How Pharma Can Fully Digitize Interactions with Healthcare Professionals

By building end-to-end IT ecosystems and understanding preferred communications channels, pharmaceutical companies can create more engaging and fruitful digital relationships with healthcare professionals.
Executive Summary

Since the advent of the commercial Internet, digital technologies have empowered consumers worldwide, leading them to play an active and demanding role with the companies with which they do business. The rules of engagement have changed: By using the Internet, consumers can be heard, and they can influence other consumers – powerfully.

The Internet permeates every aspect of people’s lives and has transformed the way we live and work. The confluence of the Internet, social media and ubiquitous mobile devices has inalterably redrawn the contours of consumer empowerment. This tectonic shift is impacting the traditional interactions of healthcare professionals (HCP) and pharmaceuticals companies, even amid the regulatory scrutiny that is endemic to this industry.

Computers and Internet access are now mainstays of any HCP office, and the pressure to digitize is building with unrelenting force. Governments are pushing toward digital health; the U.S. federal government, for example, provides reimbursements to physicians who demonstrate compliance with Meaningful Use Stage 2, which requires HCPs to create, maintain and electronically transmit medical records. In the U.S., 90% of patients with cancer say they discuss the health information they read online with their physicians. With increasing digital savviness among patients, HCPs must embrace the same virtual tools and techniques to remain relevant with their patient communities.

Although generally considered laggards when it comes to newer forms of engagement and technology, HCPs have in the past three to four years taken to the digital world with vigor, whether to more effectively locate professional information, communicate with patients or educate themselves on new medical approaches. In fact, HCP work habits have forever changed: 86% of HCPs use a smartphone for work, 53% use
a tablet for work, and most use a computer. Anecdotal evidence even reveals that HCPs are prescribing not only traditional medicines but also apps to help patients manage chronic diseases and other ailments.

The market for digital products and services remains hot. The mobile health market, for example, is set to reach $26 billion by 2017; moreover, there are almost 20,000 health-related mobile apps on Apple iTunes, and remote patient monitoring devices are one of the fastest growing markets.

For their part, pharmaceuticals companies are venturing onto the digital highway, with the goal of strengthening their reputation as innovative players by taking advantage of evolving societal and technology trends. There is greater focus, spend and effort on digital in the industry; for instance, many pharmaceuticals companies have created mobile applications targeted at patients and HCPs; examples include Novartis’s Med Info⁴ and Pfizer’s HemMobile.⁵

At this juncture in the industry’s digital evolution, pharmaceuticals companies need to reexamine their strategies for approaching HCPs. As HCPs and their patients grow more tech-savvy, their expectations for digital will dramatically increase. Interactions must be premised on digital footprints, or what we call a Code Halo™. Pharmaceuticals companies need to holistically examine and make sense of their digital interactions with people, processes, organizations and devices and reposition themselves from brand-centric to HCP-centric.

This white paper discusses how key digital touchpoints can be harnessed for deeper strategic thinking to inform how pharmaceuticals firms can more effectively and proactively engage virtually with HCPs by applying Code Halo thinking.
Digital Systems of Interaction

Figure 1 illustrates four broad categories of digital systems:

- **Channels of interaction**, which provide an entry point for customers to the digital world.
- **Systems of engagement**, which enable and capture data from collaborations and communication between the business and its customers and partners or among employees.
- **Systems of record** that assimilate the information from transactions.
- **Systems of insight** that comprehensively enable a holistic view that can be constructed with data that accumulates across the digital world.

In many enterprises, systems of interaction, engagement and record are mature. In contrast, systems of insight are evolving to provide a more meaningful and relevant customer experience, built through insights derived from intersecting personal, device, process and organizational Code Halos. These emerging systems have brought enterprises to a crucial juncture, at which they have the potential to offer meaningful, differentiated and personalized services to their customers.
HCPs increasingly prefer digital modes of interaction, and pharmaceutical firms need to be aware of these preferences in order to better understand and serve them. Most pharmaceutical companies have built master data management (MDM) systems to create single versions of the truth for interacting with HCPs; indeed, this capability is considered to be one of their most important competitive assets, as HCP details are maintained along with their prescription behavior. Targeting and segmentation is performed using the HCP master database, and pharmaceuticals firms also identify potential key opinion leaders (KOL) by examining the HCP community’s circle of influence.

Figure 2 illustrates the touchpoints of connected HCPs to understand the extent of their interactions. Typically, the sales rep interacts with the CRM system and schedules a call with the HCP. These discussions are captured in the form of call notes and are updated in the CRM system. Sometimes, particularly for a new scientific advancement or drug introduction, detailing is conducted by the rep to the HCP, and the interaction information is updated in the CRM system.

Pharmaceutical companies also conduct virtual Web conferences and in-person events to disseminate knowledge about scientific advancements, and they create course materials for continuous learning to help HCPs update their professional knowledge. Brand-focused sites are created by pharmaceutical companies to share focused product information with HCPs, and call centers and medical science officers help HCPs with queries.

With so many touchpoints, the prevailing systems in the pharmaceuticals space are not tuned to uniformly view this data. These systems were designed with the sales rep at the center because salespeople were the most influential component of the sales process. However, with HCPs seeking to explore information on their own—and with a progressively diminishing sales rep role—pharma companies must reconsider their engagement strategies.
Existing systems have serious constraints for enabling a holistic view of the HCP’s journey. Unless pharma companies can generate a unified view of the HCP, they can get lost in the sea of interactions, viewing the touchpoints as mere transactions. Creating a 360-degree, customer-centric view is only possible if interactions are systematically built on one another, by applying Code Halo thinking. A thorough Code Halo strategy, the right blend of technology and a well-thought-out reference architecture are all critical components for companies seeking to realize digital’s full potential for enhancing customer engagement.

To convert their digital interactions into profitable business outcomes, pharmaceuticals firms must invest in a software platform with versatile capabilities. Such a platform should leverage technology advances, such as audio/videoconferencing and digital content management, and be intuitively capable of serving an omni-channel audience across mobile, Web and social platforms. It should also be seamlessly integrated with other systems within the pharma enterprise. Figure 3 (next page) highlights the ideal reference architecture for such a platform.

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**Quick Take**

**Taking Stock of HCP Digital Interactions**

The following case studies demonstrate how we have helped clients advance their journeys to digitize HCP interactions. In both situations, our customers were seeking ways to advance their interactions with HCPs via digital channels.

**Empowering HCPs to Determine Digital Interactions**

A market leading provider of pharmaceuticals products and services sought our assistance in taking its HCP interactions to the next level. The company operates at varying levels of digital maturity, depending on the brand. At issue: The same HCP would be approached by sales reps, without any knowledge of previous interactions, including queries for medical information, sample ordering, participation in events, webinars, etc. A partial view of the HCP universe of activities deeply affected the quality of sales rep interactions. HCPs expect the pharma to know them better and prefer to dictate how they would like to be approached, based on the success of earlier interactions. With this insight, we helped this pharma build a unified digital strategy for HCP engagement.

The solution allows for personalization and empowers HCPs to determine how they want to interact with the pharmaceuticals company. Analytics information, based on the HCP journey and preferences, is continuously fed to marketing to fine-tune campaigns and messaging.

**Digitization Platform for HCP Interactions**

A world leader in the pharmaceuticals industry needed help exploring and building a sustained, rich and flexible digital connection with HCPs. With greater regulatory scrutiny on HCP spend, and changing HCP preferences toward digital connections, the pharmaceuticals company wanted to expand its digital strategy and presence to deliver a consistent, intelligent and informed HCP experience.

We helped this client by proposing a global solution that can be tailored to local market needs, while retaining brand consistency across markets. The solution will help minimize the cost of sales personnel visits and events and, more importantly, enable HCPs to consistently connect with the pharmaceuticals company through digital channels.

The platform enables HCPs to virtually connect with the pharmaceutical firm at their convenience and aims to better understand HCP digital footprints.
The core of the target platform’s architecture includes the systems of engagement and systems of insight. Key functional components include:

- **Engagement portals**: Portals are intended to disseminate brand information and facilitate engagement with the HCP, as well as maintain consistency across markets and the brand. Gamification is emerging in these portals as a way to boost engagement.

- **Web conference systems**: These systems manage webcasts and webinars and enable virtual management of educational and promotional meetings. There are numerous strong commercial offerings that pharmaceuticals can use in this space.

- **E-mail marketing systems**: These systems create, send and track promotional and informational e-mail to HCPs, typically involving bulk e-mails. This is a well-developed and mature solution ecosystem, in which numerous vendors offer various products and services related to e-mail and campaign management.

- **E-detailing apps**: This area comprises product and brand detailing apps designed for scientific conversations and intended to help HCPs understand the product better. This is a critical engagement capability, and the feedback from these sessions helps in closed-loop marketing. Advances in technology such as augmented reality can be used to provide a superior experience.

- **Social media management**: This includes capabilities that help the pharmaceuticals company understand the social media conversations of HCP communities. It also includes the creation of social media-related campaigns to increase awareness and generate favorable perception and sentiment.
• **Events management**: These capabilities help life sciences enterprises manage and execute events end-to-end. Established solution providers are available in this area.

• **Systems of insight**: Considering the vast amount of data generated in the HCP engagement platform, the measurement of operational effectiveness and predictive analytics is very important. Some of the analytics capabilities include a 360-degree view of the HCP, operational analytics, predictive analytics and closed-loop feedback.

In addition, the target platform should also possess strong capabilities in integration, security, compliance and analytics. Areas of focus include:

• **Security**: Regulatory authorities around the world differ on how an HCP can be validated. Broadly, there are three variants:
  > Countries that have an external service to validate the HCP.
  > Countries that allow HCP information to be captured and used later for validation.
  > Countries where self-assertion is enough and no validation is required.

The HCP engagement platform should enable the implementation of any of the above variants. It should also be global and facilitate different implementations for different countries. Lastly, it should support encryption for both data at rest and while in motion, depending on the level of rigor required.

• **Integration**: The platform should enable extensive integration capabilities with other systems such as CRM, marketing, call center, creative agency systems, etc. It should also support emerging engagement techniques, such as those based on gamification.

• **Globalization**: The platform should enable personalization, localization and multi-country deployments, and be compliant with the local and global regulatory norms.

### Measuring Platform Effectiveness

Key performance indicators (KPIs) help pharmas continuously evaluate whether an HCP digital initiative maintains alignment with the business’s strategic goals. The strategic goals could include:

• The ability to reach all HCPs through all digital channels, including mobile, Web, etc.
• A consistent digital presence, reuse of digital assets, elimination of redundant spend.
• Development of metrics based on HCP perception toward digital channels.
• Increased transparency in dealing with HCPs; improvement of public perception and regulatory compliance.
• Ability to offer an array of digital services covering all HCP interaction activities.

KPIs indicate the health of the digital initiative. To be most effective, KPIs need to be well propagated throughout the organization and should serve as the alignment link between strategy and the operational indicators. It is important that the KPIs have consistent meaning across the enterprise and are capable of being discussed at various levels. Strategies such as digital reach with the HCP need to include clearly defined KPIs.

Figure 4 (next page) lists potential KPIs that can help measure the progress of a digital initiative. These KPIs are indicative; when companies have specific goals, the KPIs will need to be tailored to assess performance against these objectives.
Looking Forward

With HCP preferences tilting toward digital channels, it is imperative that pharmaceutical companies take a holistic approach to digital marketing. Digital helps pharmaceuticals embrace closed-loop marketing, keeping customer centricity as a prime focus. It helps prepare them to eventually pursue a strategy informed by big data-driven predictive analytics. To realize the full potential, it is critical to have a strong architectural foundation, guided by a well-thought-out business strategy, influenced by Code Halo thinking.

In the years to come, digital channels will gain prominence over physical channels: Dinner meetings will be replaced by digital alternatives leveraging social media principles, and experiential events driven by digital and mobile advances will dominate conventions, symposia and investigator meetings. Sales reps will need to know the digital profile and history of HCP interactions to inform their call planning activities. It will be crucial to develop a proactive understanding of HCP needs, informed by distilling meaning at critical Code Halo intersections.

For example, based on historical interactions, analytical insight might reveal that if the HCP is browsing the brand site for specific information and requesting a call with a medical science expert, he or she will likely place a sample order. Knowing this, the pharmaceuticals company can anticipate these needs and be positioned to service the HCP – even before the HCP makes the intent known.

### Indicative KPIs

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<th>KPI</th>
<th>Brief</th>
<th>Potential KPIs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reach</td>
<td>What is the digital reach to the HCPs?</td>
<td>• Proportion of HCPs accessing digital channels.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Percentage of HCPs in portal, e-mail databases.</td>
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<td>• Opt-out percentage, trending.</td>
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<td>Penetration</td>
<td>How extensively are digital channels being used?</td>
<td>• Proportion of HCPs requesting reach through the digital channel.</td>
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<td>• Proportion of sample orders through digital channels.</td>
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<td>• Proportion of HCPs using virtual events such as Web conferencing.</td>
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<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>How are digital channels faring, compared with other channels?</td>
<td>• Analytics on 360-degree view of the HCP.</td>
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<td>• Repeat activities through the digital channel.</td>
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<td>• Correlation of trends in increase/decrease of physical vs. digital channels.</td>
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<td>• Referrals effectiveness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>How engaged are HCPs on the digital channels?</td>
<td>• Visit frequency.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Breadth of activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>How is the customer experience on the digital channels?</td>
<td>• Percent of new HCPs joining through digital channels.</td>
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<td>• Trend on average time spent on activities.</td>
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<td>• Churn rate.</td>
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*Figure 4*
Footnotes


4 Novartis’s Med Info app allows HCPs to view, download, search for relevant medical information, submit a medical inquiry directly to Novartis, report an adverse event or speak to a Novartis medical information specialist. For more information, see https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/novartis-med-info/id508789348?mt=8.

5 HemMobile™ is designed to help hemophilia patients and caregivers to log infusions and bleeds and stay aware of general health and wellness. Users can view the logging history and send reports to the care team. For more information, see http://www.pfizerplus.com/si/article_hemmobile.aspx.


References


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