

# Competency Analysis of Medical Representatives in India

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**Abstract:** The ability of medical representatives to increase revenues through new customer acquisition efforts or by leveraging existing customer relationships can contribute to a competitive advantage of any pharmaceutical company. In tough competition in the Indian pharmaceutical sector, it is necessary to have a competency model that identifies knowledge, skills, ability, and behavior needed to perform medical representative job. This research identified important competency criteria which are helpful in selecting, managing and training medical representatives in the Indian pharmaceutical sector. This research also found competencies which differentiate superior performer medical representatives from average performer medical representatives. In this research, Information sought from 350 medical representatives and 150 sales managers for achieving objectives. This research identified ten important competencies for measuring performance of medical representatives. They are Performance Competency, Technology Competency, Learning Competency, Relationship management competency, administrative competency, customer competency, selling competency and time management competency.

**Keywords:** competency, medical representative, salesman, pharmaceutical sector

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENTS

Because organizations compete at the business unit level, a corporate strategy leveraging the collective competencies of individuals is extremely important. More specifically, because the biggest factor to individual performance is competence (Woodruffe, 1993), an individual's strengths should be identified and developed in support of performance in each specific job function (Heffernan and Flood, 2000). The medical representatives of pharmaceutical sector do not only positively affect the buying organization (doctor, stockiest, retailer and wholesaler); but they are also asked to help buyers (doctor, stockiest, retailer and wholesaler) make the right choices for their organization. As a result, buyers (doctor, stockiest, retailer and wholesaler) are now demanding a higher level of understanding, better interpretation of needs, and translation of ideas into implementation actions. This is especially true in the sales department in pharmaceutical company, where the ability of medical representatives to increase revenues through new customer acquisition efforts or by leveraging existing customer relationships can contribute to a firm's competitive advantage. This new challenge has created an evolution in medical representatives' activities in pharmaceutical sector, driving a need for new competencies (Cross et al., 2001). In short, clients are demanding more highly competent medical representatives in pharmaceutical sector.

In tough competition in the Indian pharmaceutical sector, it is necessary to have a competency model that identifies knowledge, skills, ability, and behavior needed to perform medical representative job. Work of medical representatives has been influenced by many dramatic changes in the highly competitive business environment. The following difficulties highlight the need for a study of medical representatives' competency: a) the increased expectations of doctors, retailers, wholesalers and stockiest b) challenges in attaining sales target c) increased demands medical representatives' performance, d) variances in medical representatives' efficiency, e) challenges in developing customer satisfaction (f) market competition.

### Research Objectives:

However, a rigorous measurement instrument of medical representatives' competency has not been available. In order to improve that condition, the following research objectives were formulated:

- To identify important competency criteria which are helpful in selecting, managing, training and planning for the career of medical representatives in the Indian pharmaceutical sector?
- To find out important competencies which differentiate superior performer from average performer?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of understanding competence was first framed in the early 1970's by David McClelland, a former Harvard psychologist conducting research with the U.S. government in an attempt to find a more non-biased and objective measure of an individual's potential aptitude as well their potential to succeed within a given job. According to Woodruffe (1993), a catalyst for the use of the word competency in the management field was Richard Boyatzis' book 'The Competent Manager'.

Boyatzis defines competency as an underlying characteristic of a person which results in effective and/or superior performance in a job. An underlying characteristic, it is suggested, could include a motive, trait, skill, an aspect of one's self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge. Spencer and Spencer (1993), who furthered Boyatzis' original work define competency as an 'underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation'.

A competency model is a descriptive tool that identifies the competencies needed to operate in a specific role within a(n) job, occupation, organization, or industry. Simply stated, a competency model is a behavioral job description that must be defined by each occupational function and each job (Fogg, 1999). Depending on the work and organizational environment, a group of 7 to 9 total competencies are usually required of a particular job and depicted in a competency model (Shippman, 2000).

Literature review in the following areas was conducted for getting competency criteria for salesman representatives:

1. Competency of salesman and sales executives
2. Competency of medical representatives

The summary of literature review is given in the following table:

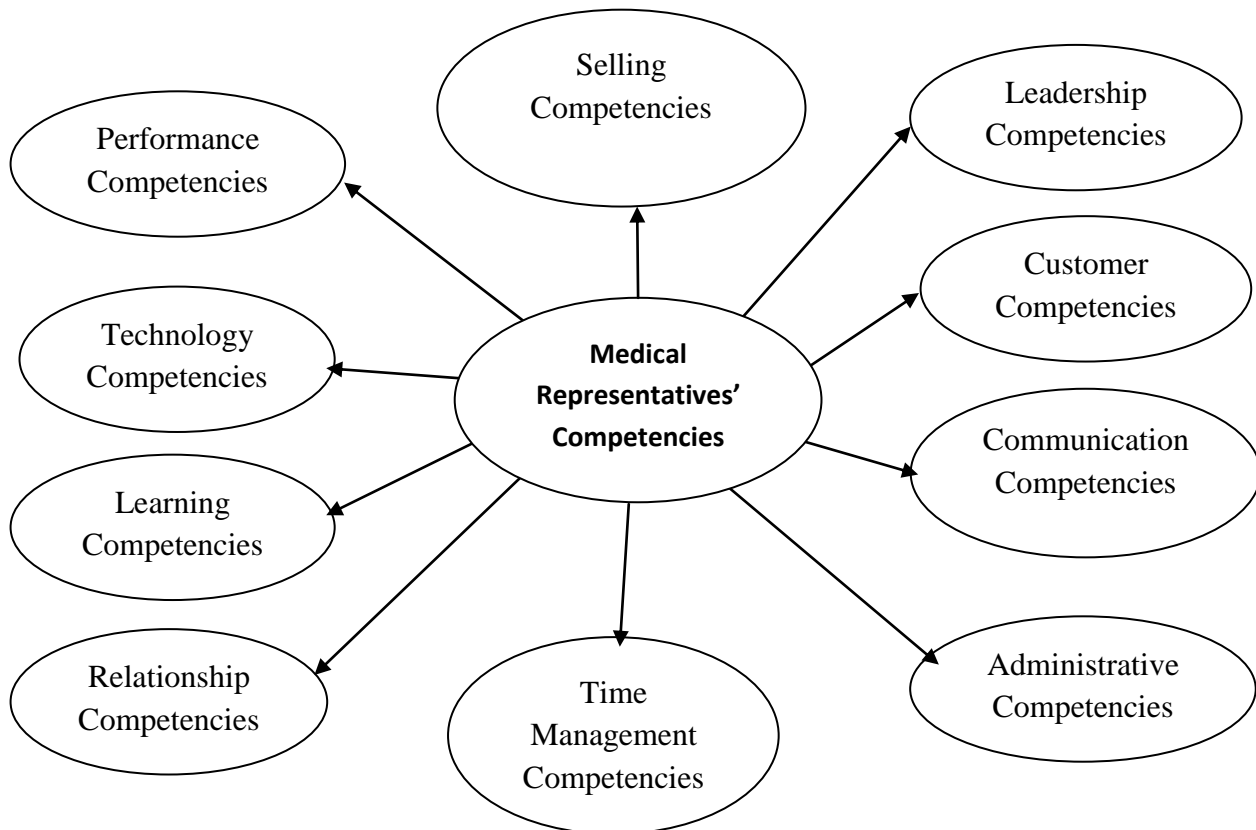
**Table 1: Summary of Literature Review**

Sr. No.	Author Name	Name of Research Paper/ Book/Report	Important Skills and Competencies for Salesman
1	Behrman and Perreault (1982)	Measuring The performance of industrial salespersons.	Sales objectives, Technical knowledge, providing information, Controlling expenses and Sales presentations
2	Moncrief (1986)	Selling Activity and Sales Position Taxonomies for Industrial Salesforces.	selling function, working with orders, servicing the product, managing information, servicing the account, conferences/meetings, training/recruiting, entertaining, out of town travel, and managing distributors.
3	Festervand, Grove, and Reidenback (1988)	The sales force as a marketing intelligence system	Information gathering
4	Chonko et al. (1990)	Do retail salespeople use selling skills?	courtesy, attentiveness, ability, accuracy, professionalism, friendliness, customer knowledge and listening skills
5	Anderson (1996)	Personal selling and sales management in the new millennium	Learning competency
6	Deeter-Schmelz and Ramsey (1995)	A conceptualization of the functions and roles of formalized selling and buying teams	Team Coordination
7	Churchill et al. (1997)	Sales Force Management	Vocational skill and sales presentation skill.
8	Whiting (1998)	Dangerous liaisons	Business communications, resolution of disputes, assessment of customer needs, helping internal management, understand customer needs, enforcing the organization's administrative processes, and selling new products or services to customers.
9	Piercy et al. (1999)	Relationships between sales management control, territory design, sales force performance, and sales organization effectiveness	Technical knowledge, adaptive selling, teamwork, sales presentations, and sales planning
10	Rosenbaum (2000)	Do you have the skills for 21 <sup>st</sup> century scaling?	Aligning customer, listening beyond product needs, understanding financial impact of decisions, orchestrating organization resources, consultative problem solving, customer/supplier relationship and self appraisal and

			continuous learning.
11	McMaster (2000)	Grow your own managers	Planning and business organization skills, strategic implementation skills, strategic implementation ability, human resources management; leadership and team building; and professional commitment.
12	Rentz et al. (2002)	A measure of selling skill: Scale development and validation	Interpersonal skill, Salesmanship skill and technical skill.
13	Rothwell, Donahue and Park's (2002)	Training and to Building Development Sales Ability Programs	Knowledge of self, knowledge of product and services, knowledge of clients and business
14	Shoemaker and Johlke (2002)	An examination of the antecedents of a crucial selling skill: asking questions	Questioning skill
15	Chonko and Jones (2005)	The need for speed: agility selling	Agility thinking
16	Menguc and Barker (2005)	Re-examining field sales unit performance: insights from the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities perspective	Listening skill, presentation skill, convincing skill, skill of developing contacts and problem solving skill
17	Vittala, R. (2005)	Perceived development needs of managers compared to an integrated management competency model.	Technical competencies, business competencies, knowledge management competencies, leadership competencies, social competencies and intrapersonal competencies.
18	Kim and Hong, (2005)	The relationship between salesperson competencies And performance in the korean pharmaceutical industry	Impact and influencing, achievement orientation, analytical thinking, initiative/persistence, flexibility, problem solving, self- confidence, self-appraisals and continual learning, self-control and strategic objectives.
19	Drollinger and Commer (2013)	Salesperson's listening ability as an antecedent to relationship selling	Active empathetic listening skill
20	Sypniewska (2013)	Examination of the individual competencies that differentiate results in direct sales	Leadership, motivation, communication, team management, supporting development/training, entrepreneurship, strategic thinking, focusing on the customer, attitude towards work, dealing with stress, knowledge, experience and learning
21	Canadian Professional Sales Association	Key competencies for sales representatives	Account management, business acumen, communication, consultative selling skill, knowledge management, customer value creation, local area/ regional marketing, product and technical knowledge, relationship building, sales and technology, self-development, strategic sales planning, time and territory management.
22	United professional sales association	A guide to open source selling framework	Selling interaction management, opportunity management, personal management, priority management, technology management, business knowledge management, product knowledge management, relationship management, expectation management.

### III. THE RESEARCH MODEL

Medical representatives' competencies criteria are adopted from the study of Walker et al. (1975), Moncrief (1986), Sumrall (1992), Wilson (1993), Deeter-Schmetz and Ramsey (1995), Belasko (1996), Sharma (2001), Vittala (2005) and Canadian Professional Sales Association Report (2013).



**Figure 1: Research model**

- **Performance Competencies:** Competencies required in order for medical representatives to manage individual outputs and results to proactively and continuously improve the sales processes.
- **Technology Competencies:** Competencies required in order for medical representatives to effectively choose, implement, and manage information technology and other technology related to the sales process, product or industry.
- **Learning Competencies:** Competencies required in order for medical representatives learning about relevant industry knowledge, product knowledge, and selling skills while keeping abreast of changes or trends in the market or the customer relationship.
- **Relationship Competencies:** Competencies required in order for medical representatives to identify, build, and sustain key business relationships both internally and externally.
- **Leadership Competencies:** Competencies required in order for medical representatives to achieve aspirations, manage his or self, maintain an appropriate attitude, maintain a positive attitude, and lead others.
- **Customer Competencies:** Competencies required in order for medical representatives to synchronize to customer buying processes, systems, and requirements while helping the selling organization deliver on the promise of the business relationship.
- **Communication Competencies:** Competencies required in order for medical representatives to effectively listen, speak, persuade, question and write within appropriate business norms while representing the interest of the selling company.
- **Administrative Competencies:** Competencies required in order for medical representatives to maintain corporate systems while adhering to corporate policies and procedures reporting and tracking needs and conducting other non-selling activities in support of sales goals.
- **Selling Competencies:** Competencies required in order for medical representative to identify, engage, move, close, and protect sales opportunities.

- **Time management competencies:** Competencies required in order for medical representative to utilize his time effectively by scheduling, allocating, prioritize his time to achieve sales growth.

#### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### Research Design

In order to address the above-mentioned objectives a two-step methodology was used for this research study. The first stage is exploratory research, which was conducted to gain a better understanding about the research area being studied. It was conducted using secondary data and qualitative research. The second stage is a conclusive research, which will be conducted for gathering data for testing the research hypotheses and validating the model. Each will be overviewed here. Qualitative research was conducted using in-depth interview method and for that, in-depth interview of sales managers and medical representatives of pharmaceutical companies was taken.

##### Sampling Design

This empirical study will be conducted in Ahmedabad city of Gujarat State. The population of the study will be medical representatives and sales managers of pharmaceutical companies in Ahmedabad city of Gujarat state. In this study total target population is unknown and sampling frame is not available so non-probability sampling technique was used. Convenience sampling, a form of non-probability sampling techniques will be used to identify respondents for the study.

Responses were sought from 350 medical representatives and 150 sales managers of pharmaceutical companies.

##### Measurement Scale

Medical representatives' competencies criteria are adopted from the study of Walker et al. (1975), Moncrief (1986), Sumrall (1992), Wilson (1993), Deeter-Schmetz and Ramsey (1995), Belasko (1996), Sharma (2001), Vittala (2005) and Canadian Professional Sales Association Report (2013).

#### V. DATA ANALYSIS

Independent sample t test was used to find out significant difference between competencies of superior and average performer medical representatives. SPSS was used for data analysis in this research.

##### Assessment of Reliability

The adequacy of the measurement model was assessed by evaluating the reliability of the individual items, the internal consistency among items expected to measure the same construct, convergent validity, and the discriminant validity among the various constructs (White et al., 2003). Reliability was gauged via the standardized Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951). Hair et al. (2007) recommended that 0.6 Cronbach's alpha value is deemed the lower limit of acceptability. After reexamining each dimension and deleting items based on the SPSS recommended criteria, Cronbach alpha was computed for each distinct construct of competencies of medical representatives. The final Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all items range from 0.617 to 0.775 (see table 2), suggesting good internal consistency among items within each construct and the reliability of the constructs. Moreover, the combined scale reliability for the 84 items of competencies of medical representatives is 0.863. The high alpha value of the combined scale indicates that both the reliability and the convergent validity of the scale were met (Parasuraman et al., 1991). Cronbach's alpha scores were shown in table 2 indicated each scales used in this study exhibited strong internal reliability.

**Table 2: Reliability of the Scale**

Sr. No.	Dimension Name	Cronbach's Alpha Scores
1.	Performance competency	0.748
2.	Technology Competency	0.759
3.	Learning Competency	0.733
4.	Relationship Management Competency	0.734
5.	Customer Competency	0.765
6.	Communication Competency	0.725
7.	Leadership competency	0.617
8.	Administrative Competency	0.775
9.	Selling Competencies	0.755
10.	Time management competency	0.619
11.	Reliability of Overall Scale	0.863

##### Assessment of validity

Validity is an extent to which research is accurate. Validity of a scaling procedure implies that the data must be unbiased and related to the construct being measured. Content validity was measured in this research. The degree to which the measure spans the domain of the construct's theoretical definition is defined as the construct's content validity (Rungtusanatham, 1998). Medical representatives' competency dimensions were

identified from literature and content validity of the instrument used in the present study is ensured by professionals of pharmaceutical sector and academicians of marketing area.

### Independent sample t test and hypothesis testing

Independent sample t test was used to compare competencies of average performer medical representatives and superior performer medical representatives. The following hypotheses are framed for comparing average and superior performer medical representatives.

#### Hypothesis of the study

*H1: There is no significant difference between superior performer and average performer with regard to Performance competency.*

*H2: There is no significant difference between superior performer and average performer with regard to Technological competency.*

*H3: There is no significant difference between superior performer and average performer with regard to learning competency.*

*H4: There is no significant difference between superior performer and average performer with regard to Relationship Management competency.*

*H5: There is no significant difference between superior performer and average performer with regard to Leadership competency.*

*H6: There is significant difference between superior performer and average performer with regard to Customer competency.*

*H7: There is no significant difference between superior performer and average performer with regard to Communication competency.*

*H8: There is no significant difference between superior performer and average performer with regard to Administrative competency.*

*H9: There is no significant difference between superior performer and average performer with regard to selling competency.*

*H10: There is no significant difference between superior performer and average performer with regard to Time Management competency.*

#### Independent sample t test (Overall)

Independent sample t test was used to know significant difference between superior performer and average performer for particular competency. According to Harnett & Murphy (1985), a t-value larger than 1.282 corresponds to  $p < 0.10$  (weakly significant), a t-value larger than 1.645 to  $p < 0.05$  (moderately significant), and a t-value greater than 2.326 to  $p < 0.01$  (strongly significant).

**Table 3: Independent sample t test**

Name of competency	P value	Statistical significant difference between superior and average performer
Performance Competency	0.000	Yes
Technology Competency	0.238	No
Learning Competency	0.410	No
Relationship management competency	0.000	Yes
Administrative Competency	0.104	No
Customer competency	0.000	Yes
Selling competency	0.000	Yes
Time management competency	0.638	No
Leadership competency	0.574	No
Communication competency	0.000	Yes

It was shown in above table 3 that p values for the performance competency, relationship management competency, customer competency, selling competency and communication competency are less than 0.01 so, null hypotheses 1, 4, 6, 7 and 9 were rejected at 99% confidence level and it was concluded that there is strong significant difference between average and superior performer medical representatives in performance competency, relationship management competency, customer competency, selling competency and communication competency.

**Independent sample t test for individual competency's criteria**

**Table 4: Independent sample t test for individual competency's criteria**

Sr. No.		Mean values of superior performer	Mean values of average performer	Difference in mean	Rank on the basis of difference	P value	Statistical significant difference
<b>Performance Competency</b>							
1	Accurately forecasts demand for products or services	3.96	3.17	0.79	1	0.00	Yes
2	Predicts closing rates on new sales opportunities	3.93	3.20	0.73	2	0.00	Yes
3	Regularly conducts review meetings with key interest holder	3.55	3.19	0.36	5	0.00	Yes
4	Possess decision making ability	3.72	3.13	0.59	4	0.00	Yes
5	Always prepared for upcoming obstacles to sales success	3.71	3.05	0.66	3	0.00	Yes
	Overall	3.77	3.15	0.62			
<b>Technology Competency</b>							
1	Knows how to use email & mobile to communicate properly	3.54	3.60			0.52	No
2	Effectively uses appropriate software tools, packages and internate to achieve goals	3.56	3.55			0.87	No
3	Effectively leverages personal devices to manage information (i.e. laptop; cell phone; tablet etc...)	3.70	3.60			0.30	No
4	Uses proper technology when appropriate to send documentation	3.62	3.54			0.38	No
5	Uses video conference technology	3.62	3.47			0.12	No
6	Recall technical knowledge and relays it to doctors	3.56	3.51			0.56	No
	Overall	3.54	3.61			0.23	No
<b>Learning Competency</b>							
1	Comprehends mixture, dosage and benefits of the drugs.	3.88	3.67	0.21	1	0.00	Yes
2	Conducts adequate background research on doctors, pharmaceutical industry and competitors	3.62	3.66	-	-	0.59	No
3	Reads company literature and relates content appropriately	3.71	3.63	-	-	0.27	No
4	Attends and actively engages in periodic sales training	3.67	3.63	-	-	0.52	No
5	Able to acquire and leverage information from multiple sources	3.60	3.69	-	-	0.24	No
	Overall	3.70	3.65	-	-	0.41	No
<b>Relationship Management Competency</b>							
1	Safely and securely takes doctors on-site	3.98	3.18	0.80	2	0.00	Yes
2	Always takes follow up to individual meetings	3.73	3.06	0.67	4	0.00	Yes
3	Effectively praises doctors to support end goal	4.3	3.05	1.25	1	0.00	Yes
4	Formulates and implements strategies to build rapport with doctors.	3.73	3.14	0.59	5	0.00	Yes

5	Proactively attends networking opportunities and builds important key contacts	3.95	3.21	0.74	3	0.00	Yes
6	Maintains transparency and show honesty and integrity while becoming a trusted advisor to doctors	3.58	3.20	0.38	6	0.00	Yes
	Overall	3.88	3.14	0.14		0.00	Yes
<b>Customer Competency</b>							
1	Handles orders and backorders effectively and expedites as necessary	3.75	3.59	0.16	6	0.02	Yes
2	Handles distribution problems as required to keep customers happy	3.77	3.72	0.05	-	0.52	No
3	Facilitates delivery by communicating orders to support personal	3.76	3.71	0.05	-	0.50	No
4	Organizes and operates seminar or exhibition booth	3.85	3.38	0.47	1	0.00	Yes
5	Monitors competitor products or services	3.70	3.51	0.19	4	0.00	Yes
6	Addresses doctors issues and concern smartly	3.68	3.43	0.25	2	0.00	Yes
7	Smartly deals with competitive threats	3.67	3.50	0.17	7	0.00	Yes
8	Setup displays	3.74	3.61	0.13	8	0.04	Yes
9	Deliver product samples	3.87	3.66	0.21	3	0.00	Yes
	Overall	3.75	3.57	0.18	5	0.00	Yes
<b>Administrative Competency</b>							
1	Gathers appropriate information in order to effectively complete data entry	3.78	3.70	-	-	0.26	No
2	Updates customer files in an effective manner	3.61	3.55	-	-	0.37	No
3	Maintains a viable and working virtual office	3.70	3.74	-	-	0.60	No
4	Stick to policies for keeping track of invoices	3.71	3.71	-	-	0.14	No
5	Prioritizes applicable corporate policies	3.86	3.67	0.19	1	0.01	Yes
	Overall	3.11	3.01	-	-	0.10	No
<b>Selling Competencies</b>							
1	Acquires and implements adaptive or consultative selling behaviors	3.68	3.49	0.19	6	0.01	Yes
2	Sells the unique competencies and value of the company	3.57	3.35	0.22	5	0.01	Yes
3	Effectively follows up on doctors orders	3.63	3.10	0.53	2	0.00	Yes
5	Aggressively finds leads on new prospects	3.75	3.64	0.11	-	0.17	No
8	Possesses skill at closing opportunities and obtaining orders	3.53	3.22	0.31	4	0.00	Yes



9	Actively and effectively sells additional value-added services or solutions	3.70	3.18	0.52	3	0.00	Yes
10	Adequately targets personal activities towards important or key accounts	3.88	3.31	0.57	1	0.00	Yes
	Overall	3.68	3.33			0.00	Yes
<b>Time management competency</b>							
1	Allocate time to the task as per importance	3.72	3.68	-	-	0.58	No
2	Prioritize the work as per urgency	3.75	3.53	0.22	1	0.01	Yes
3	Know Doctors peak time and buying cycle	3.69	3.73	-	-	0.61	No
4	End of day, review day's activities & schedule next day	3.64	3.75	-	-	0.17	No
	Overall	3.70	3.67	-	-	0.63	No
<b>Communication Competency</b>							
1	Possess skill in preparing documents and presentations	3.65	3.27	0.38	2	0.00	Yes
2	Effectively and passionately delivers sales presentations to doctors	3.68	3.44	0.24	4	0.00	Yes
3	Identifies processes for creating compelling sales presentations that differentiate from competitor	3.76	3.37	0.39	1	0.00	Yes
4	Gathers and relevant feedback from doctors	3.72	3.47	0.25	3	0.00	Yes
5	Maintains communication with others by telephoning the office	3.76	3.60	0.16	5	0.01	Yes
	Overall	3.71	3.43	0.28	-	0.00	Yes
<b>Leadership competency</b>							
1	Displays confidence and a sense of self-worth in own capabilities	3.59	3.64	-	-	0.59	No
2	Positively sees the upside in events and maintains a positive attitude	3.62	3.65	-	-	0.74	No
3	Takes personal responsibility for failures or problems	3.48	3.52	-	-	0.71	No
4	Takes calculated risks	3.68	3.77	-	-	0.33	No
	Overall	3.60	3.64	-	-	0.54	No

Performance wise superior performer medical representatives are good in forecasting demand, conducting review meeting regularly, decision making, predicting closing rates on new sales opportunities and readiness for upcoming obstacles to sales success.

Medical representatives who are superior performers have good knowledge about mixture, dosage and benefits of the drugs than average performer medical representatives.

There is significant difference in relationship management competency between average and superior performers. Medical representatives who are superior performer are better in taking follow-up and individual meeting; formulating and implementing strategies for long term relationship with doctors, networking and providing support to doctors in meet his goal. They are also very trusted advisors of doctors.

Superior performer medical representatives perform better in addressing and solving doctors issue; handling orders and delivering product samples on time; organizing seminar and exhibition booth and setting up displays. There is significant difference in customer competency between average and superior performer medical representatives.

Superior performer medical representatives have very good selling skill also. Superior performer medical representatives know very well about unique values and competencies of the company and they use it very well during selling. They are also good in generating new leads & closing orders and providing value added services or solutions.

Superior performer medical representatives know very well that how to prioritize the work as per urgency. There is significant difference in communication competency between superior and average performers. Medical representatives who are superior performer are good in presentation skill, getting feedback from doctors and communication with stakeholders.

## VI. CONCLUSION & MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

Performance Competency, Technology Competency, Learning Competency, Relationship management competency, administrative competency, customer competency, selling competency and time management competency are important competencies for measuring performance of medical representatives. There is significant difference in performance competency, relationship management competency, customer competency, selling competency and communication competency between average and superior performer medical representatives. Medical representatives who are superior performer are better in performance competency, relationship management competency, customer competency, selling competency and communication competency than average performer medical representatives.

Medical representatives who are superior performer are good in presentation skill, getting feedback from doctors and communication with stakeholders. Superior performer medical representatives know very well about unique values and competencies of the company and they use it very well during selling. They are also good in generating new leads & closing orders and providing value added services or solutions. Medical representatives who are superior performers have good knowledge about mixture, dosage and benefits of the drugs than average performer medical representatives.

HR & training department of pharmaceutical companies should develop training module to improve performance competency, relationship management competency, customer competency, selling competency and communication competency of medical representatives.

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