



Best Programs & Best People

Best-in-Class Account Manager Nominations 2026

Each year, HIRC’s Best-in-Class Account Manager benchmark captures a unique perspective from the market—direct nominations from payer and PBM decision-makers on the account managers who stand out most in the field. Widely referenced by market access teams and account leaders, HIRC’s report, *Best-in-Class Account Manager Insights*, has become a trusted indicator of field excellence and a valuable tool for both recognition and development. The report addresses the following questions:

- Which very large, large and mid-size firms' account managers receive the most best-in-class nominations?
- Which firms lead in best account manager nominations across health plan pharmacy directors, health plan medical directors, and pharmacy benefit manager executives?
- Which account manager attributes operationally define the best-in-class?

Key Finding: The best-in-class account managers in 2026 are described as partnership facilitators who are responsive, knowledgeable of customers, and able to provide solutions to address customer needs.

Account Managers from Novartis are Most Frequently Nominated as Best-in-Class

HIRC asked commercial health plan pharmacy and medical directors, as well as PBM executives, to nominate best-in-class account managers from pharmaceutical companies. Novartis leads in total best-in-class account manager nominations, followed by Lilly, Boehringer Ingelheim, Pfizer, and AstraZeneca. The full report provides a complete listing of account manager nominations as well as the rationale behind the nominations.

LEADERS IN BEST-IN-CLASS
ACCOUNT MANAGER NOMINATIONS 2026

OVERALL RANK	TOP MANUFACTURERS	# of AM NOMINATIONS
1	Novartis	15
2	Lilly	12
3*	Boehringer Ingelheim	9
3*	Pfizer	9
5	AstraZeneca	8

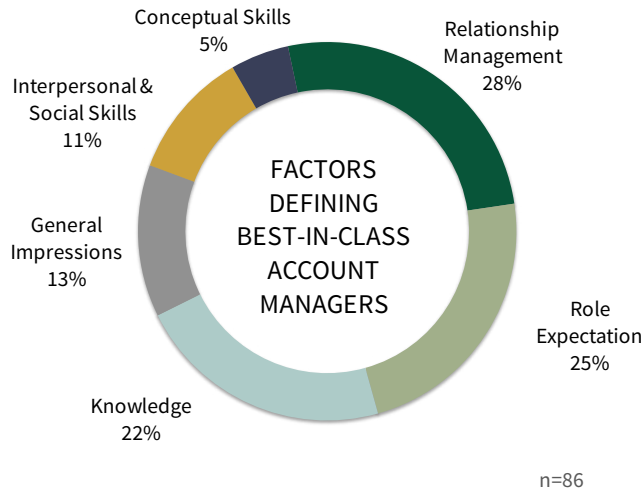
n=86

Beyond demonstrating a strong understanding of customer needs, top account managers further differentiate themselves through how they build partnerships and deliver value.

- **Novartis** account managers are noted for building authentic relationships, transparent communication, and creative contracting.
- **Lilly** account managers are commended for engaging in flexible and custom contracting partnerships, and demonstrating deep market and portfolio knowledge.

Six Descriptive Categories Operationally Define Best-in-Class Account Managers

Managed markets customers were asked to explain their rationale for best account manager nominations. Analyses reveal that their evaluations fall within six key descriptive factor categories: (1) Relationship Management, (2) Role Expectation, (3) Knowledge, (4) General Impressions, (5) Interpersonal & Social Skills, and (6) Conceptual Skills.



This year's findings reveal the capabilities that define best-in-class performance in today's increasingly complex access environment. While individual nominations are shared directly with subscribers, the broader results provide a clear view into what differentiates top-performing account managers, and where the bar continues to rise. Account manager relationship management behaviors, fulfilling role expectations, and overall knowledge account for the majority of best-in-class nominations and should be among the key focus areas of training and development.

Research Methodology and Report Availability

In December 2025 and January 2026, HIRC surveyed 86 decision makers from commercial health plans and pharmacy benefit managers. Online surveys and follow-up telephone interviews were used to gather information. The complete report, *Best-in-Class Account Manager Insights*, is available now to HIRC's Best Programs and Best People subscribers at www.hirc.com.

The Best Programs & Best People Service provides strategic and tactical information to assist pharmaceutical manufacturers in maximizing the impact of their account managers, medical science liaisons, and value-added marketing programs. This service provides insights into the skills and attributes critical to account manager and medical science liaison success, as well as guidance for the development and implementation of support resources that meet customers' evolving needs. For subscription information please contact:



Lisa Nanfra
Research Director
408-884-8560
lnanfra@hirc.com

hirc

HEALTH INDUSTRIES RESEARCH CENTER (HIRC) is an independent, nonpartisan organization that conducts strategic market research on trends in health care, pharmaceuticals and managed care businesses. HIRC's benchmark studies focus on the marketing needs of pharmaceutical companies by providing research critical to the development of successful customer-focused marketing strategies.

224 Walnut Street, Suite C
Santa Cruz, California 95060
P: 408-884-8560 • F: 408-884-8561

www.hirc.com