

# Elevation™ Virtual Meeting Speaker Programs

## Case Study: Launching Two New Brands

### SITUATION

In the second half of 2013, a Top Ten biopharmaceutical company received FDA approval for two new brands in the same therapeutic Franchise. The new products were key to replacing sales of major brands that were going off patent and threatening overall revenue growth for the company. Both brand teams in the US Franchise were challenged to set aggressive sales goals and execute large scale, high-profile product launches to primary care physicians. To achieve this, the brand teams explored the use new digital formats across multiple channels, striving to lower marketing costs while effectively reach more target HCP audiences.

The Franchise identified virtual meeting (VM) speaker programs as a channel with strong potential to lower costs and expand reach to HCPs. As an added benefit, the virtual approach allowed speaker programs to be conducted in a more compliant format. Before the 2013 launches, the US organization had used virtual meetings strictly as a secondary tactic, hosting infrequent one-off speaker events.

Virtual meeting speaker programs can lower costs and reach target HCPs in a more compliant format.

### SOLUTION

MedPoint Digital engaged with the Franchise in a strategic planning process on the role of virtual meetings in product launches. The goal was to design VM speaker programs that function similar to traditional local event programs in several important ways:

1. A continuous year-long program
2. Multiple events every week for scheduling convenience
3. Reach a large number of HCPs – 5,000 or more per brand
4. Sales reps drive the invitation process
5. Sales reps gain personal access to HCPs during events

MedPoint Digital applied its 23 years of experience, proprietary technology, robust processes, and personalized service to construct a plan that achieved these goals. This Case describes the service model and provides metrics for the VM speaker program over a 2+ year launch and post-launch period.

The goal was to design virtual speaker programs that function similar to local speaker events.

### RESULTS

The VM speaker program generated exceptional results over the launch and post-launch period. Cost per event and cost per HCP were remarkably lower than local venue events (aka dinner meetings.) Sale rep and speaker enthusiasm, as well as rates of participation, both grew steadily. Importantly, high levels of HCP participation were maintained through the launch and post-launch period, including strong rates of repeat participation by target HCPs in events with refreshed content.

## PROGRAM EXECUTION

It was very important to ensure a rapid, successful launch of the VM speaker programs, so several initial goals were set:

1. Get off to a strong start with successful early events
2. Gain the confidence and commitment of field sales reps
3. Provide extensive support to VIP speakers
4. Deliver a seamless, engaging experience to HCPs

This initiative started with a 22-event pilot program during the launch of Brand A in the fourth quarter of 2013. Over the next two years, the VM speaker program was scaled up with larger series of events, and expanded to support a second major launch, Brand B, as well as several smaller brands.

During the Brand A launch, hybrid events using local venues were offered in addition to all-virtual speaker events. In this period, only 6% of HCPs participated from venues, and 94% of HCPs participated virtually from their office, clinic or residence. The all-virtual events not only drove high rates of attendance, but operated at much lower cost and greatly simplified compliance with Open Payments regulations. By 2015, the Franchise eliminated support for hybrid events. This Case will only address the all-virtual meeting activities.

Strong early events and gaining sales rep buy-in are key factors for success.

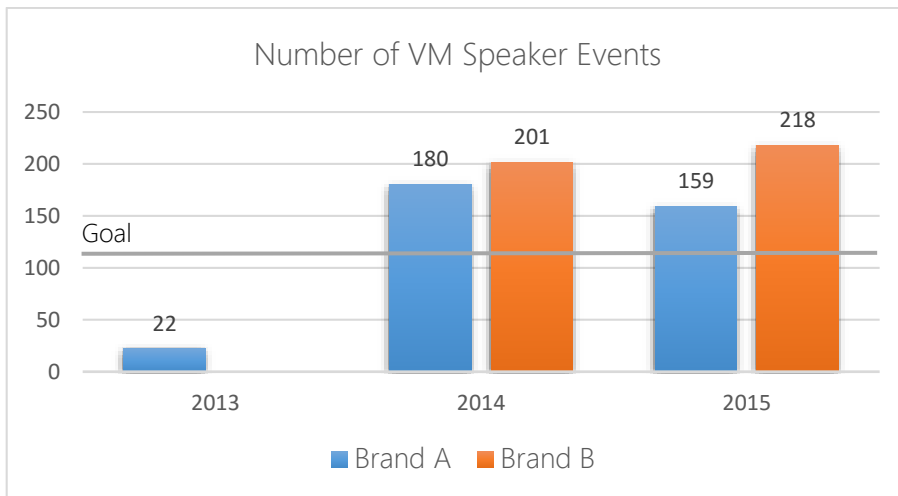
## METRICS

The most fundamental metric for the VM speaker program was to execute a large number of virtual events that reach a significant number of target HCPs. The scale planned for the VM speaker program was unprecedented, going from a handful of one-off events to 100+ per year, per brand. Because this supported the launch phase for two products, it was important to achieve scale quickly. Going “from 0 to 60 mph” presented challenges in logistics and technology, as well as challenges in evolving the company culture. To succeed, we needed to change the perception of virtual meetings among field sales reps, many of whom had negative past experiences.

As depicted in the charts on the next page, the VM speaker programs started in late 2013, posting small numbers, but gaining scale rapidly and peaking during the 2014 launch period. Although numbers tailed off in 2015, this is inevitable in the post-launch period, and metrics still continued to outpace initial goals. As the VM speaker program exceeded expectations, support for the program was expanded, driven by positive early results, brand team perception of value, and growing sales force participation.

The VM speaker program gained scale rapidly and continued to exceed goals for HCP reach.

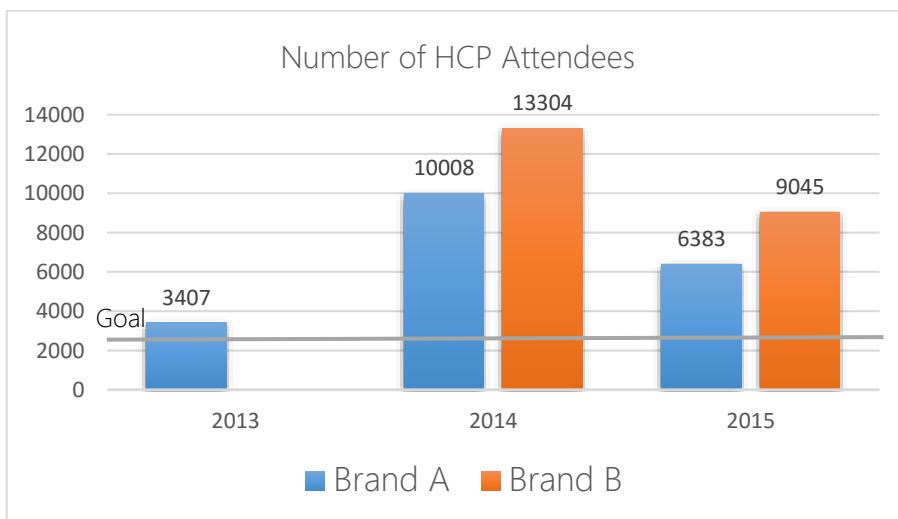
## VM Speaker Events per Year



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The VM speaker program quickly emerged as a primary tactic for product launch. An annual Goal per brand of 120 events was set at the start of the program in 2013, but it became apparent very early that the actual number of events would exceed initial forecasts. During the 2014 launch period, each brand sponsored over/under 200 events. In the post-launch period of 2015, when promotional activities typically drop off, the pace of VM speaker events held steady.

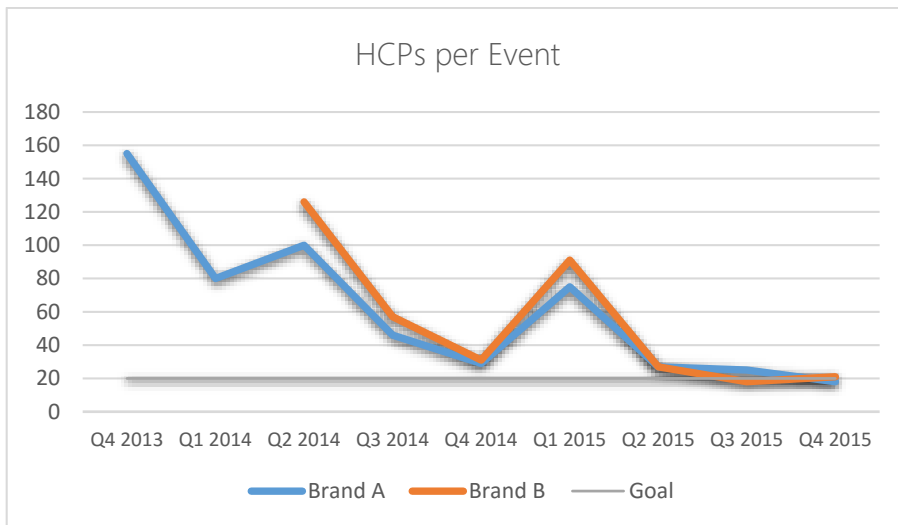
## HCP Attendees per Year



23,000 HCPs in the launch phase and 15,000 HCPs in post-launch were engaged.

Reaching target HCPs with quality peer-to-peer exchange was a primary goal for the program, and total annual HCP attendance was a primary metric. The VM speaker program significantly exceeded initial goals, reaching over 23,000 HCPs during the 2014 launch and continuing to reach over 15,000 HCPs in post-launch 2015. By providing an overlapping series of VM events with different topics, HCPs had a reason to attend multiple events over the 2+year span of this Case.

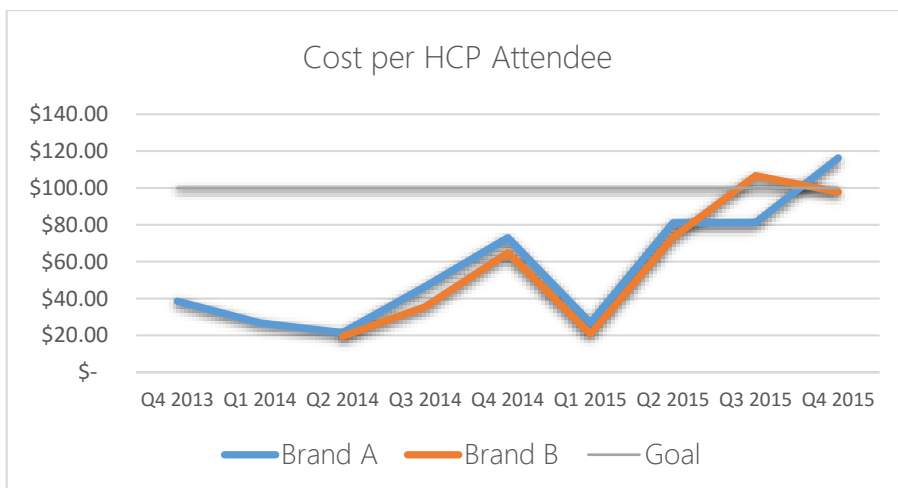
## HCP Attendees per Event



A look at average number of HCPs per event shows large variation and a downward trend over the course of the VM speaker programs, with both Brand A and Brand B demonstrating similar patterns. However, the data are positive in several ways. First, the raw number of HCPs per event greatly exceeded projections overall, and higher interest was naturally expected when the products were newly launched. Some of the reduction in HCPs per event is due to the brand teams scheduling more events to meet demand, and the spike in Q1 2015 is a positive sign associated with refreshed program content. Lastly, even as numbers tailed off in late 2015, they still hovered around the original goal of 20 HCPs per event.

HCPs per event greatly exceeded expectations and never dropped below goal.

## Cost per Capita



Cost per Capita data display an inverse relation to the preceding data on HCPs per Event, and the two metrics show similar trends: costs per HCP were generally lower in the brand launch phase, and displayed a bumpy but mostly upward trend into the

Compared to local events, VM speaker programs lower costs by 75% to 90%.

post-launch phase. Overall, cost per capita stayed in a low \$20 to \$80 range, and only reached the goal level of \$100 per HCP towards the end of the program, without significantly exceeding goal. Importantly, the \$100 figure compares very well to typical cost per capita of other marketing programs, especially considering that this delivered a live, engaging, 30- to 45-minute peer-to-peer experience. When compared to local event programs, the VM speaker programs lowered costs by 75% to 90%. Considering that local event speaker programs for the past 25 years have been among the top two or three categories of highest spending for US pharma brands, VM speaker programs may represent the single biggest opportunity for brand teams to lower marketing costs.

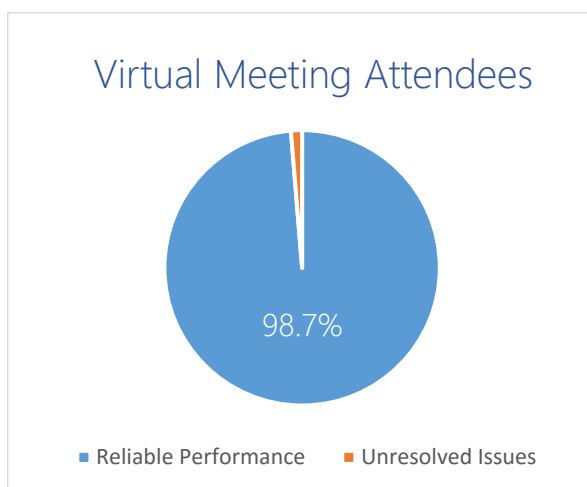
VM speaker programs may represent the biggest opportunity to lower marketing costs.

## Technology Performance

Virtual meeting technology has been available for over 20 years, but many users still experience irksome technical issues. The Franchise in this Case recognized that target HCPs have low tolerance for technical glitches, and that such issues can be demotivating for sales reps. A primary goal of the VM speaker program was to offer a highly reliable platform and simple process for participation.

MedPoint Digital applies an integrated model of technology, processes and service to ensure high rates of performance and a seamless user experience. This includes various best practices to minimize potential sources of failure, as well as active monitoring to identify and resolve glitches rapidly, often before they are noticeable. As a result, technical performance for the VM speaker program was nearly flawless, with 1.3% of HCPs experiencing an unresolved technical issue. In almost all cases these issues were local, and HCPs were able to re-schedule for another event. Importantly, none of the 780 virtual events held during the 2+ year span experienced a technical issue that disrupted event completion. Superior reliability was a major factor in gaining buy-in from field sales, which drove program growth and success.

Superior reliability was a major factor in gaining buy-in from field sales.



**ZERO**  
events discontinued due to technology issues

## Quality Outcomes

The VM speaker program produced several qualitative results that, although difficult to quantify, are clearly beneficial to the company, brand teams and sales reps.

One obvious benefit is that the virtual meeting format is inherently more compatible with the new ethical climate in the US medical community, and more amenable to compliance with Open Payments requirements, as well as regulations and ethical guidelines emanating from the FDA, OIG, AMA, PhRMA and other organizations. Many biopharma companies have reassessed their sales/marketing practices with the aim of projecting a more ethical image and improving public perception of the industry. In this context, VM speaker programs provide an effective alternative to local events and “free meals,” shifting the focus to valuable, ethical peer exchange.

The virtual format requires less professional time per event for speakers, so that honoraria based on fair market value are significantly reduced. This improves both the economics and the ethical profile of speaker programs.

The quality of the speaker faculty can be elevated using the virtual approach. Because virtual events require no travel, top-tier KOLs are usually available to support many more events, and can reach national HCP audiences. In this Case, the 12 most active speakers accounted for 80% of the 780 virtual events. Such logistics allowed the brand teams to concentrate activity among a small cadre of the most accomplished and effective speakers, improving program quality.

Moving into 2016, MedPoint Digital is implementing processes to capture metrics on additional dimensions. This includes Carbon Savings, which arise by eliminating speaker air travel, as well as ground travel for speakers and HCPs. Another key metric is Participant Satisfaction, which can be assessed by a brief online evaluation form. (This requires approval by the sponsor, including legal/regulatory review.) Lastly, ROI is a fundamental metric, often based on HCP prescribing activity. This metric is generally managed by the sponsor’s market research team.

## CONCLUSION

The VM speaker programs consistently exceeded performance goals and delivered exceptional value to each brand in the US Franchise. Importantly, the VM speaker program significantly out-performed goals for two primary metrics: target audience participation and cost per capita.

The success of the VM speaker programs is due to several factors, beginning with the program planning process. MedPoint and the Franchise worked in close collaboration to devise detailed plans incorporating various best practices. The two main considerations underpinning the program were, 1. For Sales Reps, implement

The VM speaker format is more compatible with the new ethical climate.

Quality is improved by concentrating activity among a small cadre of top-tier speakers.

The VM speaker program consistently exceeded goals and delivered exceptional value.

programs that are easy to use, generate HCP access, and help achieve territory goals; and 2. For HCPs, provide virtual events that are simple to join, deliver an engaging experience, and offer a choice of many convenient times.

Another factor driving program success was a significant change in the market environment for traditional local speaker events, aka dinner meetings. Due to the Open Payments program, local events have become increasingly unattractive for all parties, including HCPs, health systems, field sales, biopharm companies and the speakers themselves. VM speaker programs enable thought leader speakers and local clinicians to continue engage in peer-to-peer exchange in a more ethical way.

This Case demonstrates that VM speaker programs provide an alternative to traditional local speaker events that is superior in several ways. In the past, the biopharm industry has used virtual meetings mostly as a secondary channel, and too often has executed virtual events that lacked simplicity, reliability and an engaging experience. As this Case shows, by employing various best practices within a comprehensive service model, VM speaker programs can be a primary channel for effectively connecting KOL speakers with local clinicians, while reducing marketing costs, improving compliance, and driving greater sales rep access.

VM speaker programs  
provide a superior  
alternative to local events.