

HOW PHARMA CAN OPTIMIZE HCP ENGAGEMENT IN A DIGITAL WORLD

An Ipsos Point of View

Author: Sara Martin

GAME CHANGERS



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Pharma began to employ digital channels for healthcare professionals (HCPs) engagements prior to COVID. However, when the pandemic forced the industry to rely almost exclusively on digital, pharma was unable to quickly adopt effective strategies and thus shared an overwhelming amount of promotional content with HCPs.
- A more customer-centric approach is necessary to adapt to HCPs' evolving needs. For successful HCP engagement pharma should:
 1. Reel in HCPs with personalized content
 2. Keep customer preferences at the core of all communications
 3. Be available when it is convenient for the customer
- Embracing an omnichannel approach would help pharma embody these three key components to HCP engagement by enabling greater cross-team collaboration, data integration, and synergy of engagement tactics across the organization.



Introduction: An Overview of the Recent Evolution of HCP Engagement Tactics

Before Pandemic

While face-to-face meetings were the primary method for HCP engagement, pharma reps were using some digital means of communication, such as virtual meetings and emails. Results from a [2017 Veeva survey](#), show that 59% of HCPs had face-to-face interactions, 37% received emails, and 17% participated in remote meetings.

During Pandemic

Pharma was required to communicate with HCPs almost solely with digital tactics but was not equipped to transition so quickly. There was often no clear long-term strategy to engagement methods. HCPs were overwhelmed by generic promotional emails, and some hospital organizations even began to block these messages.

Despite the growing pains of digital, HCPs value convenience and would like some form of virtual engagement to continue post-pandemic.

Future

The use of digital channels is here to stay, but pharma needs to learn to personalize digital tactics to meet HCPs' needs using a synergistic mix of channels, designed to target the right HCPs at the right time in the right way.

Omnichannel engagement will be the most effective approach. This method will require greater collaboration across marketing, sales, access, analytics, and medical teams to provide material/services to HCPs in a synergistic manner. Data-driven insights will fuel this approach and allow for pharma to track and shape their strategies accordingly.



Top Three Things Pharma Should Do to Optimize HCP Engagement

1. Reel in HCPs with Personalized Content

Traditional face-to-face sales rep tactics were focused on creating a customized experience for HCPs. Market segmentations guided sales reps' understanding of HCP preferences and needs, allowing them to shape their discussions with HCPs appropriately. Reps could also tailor the conversations to specific questions the HCPs asked.

This customized approach has not historically been widely adopted in non-personal forms of digital communication from pharma; however, it is critical to ensuring digital means of engagement can meet customer needs. An abundance of promotional emails will cause HCPs to lose interest in content shared by a pharmaceutical company. It can also cause HCPs to develop an association of the company with being too promotional. Pharma can instead instill trust and capture HCPs' attention by sharing information that is personalized to their needs and relevant for their patients.

Today there are methods available that can help personalize these communications by inferring what the next best action is for pharma to take. These methods include, but are not limited to, predictive analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning (ML) to integrate data from various sources (e.g., claims data, patient diagnoses, website content/click tracking, email engagement, search history, etc.). Existing software offerings, such as Veeva Commercial Cloud, can assist pharma in implementing these data-driven approaches.

Examples of Targeted Communications

- KOLs are targeted with digital banner ads for a therapy expected to be approved soon to spread awareness and warm up the market prior to launch.
- A drug with a new mechanism of action is approved with an indication for which an HCP sees many patients. An MSL shares educational, non-branded resources with the HCP regarding how the drug works and offers time for a follow-up discussion if the HCP has questions.
- An HCP searches for reimbursement information on a manufacturer's website, and the appropriate representative from the manufacturer contacts the HCP shortly after to see if there are any further questions or if the HCP needs assistance.

2. Keep Customer Preferences at the Core of All Communications

Pharma can also further customize their approach by directly asking HCPs about their preferences and incorporating their feedback in the engagement plan. With "preference centers," HCPs can indicate what content they want to see, where they want to see it, and the frequency with which they want to communicate.

Engagement channel preferences often boil down to convenience and can vary based on a variety of circumstances. For example, an HCP may prefer in-person rep visits vs. scheduled virtual visits for the ability to chat with the rep when they have free time in-between patients. However, this HCP may prefer virtual conferences to in-person conferences for a better sense of control over their day, with the ability to log in and out of virtual talks. HCPs who practice in hospitals that are more restrictive regarding sales rep visits may prefer a larger proportion of interactions to occur via virtual calls and other digital means. Hence, it can be helpful to directly ask HCPs how they prefer to communicate.

3. Pharma Should Be Available When It Is Convenient for the Customer

As treatments and access considerations become increasingly complex, HCPs need to stay up-to-date, which can be burdensome when constantly operating under the pressure of time. To accommodate HCPs' busy schedules and help them stay informed, pharma can offer on-demand content. A one-stop online hub with an organized library of content would be a convenient way for HCPs to access information of interest at their disposal. With a simple search or filter, HCPs could quickly find answers and resources they need. For optimal convenience and utility, digital content must be concise, relevant, and easy to understand.

Example of On-demand Content

Novartis has started to pilot an [on-demand disease state information hub](#) for HCPs. The site is simple to navigate, with filters by medical specialty area, condition, and media type. There is also an easily accessible link at the top of the page to connect with a Novartis medical associate via video chat. This hub allows HCPs the freedom to explore educational content when it is convenient for them.

How Embracing Omnichannel Will Help Pharma Execute These Key Components to HCP Engagement

Pharma should embrace an omnichannel engagement approach to provide a more customer-centric experience that considers HCPs' needs, preferences, and availability in all communications.

Currently, pharma organizations tend to operate using systems that are not properly set up to share information. This can hinder: (1) their ability to have a more complete understanding of their customers and (2) their capacity for cross-team coordination of engagement tactics.

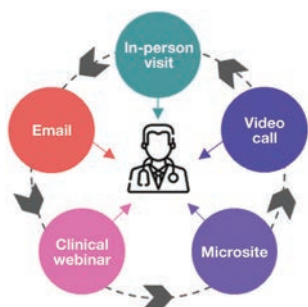
In order to adopt omnichannel, pharma must establish means of cross-team collaboration and data integration. This will require access to appropriate technology, systems, and training based on the needs of the organization.

How Ipsos Can Help You Enhance HCP Engagement (not exhaustive)

Ipsos Healthcare Advisory is skilled in partnering with clients to help them develop their omnichannel strategy and monitor the effectiveness of their tactics. Below are summaries of a couple of our offers.

Optimizing Omnichannel Strategy:

For assistance in developing your organization's omnichannel engagement strategy.



There are many components to shaping our clients' omnichannel engagement strategies, including, but not limited to:

- Enhancing HCP profiling based on triangulation of data sources.
- Developing softer leading or lagging indicators for delayed data inputs used in AI and ML algorithms (e.g., claims data, etc.).
- Translating campaign goals into tactical goals and identifying real-time key KPIs for monitoring engagement tactics.

Omnichannel Campaign Analytics:

To monitor effectiveness of engagement tactics so your team can be nimble in adapting to customer needs.



By analyzing engagement with a holistic approach of data from various campaign elements and primary market research, we help our clients:

- Identify the impact of each component of their engagement strategy in changing HCP behavior.
- Understand the dynamics of the various channels and how they contribute to the conversion funnel to provide a seamless view of the therapeutic journey.
- Adapt their strategy based on regular insights on performance and recommended optimizations.

Author

Sara Martin

Consultant, Ipsos Healthcare Advisory
sara.martin@ipsos.com

About Ipsos

At Ipsos we are passionately curious about people, markets, brands, and society. We deliver information and analysis that makes our complex world easier and faster to navigate and inspires our clients to make smarter decisions. With a strong presence in 90 countries, Ipsos employs more than 18,000 people and conducts research programs in more than 100 countries. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is controlled and managed by research professionals.

About Ipsos Healthcare Advisory

Ipsos Healthcare Advisory is a team of experienced consultants focused on working with biopharma, med tech, digital health, and other healthcare organizations to solve complex challenges across the spectrum of healthcare. We partner with our clients in a trusted advisor role, helping them tackle their toughest strategic challenges and optimize performance.