



## AXONIFY CASE STUDY:

# Ethicon boosts selling power by keeping daily pulse on medical reps' expertise

**It's 7:30 am at a busy urban hospital. Fred Argo, Executive Sales Representative and Territory Account Leader for Surgical Care at Ethicon (a division of Johnson & Johnson), stands in the operating room carefully observing a thoracic surgery. He remains on high alert.**

Any minute, he may be expected to respond instantly to technical questions from the surgical team about the Ethicon-owned medical devices involved in the procedure. He must know this stuff cold.

While Argo is an experienced rep and can build on existing knowledge of surgical procedures and products, he says it's easy for reps to feel "stressed, less confident, challenged, and spread thin." That's because reps are responsible for such a large product portfolio and don't always have enough time to get up to speed on everything they need to know.

In fact, it's not uncommon for a professional sales associate at Ethicon to manage a product portfolio consisting of hundreds of surgical devices—each with their own intricacies and nuances. Add to this, ongoing changes in healthcare policies, reimbursement, and procedures and the amount of information a rep must recall is mind-boggling. Sales reps practically have to be medical dictionaries!

## ETHICON

a Johnson & Johnson company

### Company:

Ethicon is a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson. The company develops surgical technologies and solutions to address the world's most pressing health care issues.

### Industry:

Medical Sales

### Key challenges:

- Help sales reps remember a significantly higher volume of product information
- Increase knowledge around ongoing changes to healthcare policies
- Provide consistent, cost-effective training for staff across the globe
- Reduce information overload and boost sales associate confidence

### Solution:

Provided more than 1,000 medical sales reps with access to the Axonify Microlearning Platform via a mobile app. This allowed them to receive daily questions on topics, such as hernia, to help them with their jobs.

### Results:

- Knowledge increased in some topic areas by as much as 49%
- Confidence in hernia topics increased by more than 50%
- 90% of reps voluntarily participate in training via Axonify
- 79% of reps claim Axonify has made them more knowledgeable
- 81% of reps say they prefer the Axonify learning method

## Challenging traditional training approaches

Ethicon had always prided itself on offering a robust training program to educate medical sales reps on everything they needed to know, but it was becoming increasingly difficult to use the traditional, one-size-fits-all, classroom-based approach to keep reps up to speed.

“The pace of innovation, coupled with the need to be more efficient than ever, has made it more challenging to keep the sales organization at the knowledge level required to be most effective,” said John Knoble, Director of Commercial Learning at Ethicon. “I knew we had to find a more effective way to address these new challenges while maintaining the sharpest sales skills in the field.”

One of the biggest challenges Knoble faced was that it was becoming less feasible, from both a time and cost standpoint, to bring the globally dispersed sales team together for in-person training sessions. On top of that, since reps had multiple levels of knowledge and experience, it no longer made sense for everyone to participate in the same training program. But, an even bigger concern was the risk of product knowledge degradation that Knoble believed would only increase if reps weren't exposed to information beyond the classroom. If reps didn't have the product knowledge they needed, they wouldn't feel confident about introducing clients to the broader Ethicon portfolio, which could result in missed sales opportunities. And, for Knoble, this wasn't an option.

## Searching for a modern way to build sales reps' knowledge and confidence

As an innovative leader, responsible for a winning sales organization, Knoble knew sticking with the status quo would risk long-term success. So, he decided to challenge traditional thinking and search for modern technology and knowledge-building practices that would further drive information retention within his sales team and accelerate the business. Specifically, he wanted something that would meet the growing knowledge demands of his salesforce, engage this multi-generational workforce with various levels of knowledge and experience, and fit well with reps' mobile requirements.

As a start, Knoble traveled to a number of leading organizations, throughout North America, that were recognized for having some of the best training programs in the world. After examining their best practices and considering Ethicon's specific needs, Knoble decided to implement a blended learning model that not only included in-person classroom training, but extended to self study, virtual learning, role playing, field experiences, and continual learning opportunities.

But his vision wasn't quite complete. Knoble knew that, to be successful, reps needed to be supported beyond these formal learning settings in order to keep the company's strategy and product information top of mind. So, he continued his search for a technology solution that would:

- Engage his sales reps ongoing
- Keep product knowledge at the forefront of their minds
- Help reps retain the information they learned
- Build reps' confidence in their ability to represent products effectively
- Help reps focus on strategic priorities and adjust to changing priorities on the fly
- Flag knowledge gaps so additional training could be provided, if required

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**John Knoble**

DIRECTOR OF COMMERCIAL LEARNING



“Axonify helps me feel more comfortable when I’m speaking with surgeons. I can remember information about the anatomy, so I can ask intelligent questions when I’m in surgeries ... It just breeds confidence.”

**Fred Argo**

EXECUTIVE SALES REPRESENTATIVE  
AND TERRITORY ACCOUNT LEADER FOR SURGICAL CARE

**Replacing “one and done” training with a continual learning ecosystem**

During Knoble’s search, a colleague, who was responsible for training and communication in healthcare compliance at Johnson & Johnson, introduced him to the Axonify Microlearning Platform. So, he decided to give it a try.

In a nutshell, Axonify helps employees build, sustain, and share knowledge in a fun, engaging, and gamified way. It personalizes learning to target and close individual knowledge gaps, giving employees the confidence to perform their role to the best of their ability. And this helps organizations achieve their potential because employees have the right knowledge in their heads and at their fingertips, which ultimately drives real business results.

After a successful pilot, Knoble introduced Axonify to more than 1,000 professional sales reps, who now use the platform regularly for ongoing product training. Because Axonify is accessible via a mobile app, reps can participate in 3 to 5-minute training bursts whether they’re in a doctor’s waiting room, at the airport, in their home office, or anywhere else. Reps learn about everything from hernia to wound closure to bariatric and metabolic content. And because employees participate in training on an ongoing basis, the information they learn is reinforced so it is embedded in memory and they can retrieve it at a customer site, when introducing it to a potential client, or even in the middle of a surgery. All of this learning progress is also tracked in Axonify so Knoble can keep a daily pulse on individual and team knowledge, continually fine-tune the training reps receive through Ethicon’s blended learning approach, and measure the direct impact knowledge is having on sales.

**Boosting selling power by building knowledge and confidence**

Through this revolutionary approach, Ethicon has transformed its decades-old event-based training into a culture of learning, supported by a modern learning ecosystem. Axonify, in particular, has had a significant impact: “Axonify allows us to balance the need to learn with the need to sell,” says Knoble. “We leverage Axonify to drive our company’s current strategy by keeping the sales force engaged with Ethicon’s most critical products on a daily basis.”

Proof is in the numbers. With 81% of reps stating they prefer learning through Axonify, as well as a voluntary participation rate of 90% on the Axonify platform, it’s clear reps are embracing Axonify and thriving. Knowledge lifts have increased in some topic areas by as much as 49% and 79% of reps claim Axonify has made them more knowledgeable.

On top of this, reps’ confidence has increased by more than 50% in some topic areas, including hernia, which Argo claims is a huge help when he’s standing in the operating room.

**“Axonify helps me feel more comfortable when I’m speaking with surgeons. I can remember information about the anatomy, so I can ask intelligent questions when I’m in surgeries, like: ‘Is that the ACL ligament? How do you deal with that?’ It just breeds confidence.”**