



Out of the Ordinary: The Commercial Field Team Reaches the Summit

Events

When the commercial team gathered to plan the PAM Phase Training last summer, there was a distinct desire to do something different. This, after all, was the first-to-market therapy for peanut allergy and the first in its field, with meaningful levels of protection against allergic reactions. And it would be armed with FDA approval. For most of 2019, Richard Smith, Vice President, Commercial Development, knew he had to build a team of 80 exceptional “Practice Account Managers,” unlike a typical pharma team of Product Account Managers. This work requires much more than simple sales; it requires an individual, personalized approach that takes into account a longer learning curve and a generous amount of support time to meet each individual allergist, patient and family’s needs. Richard was excited; he had gathered what he thought was the most uniquely talented group to meet this challenge and couldn’t wait to have them all gather and meet for the first time.

So, how do they make this training program unlike any training program before? First, it must be an adventure; they wanted to make the PAMs feel like they were breaking new ground; to feel

the excitement of that, and at the same time to feel connected with each other – like an expedition of mountain climbers scaling a peak for the first time – including the inspirational feeling of reaching the top...over a new landscape, with a new feeling of accomplishment. And so, “Expedition P.A.”¹ was born.

Next, where to do this? Actually, climbing mountains was a better metaphor than a training locale for PAMs. So, it needed to be somewhere still in the US but out of the ordinary; some place filled with its own culture that would keep everyone in the mood for exploration even when they had time between work sessions to relax. What better locale than New Orleans, a country unto itself, steeped in the rich mix of African rhythms, old and new jazz, French Cajun food, and the ever present history of the Mississippi River culture.

The Westin New Orleans at Canal Place was chosen, just blocks from the French Quarter and a short walk along the Mississippi River. “The Hotel was large enough to accommodate all of us (even when we grew to 140!) but small enough to offer a comfortable space where we could set up many different work spaces, from large meetings to small training booths,” said Jen Kirchner, Sr. Manager, Meeting Planning & Marketing Operations, and the architect and producer of this unforgettable trip.

Part of the challenge was to take PAMs through their certification training – to successfully demonstrate their skills in a mock allergist’s office. Jen had planned ahead and provided large screens set up across from windows that ran the length of the room and provided small comfortable spaces to run the mock practices two, three at a time.

When it was time to relax, there was plenty to “Laissez les Bon Temps Rouler!” - an evening steamboat ride down the Mississippi, plenty of good restaurants and music inside and outside, and of course any exploration into the French Quarter. The final challenge was a scavenger hunt throughout the city that brought out a real fun and competitive team spirit. Wendy Ladd, Area Business Director, Central East Field (who was featured in [the last Profile in Company article](#)), said of the experience, “New Orleans was the best live training event I’ve ever been involved with since 2005.”

By the end of the program, there was a definite feeling of mission accomplished. Excitement, inspiration, and real motivation to go out and change the commercial landscape for the debut of Palforzia.

Photo Gallery

¹ P.A. = Peanut Allergy

