

SAY ANYTHING

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO PHYSICIANS INTERESTED IN LEARNING HOW TO BECOME A TOP-NOTCH CONSULTANT?



ARTHUR B. CUMMINGS,
MB CHB, FCS(SA),
MMED(OPHTH),
FRCS(EDIN)

■ Consultant Ophthalmologist,
Wellington Eye Clinic,
Dublin, Ireland
■ abc@wellingtoneyeclinic.com

“ Two things I have found to be helpful—on both sides of the equation—are (1) being a member of a medical advisory board (MAB) or setting one up and (2) seeking advice from colleagues.

The companies, with their science- and business-savvy employees, are typically way ahead of clinicians. They're not looking for input on the science or business side from the MAB. Instead, they're looking for clinical input. I always value when an MAB member provides clinical insights with application insights, such as how a particular technology would be accepted by their patient cohort. I'm not necessarily seeking innovative scientific solutions from the MAB members.

MABs are more about the practical aspect of things—things that clinicians may take for granted and that are likely foreign concepts to the science and business professionals working for companies. Honest, repeatable, and practical feedback is the most important thing an MAB member can provide a company.

If a company wanted only your opinion, they would have scheduled an appointment with only you. When you are in a group setting, as is the case with most MAB meetings, companies are seeking insight into the collective consensus. One person's comments can perhaps ignite a train of thought for other MAB members, but companies are not looking for one person to dominate the meeting.”



SHERI ROWEN, MD

■ Medical Director, NVision
Eye Centers, Newport Beach,
California
■ srowen10@gmail.com

“ Many years ago, as I was finishing my residency, I had the great fortune of being recognized as an up-and-coming leader in cataract surgery. William F. Maloney, MD, had mentored me to speak on three steps to phacoemulsification. I honed my speaking skills and began speaking for STAAR Surgical after attending the first course on topical anesthesia and clear corneal cataract surgery taught by Charles H. Williamson, MD, FACS, and I. Howard Fine, MD.

I traveled across the United States and abroad to teach the course for the company. That was my first experience working with industry, and it shaped my involvement since. It was a collaborative, insightful, creative, and genuine experience that taught me how to help develop products in a rapidly advancing space, use the available products wisely, and teach others about the benefits and risks associated with them.

The following are three keys to becoming a top-notch consultant.

- ▶ **No. 1: Be a speaker for a product.** Learn the details of what differentiates that product from its competitors and develop speaking skills to teach others. Remember that you are not a sales representative. Consultants and speakers are the professionals companies rely on to relate clinically to peers in a genuine manner. Don't offer your services if you don't believe in a product.
- ▶ **No. 2: Participate in clinical trials.** Learn how to become an investigator for FDA-approved clinical trials and start running them in your offices. You can also approach companies and offer to do an investigator-initiated trial as a postmarket study to see how a product performs in the real world. From there, you can publish and present your findings. Not only can this information help the ophthalmic community, but it can also help you to explain the product to patients.
- ▶ **No. 3: Share new ideas.** If you have an idea for a new product or an update to an existing one, reach out to companies to discuss it. They are typically willing to listen and learn how to improve. Ideas range from making an existing product easier to use to developing a new product to how best to communicate product information to ophthalmologists.

Collaborating with companies can help them develop the products health care providers need to deliver the best patient care possible. If the betterment of patient care is your primary goal and you develop the necessary skills, your interactions with industry can be not only rewarding but also educational.”