Enhanced Methods to Maximize Your KOL/Influencer Identification and Activation
Now that it’s summer, you’re spending more time outside engaging in a variety of great activities, so grab your sunglasses and sharpen your view.

We can all appreciate that a cheap, drug store pair of sunglasses can provide good and basic vision improvement, but the more active we become and the longer we’re out in bright sunshine, the more we value better lenses that filter UV rays, reduce glare and give us much sharper vision — even in the harshest conditions. Let’s apply that same logic when thinking about how we identify and utilize KOLs and Influencers. Depending on the context of your need, a better pair of sunglasses may be in order. You need the basic information, but also a sharper, clearer understanding of who your ideal candidates are and how best to deploy their expertise.

**Who is an Influencer? Who is a Key Opinion Leader?**
These questions used to be easily answered with clear data and research tools. While additional dimensions always existed, they were hard to discern. And now, social and digital activity have expanded the definition of who is influential and what makes them so.

Depending on the lifecycle of your compound — be it phase II/III, launch stage, in market, or its therapeutic category — understanding influence and what constitutes opinion leadership is multi-layered. A best practice in research would suggest that **you should consider context and breadth in your KOL/Influencer identification and targeting initiatives.**
Context: There are a number of ways to think about your KOL/Influencer candidate audience. Are you looking for:

- Advisory board members?
- Keynote thought leaders?
- Authors?
- Clinical trial participants?
- Regional/national/local leaders who influence other HCPs based on patient treatment behaviors?
- Key roles and positions at target institutions?
- Key patient leaders or advocacy groups?

Breadth: Depending on what you are trying to solve for, the breadth of data or research tools you use should also be considered. Today, a lot of information can be rapidly analyzed via sophisticated software platforms which speed turnaround time and efficiently produce key insights. These platforms can integrate multiple disparate data feeds, gather structured and unstructured data, and, with artificial intelligence and machine learning, create tailored insights to identify the leaders you are looking for. W2O has built MDigitalLife to do just that, rapidly and accurately identifying key profile information to enable better identification and activation of influence leaders. Data breadth spans from the more traditional PubMed, peer nomination, Sunshine data, and physician profiling tools to social and online presence, activity, and content. Influencers can initiate content and conversation or facilitate the spread of important information and trends. Software capability allows you to include or exclude data as per the needs or rules of your team. For example, non-commercial teams may not want to see Rx data. And if there is an objective around marketing or sales, then Rx and Tx information can be included.

Understanding the KOL

Building from the core, or appending to existing knowledge gives better perspective for targeting and activation.
“Why is this important?”

Information and communication flow is more complex than ever before. Key topics and behaviors flow freely and rapidly between traditional formal channels and dynamic social networks. Emerging issues can pop up anywhere across networks of HCPs and/or patients. If you view your KOLs in narrow, traditional definitions — even if you have used top-notch research methods — you may be missing useful and actionable context.

The ability now exists to further identify aspects of your KOLs and who/where they can be best utilized across multiple dimensions. Whether you have already created a good KOL list based on traditional dimensions (peer nomination, PubMed, CMS/Sunshine data, etc.) or when undertaking a new initiative, you should consider appending the following information to your understanding:

- Identify which of your KOLs are active online
- How/if they connect to other HCPs or KOLs
- Where they are active — which sites, communities, etc.
- What they talk about — opinions, actions, interests, perceptions, attitudes
- Do they connect with patient communities?
  - Do patients reference them?

There are a number of actions you can take with this added perspective:

- Tie your influencers’ actions, lexicon, and opinions to how patients discuss their disease, treatment, or unmet needs — then develop education or support programs
See where they fit into the broader market landscape, competitive environment, etc. Another consideration is to identify up-and-coming KOLs as compared to long-standing established leaders. By using various metrics and weightings we can identify emerging KOLs that may be ideally suited to your needs, and not on your competitors’ radar yet.

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Dr. O’Elle is the Medical Director for Early Phase Cancer Research Program at Smart Health Care. She is also a Adjunct Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of State School of Medicine. She has a PhD in pharmacogenetics is very interested in personalized medicine. An advocate for using online platforms to connect stakeholders within the healthcare system.

| Social Presence | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | |
| **Online:** | **Offline:** | **Reach Connections** | **Resonance Citations** |
| conversation & publications | followers & co-authors | mentions & citations | |
| Online: 288 | 13,400 | 129 | |
| Offline: 1 | 114 | 1 | |

**VALUE POV**

Dr. O’Elle is closely following the value conversation online. She often shares CEAs in hematology but does not share an opinion on the outcome. As a clinical investigator, she believes in the inherent value of oncology treatment innovation but also advocates for a lower economic burden for patients.

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**Product Lifecycle Considerations**

Brand Lifecycle Planning can consist of varied, one-off research, residing within various teams such as medical, brand, or sales. All of this is valuable and actionable to each team, but what may be missing is an integrated research approach that allows each team to draw on key information as needed, but still has the broader context and synergy available to improve cross-team planning and coordination. In the case of KOLs and Influencers, this is especially relevant.

KOL and Influencer profiles vary in importance when viewed across a product lifecycle.

- The Influencers you need during the pre-clinical period or during clinical trials may not be the same profile you need when launching or in-line and facing competition, or for speakers, ad boards, etc.
- Leaders can be formal, academic, COE-based, and well known, or active and highly connected in networks of practicing HCPs and patients, but not even self-aware of their influence over colleagues.
Targeting and segmentation can be improved by having a broader context (better sunglasses!) around these important resources. Your outreach and the type of resources used, such as MSLs, internal leadership, field reps, etc., will vary based on lifecycle and KOL target.

Imagine linking your KOLs into:
- Market landscape — Which KOLs align or conflict with current conditions? How would you engage differently if you knew this?
- Networks of HCP’s — Who are they connected with? What is the nature of connection?
- Do they connect in, or get referenced by patient advocacy groups?

A Best Practice One more thing to consider: In some of the work we have done, cross-functional teams initiate multiple research efforts at the same stage — phase II/III, for example — where they have initiated KOL, Market Landscape, and Patient Journey at the same time. This research allows pre-commercial teams to better survey the market to understand patient opinions, unmet needs, assessment of current disease treatment options, and attitudes on HCP care, and more. This insight can be used to inform deeper primary research efforts, identify key topics useful in unbranded education, aid in the recruitment of HCPs for various pre-commercial efforts, and inform terminology, lexicon, competitive analysis, and payer strategy. It also forms the backbone for an ongoing marketing insights platform from pre-approval, to launch, and into market.

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