET PC ADVANTAGE

As part of a technology refresh for field sales three years ago, Sepracor decided to implement Tablet PC technology. The company conducted an assessment to determine the key features and capabilities it needed in the devices, including portability, processing speed, reliability, and service and support from the vendor.

"We looked at what the sales representatives would need in order to be more effective as a pharmaceuticals sales group, today and in the future," says McGrath. "We felt we were a perfect fit for Tablet PCs." Sepracor wanted to deploy tablets that could easily be converted into laptops, because many of the sales people wanted the flexibility to use both a stylus and a keyboard.

The company evaluated products from seven vendors, and ultimately selected the Toshiba Portégé M200 Tablet PC running Microsoft Windows XP Tablet PC Edition. This operating system offers all the features of Windows XP, plus pen-based functionality and speech recognition capabilities.

Sepracor initially deployed 1,200 systems to its sales force in 2003. More recently the rollout has been expanded to 1,700 sales reps, including individuals taking part in a pilot project aimed specifically at managing electronic sample requests for products.

**Faster sample turnaround time.** When a participating sales rep visits a doctor's office today, he fills out a sample request form on the tablet, asks the doctor sign the form on screen, then sends the order electronically to the verification facility via wireless networking. Once verified, the sample goes out to the doctor's office on the same day.

The results have been impressive. The Toshiba Portégé M200 Tablet PCs have enabled participating reps to eliminate paper orders, lower the risks involved and greatly improve the process of getting sample requests to physicians. Because of this suc-

cess, the company now plans to expand the application to the sales force as a whole.

By eliminating the need for reps to carry drug samples, Sepracor no longer needs to conduct inventory analyses on a regular basis. When fully implemented across the entire sales force, the electronic request system is expected to save the company more than \$1 million per year. "With electronic sample requests and overnight fulfillment it's much easier to ensure that we're being compliant with regulations," notes McGrath.

## USER PROFILE

### COMPANY

Sepracor Inc., Marlborough, Mass.

### CHALLENGES

- Provide sales people with a single mobile computing device
- Improve schedule management and security
- Speed up the process of getting product samples to doctors
- Eliminate the need for sales people to carry samples

### SOLUTION

- Toshiba Portégé M200 Tablet PCs with Microsoft Windows XP Tablet PC Edition
- Provide electronic sample requests to doctors using tablets connected wirelessly to corporate networks

### RESULTS

- Projected \$1 million in savings from avoidance of product inventory analyses
- More effective presentations by reps
- Improved note taking and management of schedules

**More effective presentations.** Meanwhile, Sepracor continues to see other benefits from its Tablet PCs. For example, sales reps can make more effective presentations about products to physicians. They can also take better notes during meetings and access information needed while on sales calls.

**Digital ink.** The pen interface on the tablet is a valuable tool for accessing and navigating applications and for taking notes during meetings and calls, McGrath says. Sepracor is using Microsoft Office OneNote for note-taking. OneNote is a member of the Microsoft Office family of products that ships on all Toshiba Tablet PCs.

**CRM.** Another key application running on the devices is a customer relationship management (CRM) package. "Some functions in the CRM are pen-enabled now, and the application will be fully pen-enabled within the next release later this year,"

says McGrath. The CRM application in use, StayinFront CRM, is a forms-based program developed in Microsoft .NET. It is the key sales application in use at Sepracor and is the primary tool used by all reps to manage their activities, including knowing which doctors to call on in their territories.

**A secure and robust OS.** Among the things Sepracor's IT group likes best about Windows XP Tablet PC Edition is its security features. McGrath says his company was initially concerned about information on the tablets getting into the wrong hands or being damaged by unauthorized use, but Windows XP has safeguards to help prevent this.

Several security features in particular stand out. "One of the advantages is that we can do more with security profiles," notes McGrath. For example, "we're able to protect the information on the devices through features such as control lists and policies. The fact that other benefits of XP, such as policy management, networking and firewall, are included is a big plus for corporate IT departments. In addition, the OS has been very robust." And because sales reps were already familiar with Windows, the transition to tablets was seamless. "When we converted from PCs to tablets, we had very little culture shock because of the similarity of the core applications and operating system across platforms," says McGrath.

### THE TOSHIBA VALUE-ADD

All Tablet PCs have similar features, but Sepracor selected Toshiba over other suppliers for several reasons. "At the time we made our selection, Toshiba had the only second-generation convertible tablet (i.e., attached keyboard) available," says McGrath. "Toshiba's combination of speed, battery life, form factor and design was the best we saw during our evaluations. Toshiba also showed a very high level of professionalism and commitment to us during the evaluation and implementation. We continue to work closely with them today."

### THE ROAD AHEAD

For additional access control, Sepracor is evaluating Toshiba Tablet PCs that come with built-in biometric capabilities such as thumbprint readers. When the time comes to replace the older tablets, McGrath says they will likely go with this option. Also in the future, Sepracor plans to use the Tablet PCs for a new application called e-detailing. Using this software, sales reps will be able to create and send customized messages to specific doctors based on their particular needs.

More tablets may be needed at Sepracor soon. With the success of the Tablet PCs duly noted by managers outside of sales, many are now asking the IT department to order tablets for their use, too. ■



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