

Rob Owens

ROLE

Distributor Rep

LOCATION

Phoenix, USA

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I am 27 years old and this is my first job straight out of college. I've always had a 'sales' personality and this job gives me fantastic earning potential and flexibility. The hours can be long and irregular but it's fascinating to be working so close to the surgeon and seeing my products being used first hand.

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Medical sales is a rewarding and competitive job. A representative is either employed, usually by a larger firm who want to operate a direct sales-force or an independent contractor. This is sometimes referred to as a 1099 position and usually involves working for a distributor who has exclusive rights to sell a portfolio of products in a specific territory. It's not uncommon for a large firm to operate both models; retaining a direct sales-force in some regions and using a distributor in others. The distributor representative will be paid wholly by commission and can expect the distributor to provide some training and administration support in addition to granting exclusive access to a territory. As a rep becomes more successful he / she may employ their own independent contractors and so they start to build up a successful business and income stream.

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My responsibility is to develop and manage a territory with the goal of maximizing the sales of my product portfolio within approved indications. As an independent contractor, I decide who to target and when, but to be successful I need to develop business relationships with targeted physicians and healthcare professionals. If I am unsuccessful I risk losing my exclusivity over a product set and territory and therefore I need to ensure that I:

- Achieve my quarterly sales goals.
- Identify and develop key influencers.
- Understand and address both the business and clinical needs of my physicians.
- Provide high quality after sales service.

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Common **Questions**



- ① Financial reward.
- ② Anything that deepens the relationship with my surgeons and gives me access to new surgeons.
- ③ Being self-employed with the freedom to exploit any opportunities.

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Developing and maintaining relationships



Protecting my commission income



Managing off label situations



Keeping up to date



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Developing and maintaining relationships

My surgeon relationships are critical to my success. I guard them jealousy and have to continually fend off other reps who are pushing their product. In turn, establishing new relationships is often difficult because other surgeons will already be trained and comfortable with a competitor product and closely supported by their rep.

How I overcome it today

I focus very closely on my surgeons and ensure they have everything they need. I'm available to review their patient lists with them, if they will allow, and on hand in the OR to answer any questions. I try to be the first to introduce them to new innovations / product so they value me as a partner.

Talking to new surgeons is always hard and so I take my opportunities where I can, and where possible, try to get an existing surgeon to make an introduction and recommendation.

How can Biocomposites help?

- Infection is a priority and transparency over surgeon performance is increasing. Stimulan can help a surgeon with infected cases and is therefore a value add product the rep can use to demonstrate value and strengthen their relationship.
- As Stimulan has few competitors and is sold through a distribution network it provides an opportunity for the rep to talk to those surgeons that use competitor implants. The rep doesn't need to replace the implant being used, just sell the Stimulan as a complementary sale.

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Protecting my commission income

Changing regulations, such as the Affordable Care Act and the shift towards centralized purchasing, employee doctors and the commoditization of implants is creating downward pricing pressure. This fall in pricing, in what is already a highly competitive market, is leading to lower value sales and lower commission payments.

How I overcome it today

In addition to working very closely with the surgeon I now ensure that I have good relationships with Materials Management, OR Director and Scrub Techs.

I try to participate in the surgeon's review of his patient lists and look to find opportunities to sell from my full product set.

How can Biocomposites help?

- Stimulan is a very valuable sale to the rep. A typical case may use £\$2,000 of Stimulan. Considering an implant will typically cost between \$2,000 and \$4,500 this represents a significant uplift in value. For junior reps, their commission share on the Stimulan may be higher than for the implant.
- Help the rep get Stimulan approved at their hospitals.

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Managing off label situations

With surgeons keen to innovate and experiment I often find myself in a situation where I am expected to discuss an off label use for my product.

How I overcome it today

There are very strict rules on off label promotion and in the last few years my firm have made it quite clear that I am not to cross them. We do have an unsolicited request process that must be followed.

How can Biocomposites help?

It is important that all reps remain on label. Biocomposites provide training for the on label use of Stimulan and have an unsolicited request process in place for any off label questions.

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Keeping up to date

My surgeons are inquisitive and academic by nature and so I need to ensure that I am always up to date with emerging trends and hot topics. They also expect me to know my product portfolio inside out, which can be quite challenging, given its size and complexity.

How I overcome it today

I like to attend the same events as my surgeons and keep up to date by reading the same journals. This gives me an opportunity to engage in regular conversations with my surgeons. As surgeons like to teach, I find that I gather a lot of information through these conversations.

On the product side, many companies offer product specialists and training sessions, but if those are not available, I refer to a supplier's regional manager.

How can Biocomposites help?

- Stimulan is a very simple product to use and explain.
- Our regional managers are on hand to offer any advice or help.
- Develop online training for reps to access at a time and place that suits them.
- Provide insight into hot topics such as infection.

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- ① My surgeon's needs.
- ② Commission levels and ease of sale.
- ③ Distributor head of sales.

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① Formal training by product specialist or supplier regional manager.

② Sales literature.

③ Attending conferences my surgeons attend.

④ Sales Meetings.

⑤ Reading relevant journals.

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- ① What is Stimulan indicated for?
- ② What is the list price for Stimulan?
- ③ Who else can I talk to for more information?
- ④ What data do you have to support your claims?
- ⑤ Who else is using Stimulan that my surgeon could talk to?
- ⑥ How does Stimulan work?
- ⑦ Who are Biocomposites and how credible are you as a supplier?
- ⑧ Do you have any plans to sell through a direct sales force?
- ⑨ What is the commission rate that Biocomposites offers their distributor reps?

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