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Concurrent Roll-Out of Datavision™ and Good Publication Practice Training in the Asia-Pacific Region: A Case Study

“Our overall objective was to extend our publications capability, processes, and tool to our affiliates”

“...we really didn't know what was happening in each country, and needed a way to achieve better global transparency”

In late 2011, this top 20 pharmaceutical company successfully completed the implementation of its newly-selected publication planning and management tool, Datavision, across its headquarters and US regional teams, representing the first phase of replacement of an older and outdated system. A second roll-out phase then brought European affiliates online late in 2012, and a third phase for the Asia-Pacific region occurred in mid-2013 – covered in this case study. A final roll-out to Latin-American, Canadian, Middle-Eastern and African affiliates will be completed by the end of 2013. Alongside the implementation of Datavision, the HQ team have been keen to address and align good publication practices and standards worldwide, while guiding the affiliate country teams on how Datavision can be used to help document and implement transparent and compliant publication practices.

Objectives and Approach

The client characterized five key objectives for the Asia-Pacific phase of the roll-out:

1. to **extend publication capability, processes, and tools** to affiliates in Asia (including China, India, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand) and Australia
2. to **foster alignment of publication standards** across therapeutic areas and between global, regional, and local medical publication groups
3. to **introduce efficiencies** by streamlining and consolidating systems
4. to **provide a central repository of publications** across global development and medical affairs
5. to **provide documentation of good publication practice** (GPP) regarding author involvement and transparency of the publication development process

To enable an effective initiative to be completed within the available budget, it was decided to conduct face-to-face training at two locations that had the largest contingent of publication planners, or publication volume (Japan and China), with a virtual, real-time link to other countries. Based on experience with the earlier European phase, the client team anticipated that the combined training of GPP alongside Datavision would reinforce the strong link between the two: the teams would learn the concepts and specific corporate policies regarding GPP, and be simultaneously trained in using Datavision to document its implementation.

“We needed insight into what was being published, as well as the contributions of authors in the development of locally-sponsored publications”

The Roll-Out

The Asia-Pacific roll-out initiative was co-led by the company's Global Datavision Lead and a Publication Advisor who specialized in publication policy and processes along with a Datavision Portfolio Lead from Envision to help deliver technical training in 'real-life' scenarios. The company's regional communications team, who already had a presence in the Asia-Pacific region, provided logistical support and liaised with key contacts to help identify and ensure appropriate attendees were invited and participated in the training.

The roll-out was preceded by a pilot project in Japan focusing on one of the company's products, which proved helpful in two key ways. Firstly, the pilot identified that author involvement and their direct Datavision usage would require some specific specialized attention. Secondly, involvement of Japanese colleagues in the later multi-country training to present their perspectives, lessons learned, and local best practices also helped to demonstrate the HQ team's desire to work in collaboration with local teams, and provided a local "Datavision country champion" for the initiative.

The roll-out sessions were held face-to-face in Japan and China, with simultaneous remote teleconference and web meeting options available for the other countries. The sessions were structured to combine and reinforce the policy- and technical-focused aspects of the initiative. Both didactic and scenario-based hands-on exercises were used. Over 120 participants from a variety of medical, research, and associated roles took part in the structured training program:

Day 1: GPP training (introductory, advanced, and 'open door' sessions for specific questions)

Day 2: Datavision Desktop training

Day 3: Datavision Writer's Workbench and reviewer/approver training

Day 4: Duplicate sessions to allow for the fullest possible attendance and coverage

Additional efforts were made to ensure optimal uptake of the training. For example, simultaneous translation was provided in Japanese, which greatly facilitated interaction, and 'quick reference' guides were translated into several local languages and made available to internal and external stakeholders.

Early Signs of Success

Within the first couple of months post-roll-out, over 80 locally-sponsored publications had been entered into, and managed within, Datavision. Local communication teams have also become increasingly adept at using the built-in reporting functionality of Datavision to share publication status information with country medical directors and senior management. The HQ team anticipate that full local adoption will take between 9 months and 1 year, based on their earlier European experience. Despite this, the immediate visibility of previously unknown affiliate publication plans and practices, and the two-way discussions that have been facilitated, are viewed as major steps forward.

“Utilizing one capability globally and having it act as the source for metric reporting, Sunshine Act transfer of value reporting, and as a central repository is a tremendous achievement for our company”

A few specific challenges emerged during the training which required further attention:

- Facilitating certain external author reviews and direct engagement with Datavision, where previously face-to-face or non-email-based communication with the company had been the norm
- Guidance on how translations should be reviewed and approved within Datavision
- Differences in requirements and working practices for colleagues liaising with alliance partners (with several differing arrangements in place in the region – each requiring adaptations in approach)

Further discussions as part of planned, regular follow-up teleconferences have helped resolve these emergent points. These scheduled follow-up sessions have additionally demonstrated to regional and local staff that their HQ colleagues are committed and available to provide support with the goal of long-term success, not just a 'one off' event. Further engagement with the network of "country champions" also continues to enhance understanding and identify further needs from both GPP and Datavision perspectives. By the time the final roll-out phase completes in late 2013, the entire Medical organization will have received access to and training on Datavision, and importantly, concurrent education on how to develop publications in a compliant and transparent way. Over time, the HQ team anticipate that there will be an increase in en-core and local primary research publications, including local language and English translations, being initiated from the Asia-Pacific region. A metrics program and global audit, planned for 2014, will add further detail to country-based assessment of progress and compliance, and provide an opportunity for recognizing lessons learned and further adjustments required. In the meantime, the team firmly believes the key objectives for the roll-out and training initiative have been successfully achieved.

“It was great to have the support from an Envision-certified trainer, bringing cross-industry experience and insights. A key to our success was utilizing Envision's experience in developing such a program, and their exceptional training capability”

Key summary points and the client's recommendations for similar programs:

- Combined training on Datavision and GPP reinforces the concept of Datavision as the tool to document GPP compliance
- Create long-term partnerships, demonstrate commitment, and enable follow-up opportunities between HQ and local teams
- Ensure local requirements and practices are understood and addressed
- Take the time to plan the initiative carefully, using previous successful examples and experience to build confidence
- Include Envision as training partners – to provide and share a wealth of cross-industry experience