

Connecting the Data Dots

Analyzing what matters to pharmaceutical manufacturers in the age of big data.

There is a maze of data surrounding the pharma industry. At the center, the promise of invaluable insights with which manufacturers can construct highly profitable sales and marketing strategies. But data without analysis are worthless. Furthermore, analysis without understanding is equally ineffective. This latter point leaves many manufacturers feeling overwhelmed as they comb through volumes of reports to identify what's important to them. It's also what drove ICS to step into the analytics arena more than 15 years ago.

"Analytics comes from listening," says Karl Erickson, Vice President of IT at ICS. "Working hand-in-hand with manufacturers over the years, we've learned what really matters to them — specific to their drug programs. Our clients trust our counsel and often ask for our help compiling custom analytics for them. It's a natural progression in our role as their business and third-party logistics partner."

It's that rare understanding of both IT and the business that positioned ICS as an invaluable consultant to its manufacturer clients. It's not uncommon for the company's IT experts to accompany the business development team on client meetings to discuss the manufacturer's unique needs and how ICS Analytics can be tailored accordingly. And with each meeting, the team learns something new, evolving its understanding of the client and expanding the capabilities of ICS Analytics.

"We give our manufacturing clients the opportunity to build ICS Analytics the way they want," says Cory Isom, Business Intelligence Manager at ICS. "For instance, we had clients that wanted to know when their products were delivered. So, we worked out a way to access UPS data and created a Proof of Delivery (POD) report that showed exactly when the product arrived and who signed for it based on the order number. How ever our clients need to see their analytics, we're going to make that happen."

"Working hand-in-hand with manufacturers over the years, we've learned what really matters to them — specific to their drug programs."

— Karl Erickson, Vice President of IT

It's important to note that ICS is doing more than tailoring its analytics — it's helping manufacturers uncover what data to integrate and why. As an example, by connecting chargeback data to 867 data, manufacturers can see when a chargeback may come and forecast chargeback costs, as well as gain visibility into chargeback accruals and chargeback utilization by product and distributor. In addition to delivering critical analytics that allow

manufacturers to instantaneously see their top customers, how they're buying and in what states and ZIP codes, ICS also reveals to its clients the need to integrate wholly unique data points, such as invoice fees and discounts. For one client, ICS helped create an analytics dashboard that offered a rolling inventory by week, enabling the manufacturer to see what they had at each distributor at any given time. It was during this same client engagement that the ICS team got the idea to add functionality that would analyze data by sales person, giving manufacturers insight into how the sales team was performing at an individual level, as well as by sales territory.

“All the answers are within ICS Analytics.”

— Cory Isom, Business Intelligence Manager

Of course, not every idea that informed the current ICS Analytics solution came from ICS. Some came from its manufacturer clients, including the idea to create custom alerts based on key metrics and business rules. One manufacturer wanted to better manage its customers' behaviors by holding suspicious orders. Say, the manufacturer has a service-level agreement (SLA) with a customer that limits them from ordering more than 10,000 units per month. Should that customer exceed said limit, the ICS Analytics solution can be programmed to alert the manufacturer and hold the order until next steps can be agreed upon. This benefit is unique to ICS Analytics because ICS serves as the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system for its manufacturer clients, which also allows for the solution's real-time capabilities — a key ingredient to optimizing performance and helping ensure better business decisions.

“ICS Analytics are designed to be proactive rather than reactive,” says Isom. “It's not just about gaining visibility into inventory levels and sales trending, it's about cross-referencing them to forecast restocking needs. We deliver actionable intelligence, so when a client has inventory about to expire, they can quickly decide if they should destroy it, put it in quarantine or push it out. Or, if a client's sales have dropped over the past few months, they can very easily determine whether the decrease is product-specific or central to a particular area, related to sales efforts or community need. All the answers are within ICS Analytics.”

Connecting the cause and effect is the very definition of analytics and what ICS delivers to its clients so seamlessly. It's the difference between showing manufacturers what has happened and what will happen. It's the bridge between showing them the *why* and then showing them the *way*. Taking all that into account, one can hardly imagine an effective analytics solution that's not tailored to meet the needs of each manufacturer.

Erickson illustrates this point when he says, “Many in the industry tout ‘analytics packages.’ That's not analytics, that is a reporting package. People might brag about how good it looks, but what about the content? If it hasn't had that human touch, that understanding of the relationship between a manufacturer and its customers, the knowledge of their unique program, then it's just extracted data wrapped in a colorful bar chart. That's why ICS will never have one analytic solution for our clients.”

It's also why the company will continue to closely collaborate with its manufacturer clients, sharing what has worked (and what hasn't) to better ensure their success, evolve its analytics capabilities and redefine what it means to be a trusted third-party logistics partner.

About ICS

ICS, a business unit of AmerisourceBergen, partners with pharmaceutical manufacturers to deliver third-party logistics services that improve the quality and efficiency of their supply chains. Since pioneering the market in 1997, ICS has helped bring hundreds of specialty pharmaceutical products to market and served as an integral component in their growth.

icsconnect.com

