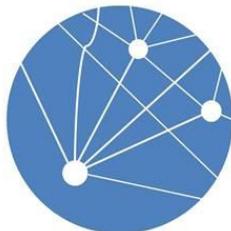


# Fact Sheet – 5091

## MSL Performance Evaluations: Pairing the Role's Activities to Products' Lifecycle for Better Reviews



Pharmaceutical  
Medical Affairs  
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# MSL Performance Evaluations: Pairing the Role's Activities to Products' Lifecycle for Better Reviews

## Foreword

MSLs have been part of the industry for 40 years. Over this period, the function has held various responsibilities depending on companies' needs, objectives and understanding of the function. Originally formed to interact with high level physicians, the position has evolved into a medical education role with a much wider audience, from third-party payers to Primary Care Providers and Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs).

Many research organizations have studied performance evaluation in a superficial manner that produces very similar results year after year, a lack of discovery that leaves MSL management across the industry without recourse to improve the performance evaluation of their team members.

We find the issue mainly lies in the nature of the MSL function, a function that evolves with a product, from early phases to maturity. While MSL responsibilities remain fairly constant throughout, particular emphasis on one or more of these responsibilities depends upon where a product is in its lifecycle.

So then, how best can a company evaluate the MSL role? Should it follow one single path, with similar focus across time or should the evaluation follow distinct criteria based on the particular needs of a given phase in a product's lifecycle? These are questions that the majority of MSL managers face year after year, with no real answers.

While we believe there should be somewhat of an overhaul to the traditional model, we conducted a study to identify the most common trends and perceptions among the medical affairs executives.

In this article, Arx Research reveals key indicators on performance evaluations frequency and how the surveyed executives view the overall process of evaluating a MSL's work.

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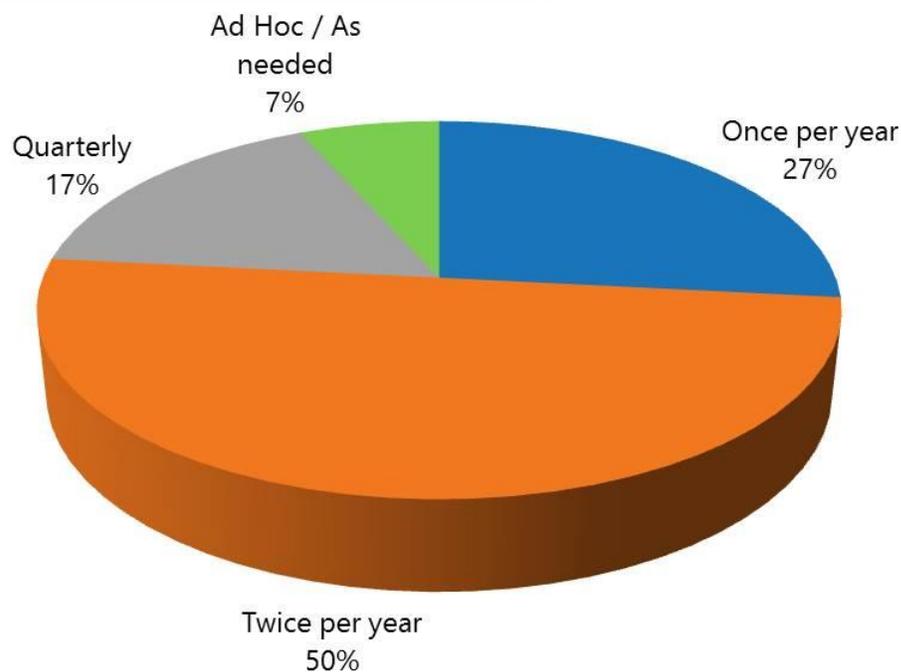
## Frequency of Reviews

Sound performance evaluation programs prove crucial to ensuring that MSLs maintain an updated understanding of their role, their organization's objectives and the fast-moving life science environment.

The performance evaluation practice has been part of companies' processes for ages, but the MSL function has been tricky to nail down, as we will show further down.

### Frequency of Performance Reviews

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**Figure A: Frequency of Performance Reviews**

**Figure A** shows that the majority (50%) of surveyed companies conduct performance reviews twice per year, while 27% conduct this exercise once per year and 17% opted for a more intense pace of quarterly reviews.

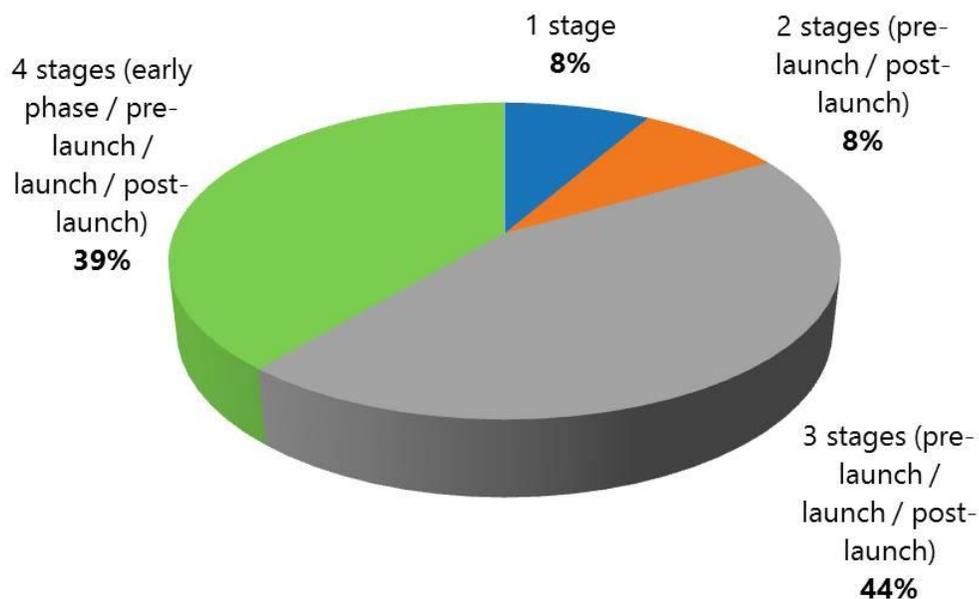
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## Reviewing Performance Reviews

Most companies encounter difficulties when measuring MSL teams' performance because "hard" metrics do not provide accurate indications of how well MSLs are doing. Typical metrics such as number of interactions and number of thought leaders visited reflect MSLs activities but don't necessarily depict the level of benefit the relationships provide the organization. Despite team managers' best attempts to stay away from hard metrics, senior management still prefer collecting them to understand how the MSL groups are operating.

### Preferred Flow Patterns of MSLs' Performance Evaluations

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**Figure B: Preferred Flow Patterns of MSLs' Performance Evaluations**

**Figure B** shows study participants' preferred patterns for evaluating the MSL function. It shows that almost half of executives see three distinct stages where a MSL's activities will shift, therefore requiring different sets of evaluation. Another 39% of survey takers indicated that the MSL role shifts according to four stages, from early phase to post-launch.

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Historically, most of the industry used the “one-phase” approach, now only considered by 8% of surveyed executives. Although this approach may work in some instances to evaluate how an MSL performs his work, this type of evaluation means applying the same intensity to each evaluation factor throughout the career of a MSL and the products to which he or she is assigned.

Modifying the approach to evaluate a MSL in direct relation to a product lifecycle and adapting it to account for the intensity of each task and responsibility will be more representative of a MSL contribution to the organization.

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## Full Study

The findings presented in this Fact Sheet are extracted from the following study:

### **A Handbook for MSL Performance Reviews: Modeling Suitable Metrics of a Shifting Role**

(report code MSL-509)

The Pharmaceutical Medical Affairs Center of Influence and Arx Research conducted a study to rethink how the Medical Science Liaison (MSL) role is evaluated. This study presents an assessment of current practices, feedback from 37 executives across 26 organizations from 11 countries. The analysis provides executives with the various models of MSL performance assessments based on products' lifecycles, as well as a "consensus" model.

Published: 2016 | Number of pages: 42 | Format: Full Analysis, PDF

WEBLINK: <http://www.arxresearch.com/reports/msl-performance-reviews/>

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