cognizant®

The future of CRM in pharma

Decision framework to navigate the post Veeva-Salesforce era

66%

of pharma enterprises plan to migrate within the next 24 months

37%

are currently in early stages of collating requirements and assessing providers

62%

of pharma enterprises indicate a preference for 'one CRM platform for all' when picking their platform of choice

75%

of enterprises leaning towards Salesforce are doing so for its flexibility to integrate with diverse data ecosystems

66%

of enterprises leaning towards Veeva are doing so for its domain-specific technology stack, prioritizing domain over AI enhancements

Top three parameters influencing platform selection decision-making:

- Regulatory compliance
- Ease of platform customization
- Total cost of ownership

To stay ahead in this competitive landscape, life sciences companies must showcase a strategic vision that unites cutting-edge AI technologies with valuable research insights, paving the way for powerful, secure, and reliable AI-driven CRM solutions.

While technology transformations aren't new in the life sciences space, there is currently a strong focus on navigating the post-Veeva-Salesforce era and building a future-ready CRM foundation. As the competitive landscape broadens with the emergence of new technology providers, enterprises must act decisively to ensure their CRM strategy remains fit for purpose.

In addition to Veeva and Salesforce, the emerging life sciences-specific CRM technology providers such as Exeevo, Pitcher, and Trueblue have gained industry traction, by offering agile, modular, and omnichannel engagement platforms tailored to evolving enterprise demand dynamics.

While the primary need for the CRM evolution is to bridge the gaps that the traditional CRM fails to provide, enterprises are expecting a uniform and dynamic stakeholder view through an API-driven scalable ecosystem with enterprise-wide interoperability. The key focus is on the foundation that lies in the process capabilities supporting digital engagements, complemented with data and insights to enable enterprises to deliver personalized engagements across both digital and non-digital channels.

Best-of-breed vs 'one CRM for all' has been a hotly debated consideration from an architectural standpoint. Enterprises need to weigh up the specific context and requirements based on current business processes and decide on the trade-offs across key parameters.

The CRM transition is no longer optional—it's a strategic imperative. However, arriving at a conclusion will not be easy and enterprises need to start the journey sooner rather than later. Identifying the right KPIs to accurately reflect adoption, usability, and business impact can be complex, but getting this right is key to tracking progress and enabling continuous improvement.

This research report from Everest Group, supported by Cognizant, lays out a CRM selection framework to assist pharma enterprises on this journey. Backed by insights from industry leaders, the report explores key considerations for defining the future of pharma CRM.

Enterprises who act decisively today will be better positioned to lead tomorrow's CRM transformation—enabling smarter, more connected, and more impactful engagement across the stakeholder journey.

Kumar Ramananda

Practice Leader,
Life Sciences
Commercial, EMEA
Cognizant

Uday Kotla

Global Practice Head,
CX/CRM,
Cognizant

Everest Group®

July 2025

The Future of CRM in Pharma: A Decision Framework to Navigate the Post Veeva-Salesforce Era

Contents

Introduction

The pharma industry is undergoing a pivotal shift in how it engages with Healthcare Professionals (HCPs), patients, and other stakeholders. As expectations for personalized, omnichannel engagement continue to rise, traditional CRM platforms are proving to be inadequate. The dissolution of the Veeva-Salesforce partnership, combined with persistent challenges around fragmented data, limited interoperability, suboptimal user experiences, and underdeveloped AI capabilities, have further underscored the limitations of current CRM platforms. Together, the demand- and supply-side factors mark an inflection point in the CRM landscape – reinforcing the imminent need for a future CRM platform that can meet the industry's evolving needs.

Future CRM is expected to be agile and intelligent, built to meet the needs of all commercial stakeholders. Enterprises are now seeking platforms that offer a unified, 360-degree view of HCPs and patients, support dynamic content and channel orchestration, and integrate seamlessly across functional and data silos. The goal is to move beyond transactional engagement toward personalized, data-driven interactions that are compliant, scalable, and impactful.

AI, especially with the growing traction around generative and agentic AI, will play a key role in this transformation. These technologies enable personalized content delivery, intelligent decision support, and real-time stakeholder engagement, helping pharma enterprises advance toward a connected, AI-powered CRM platform that addresses the evolving needs of all stakeholders.

This Viewpoint explores how enterprises can navigate the post Veeva-Salesforce era and build a future-ready CRM foundation. It focuses on:

- The need for CRM evolution and challenges with traditional CRM platforms
- Key functional and technological building blocks of future CRM
- Enterprise expectations from core CRM processes in future CRM
- Strategic considerations for CRM platform selection and implementation
- Essential success factors and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to drive enterprise-wide adoption

As the competitive landscape broadens with the emergence of new technology providers, enterprises must act decisively. This Viewpoint will serve as a strategic guide for pharma enterprises, helping them navigate the shifting CRM landscape, evaluate evolving platform options, and build a future-ready foundation to orchestrate meaningful, personalized stakeholder experiences at scale.

The current state of CRM and the need for evolution

Mapping the journey of CRM in pharma: until the Veeva-Salesforce split

The story of CRM in the life sciences industry began in the 1990s with industry-agnostic, basic database management systems for sales representatives. These early platforms focused primarily on physician targeting and drug detailing. Siebel Systems, acquired by Oracle in 2005, was the dominant CRM platform provider in the life sciences industry.

The first major shift occurred in the 2000s as the industry transitioned from on-premises to cloud-based CRM platforms, with an objective to enable data centralization, remote access, and improved collaboration. During this transition, Siebel faced stiff competition from Veeva, founded in 2007, which introduced the first cloud-based, industry-specific CRM platform built on Salesforce. By offering tailored solutions for pharma – addressing compliance requirements, process-specific capabilities, and multichannel engagement – Veeva rapidly captured a dominant share of the pharmaceutical market, while Salesforce focused on serving the MedTech sector in alignment with their non-compete agreement.

For many years, Veeva and Salesforce enjoyed being the frontrunners in the pharma CRM platform market, primarily focusing on supporting sales representatives and HCP engagement, with Salesforce also extending its capabilities to patient engagement. Meanwhile, IQVIA made a late entrance to the life sciences CRM industry in 2017, with its Orchestrated Customer Engagement Platform (OCE). While the capabilities under the hood were promising, it was challenging to displace the entrenched incumbents, Veeva and Salesforce, given the industry's inherent inertia and low appetite for change when it comes to their CRM investments.

The need for CRM evolution: a culmination of demand-supply dynamics

The industry's inertia and change appetite around their CRM investments was set to change with the COVID-19 pandemic. With the pandemic restricting HCPs and patient access, the traditional, relationship-based sales models quickly became ineffective. This prompted pharma enterprises to rethink their customer engagement strategies and question traditional CRM platforms' ability to move beyond sales rep-focused HCP engagement and focus on an integrated approach across all commercial functions (sales, marketing, medical affairs, and patient services) to deliver on enterprises' promise of personalized HCP and patient engagement. It is evident that current CRM platforms are not designed to serve all commercial functions' needs.

For example, Veeva has been built with deep specialization around sales and marketing, while Salesforce has positioned itself with a stronger emphasis on patient services.

As these limitations became more evident, enterprise expectations began to evolve, and they sought CRM platforms that go beyond transactional interactions, offering AI-driven, real-time insights to tailor personalized engagements for HCPs and patients. Enterprises now expect seamless omnichannel connectivity, allowing field reps, marketing professionals, and medical affairs teams to deliver consistent, data-driven interactions across digital and in-person touchpoints. This has accelerated CRM platforms' evolution.

Amid the shift in enterprise CRM demand dynamics, in 2022, Veeva also announced its decision to end its partnership with Salesforce and transition Veeva CRM to its proprietary Veeva Vault, opening opportunities across both pharma and MedTech markets. In response, Salesforce, in 2024, announced its global strategic partnership with IQVIA to strengthen its life sciences cloud offering, leveraging IQVIA's deep industry data and analytics to enhance its presence in pharma and biotech CRM and directly compete with Veeva. While the MedTech and biotech CRM markets continue to gain prominence, pharma continues to be the primary focus.

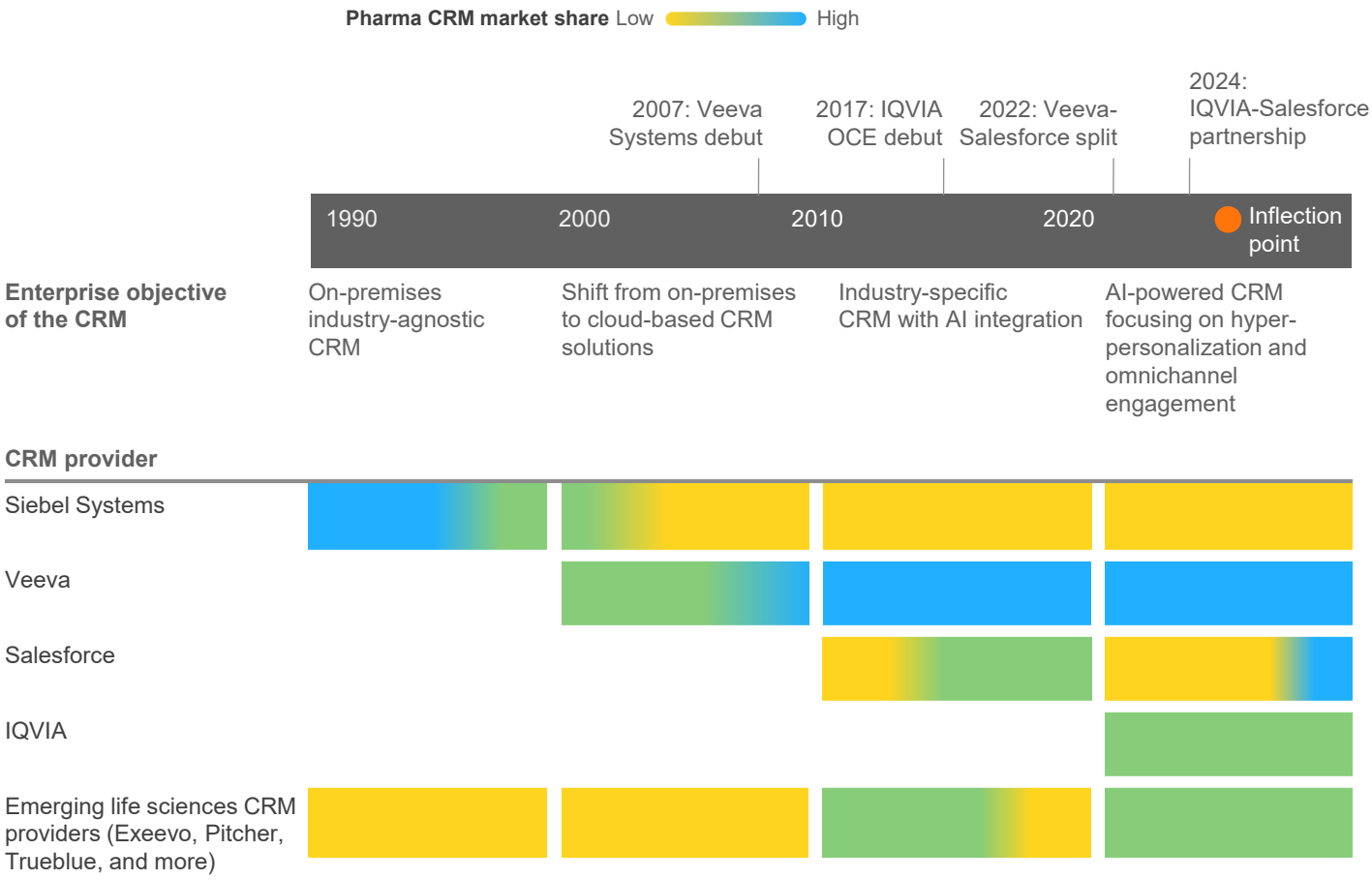
> "The decoupling of Veeva from Salesforce has created significant uncertainty for enterprises, and the horizon of 2030 is something that customers are very reluctant to address."
>
> – Strategy and governance head of a top 10 pharma company

Monetizing the uncertainty in the incumbent dynamics, the emerging life sciences-specific CRM technology providers such as Exeevo, Pitcher, and Trueblue have gained industry traction by offering agile, modular, and omnichannel engagement platforms tailored to evolving enterprise demand dynamics. They differentiate themselves by embedding domain-intelligent workflows, real-time personalization, and low-friction modular integration capabilities that extend far beyond the linear and siloed architecture of legacy CRM stacks. This allows, for example, a Medical Science Liaison (MSL) to access tailored scientific content during a virtual interaction or a marketer to auto-generate compliant materials from modular libraries. Together, these capabilities reflect a broader industry shift toward greater personalization, interoperability, and digital-first engagement strategies, challenging incumbent technologies and reshaping the competitive landscape.

The changes in the supply landscape have opened the playing field for CRM platform providers, both incumbents and emerging CRM technology providers, and left enterprises with a key question: “Which CRM platform best suits the future needs of the enterprise?” While there is a five-year wind-down period until 2030, it is important for enterprises to strategize for this transition at the earliest, given the wide-scale impact of this change across organizations and businesses. As a result, pharma enterprises need to reevaluate their CRM investments, considering both incumbents and emerging solutions that best fit their evolving commercial needs. The changing enterprise expectations from CRM platforms, further complemented by the supply-side dynamics, have created an inflection point in the pharma CRM journey, which is depicted in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1: Mapping the CRM journey in pharma

Source: Everest Group (2025)



Challenges traditional CRM platforms face

With the inflection point in the pharma CRM landscape, enterprises are now positioned for change. Below are the key challenges enterprises face currently with traditional CRM platforms, which they aim to overcome as they shift toward their CRM platforms.

Severity of enterprise challenge Low High

Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)

Beyond the initial licensing, traditional CRM platforms come with significant ongoing costs, including customization, third-party data integrations, system maintenance, and continuous user training, to name a few. Additional costs are usually hidden costs to enterprises and eventually increase the TCO, making long-term scalability a challenge. Without a cost-effective, scalable model, organizations face budget overruns and diminishing RoI over time.

Sluggish and inflexible systems

Legacy pharma CRM platforms often suffer from slow response times and require heavy IT involvement for customization, making it difficult for commercial functions to adapt quickly in fast-changing market environments. These rigid systems lack user-friendly configurability, hindering the ability to respond to evolving customer needs, regulatory changes, and competitive pressures, ultimately slowing down innovation and reducing commercial effectiveness in a rapidly changing landscape.

Lack of personalized content

Traditional CRM platforms lack the ability to dynamically personalize content, relying on static, one-size-fits-all messaging rather than modular, AI-driven content adaptation for tailored engagement. Without intelligent content automation, commercial functions struggle to deliver relevant, real-time messaging based on preferences, engagement history, or behavioral data. This results in generic interactions that fail to resonate with customers individually, ultimately reducing engagement effectiveness.

Lack of interoperability

Enterprises' current commercial technology landscape consists of various point solutions along with their CRM platforms, which operate independently across commercial functions (sales, marketing, medical affairs, patient services). This results in data fragmentation, where vital insights remain siloed, preventing a unified 360-degree customer view. Without seamless integration, commercial teams struggle to synchronize interactions, track customer journeys, and derive real-time insights, ultimately leading to inefficiencies, missed opportunities, and poor decision-making.

Lack of real-time, AI-driven insights

Real-time, AI-driven insights augment the ability of commercial functions, including sales, marketing, medical affairs, and patient services, to make data-informed decisions and personalize HCP and patient interactions. Without capabilities such as Next Best Action (NBA) recommendations and customer sentiment analysis, engagement strategies are not as effective. This may result in missed opportunities for tailored interactions, inefficient resource allocation, and lowered engagement levels.

Lack of built-in regulatory controls

Legacy systems require manual updates and complex customizations to meet new industry regulations, slowing adaptation. Without built-in compliance monitoring, automated tracking, and real-time updates, commercial functions may struggle with regulatory adherence. Additionally, they often lack comprehensive audit trails and efficient consent management, increasing compliance risks.

Not designed for all stakeholders

These CRM platforms are primarily designed for sales reps and HCP interactions, often neglecting the needs of other stakeholders such as marketing, medical affairs, and patient engagement teams. This siloed approach limits cross-functional collaboration and prevents organizations from delivering a holistic, data-driven strategy across all teams. As a result, organizations struggle to create cohesive, omnichannel experiences that address the full customer and patient journey, ultimately impacting engagement effectiveness.

Lack of user-friendly and intuitive UI/UX

Traditional pharma CRM platforms often lack a user-friendly, mobile-friendly, and intuitive UI/UX, making it difficult for commercial functions to efficiently collect, manage, and access essential data. Without a seamless, mobile-accessible experience, commercial functions struggle to capture insights in real time, leading to delayed decision-making and missed opportunities for personalized interactions. An outdated UI/UX also hampers adoption rates, forcing users to navigate complex workflows instead of focusing on high-value engagements.

Limited personalized omnichannel engagement

All enterprise stakeholders, including sales representatives, marketing professionals, and medical affairs teams, lack a unified view of customer preferences and interactions across digital and non-digital channels, leading to inconsistent messaging. Without cross-functional visibility and personalized engagement, interactions become ineffective, reducing customer engagement and trust. Redundant or misaligned messaging can frustrate customers, weaken brand perception, and ultimately hinder commercial success.

Defining the future of pharma CRM

Key tenets of enterprises' future CRM vision

As traditional CRMs were not designed to drive the personalized engagement mandate of pharma enterprises, the need for evolution became clear. The following key tenets capture what enterprises now expect from their future CRM technology stack.

Enterprise priority Low High

Unified and dynamic stakeholder view: focus on both HCP and patient

Currently, stakeholder data is often siloed, trapped in disconnected systems across sales, marketing, medical affairs, and patient services functions, leading to inefficiencies, duplication, and a fragmented view of the stakeholder. To address this, future CRM platforms must provide a dynamic, 360-degree view of all stakeholders, including HCPs and patients, by seamlessly integrating data across all touchpoints and platforms, including field force tools, marketing automation platforms, patient engagement platforms, and more. This integration should help build a holistic and validated 360-degree stakeholder view that will enable enterprise functions to better understand stakeholder preferences and behaviors, laying the foundation for real-time personalization and AI-driven insights. For example, if an HCP has not engaged with a recent marketing campaign, the CRM platform can surface this insight to the field rep ahead of their next meeting, enabling the rep to provide real-time feedback to marketing for more targeted follow-ups.

Automated compliance management: simplify operations and prioritize engagement

Enterprises expect their future CRM platforms to have built-in, AI-driven compliance frameworks that can adapt to evolving regulations with minimal manual intervention. They must align with global and regional standards such as GDPR for data protection and FHIR for clinical interoperability, ensuring compliance is both automated and scalable across markets. By automating compliance tracking, reporting, and audit-readiness, these platforms should ensure streamlined operations and reduce compliance risks, allowing enterprise functions to focus on engagement and innovation. For example, medical affairs teams could leverage the CRM platform's built-in, AI-driven compliance engine to automate responses to recurring off-label inquiries.

Intuitive and user-centric UI/UX: maximize enterprise-wide usability and adoption

Pharma enterprises expect their future CRM platforms to offer user-friendly, AI-enhanced interfaces designed to meet the distinct needs of commercial functions. These platforms must be fully mobile-optimized and device-agnostic to ensure seamless accessibility across field and remote environments. Including function-specific dashboards aligned with their strategic goals and KPIs will be vital to maximize enterprise-wide usability and adoption. For example, marketing teams will need real-time campaign performance on the home screen, while medical affairs teams will benefit from interfaces highlighting publications, inquiry trends, and compliant response templates. By combining intuitive design with intelligent, accessible data, future CRM platforms will empower timely decision-making and enable more meaningful stakeholder engagement.

Orchestrate AI-driven personalized and connected stakeholder journeys: balanced focus on channel and content

Future CRM platforms are expected to help build consistent and personalized engagement across all digital and non-digital channels, triggered by enterprise functions in a synchronized manner. Leveraging next-generation technology, including advanced analytics, AI, and agentic AI, can help enterprise functions map stakeholder preferences to the right channel and content strategy dynamically. Complementing the right channel strategy with modular content, tailored to the context of each channel, is essential to drive the personalized engagement mandate. Agentic AI integration will further enhance CRM capabilities by autonomously orchestrating content and channel decisions based on real-time behavior, enabling timely, meaningful, and intelligent interactions at scale. For example, based on an HCP's engagement history and recent scientific content consumption, the CRM platform can trigger an automatic and compliant follow-up email from medical affairs and schedule a tailored field visit or digital interaction by the field rep across preferred channels and formats.

Enterprise-wide interoperability: seamless but compliant data integrations to drive connected stakeholder engagement

Enabling secure, real-time data integration both within commercial functions (sales, marketing, medical affairs, patient services) and across other enterprise functions (clinical, regulatory, safety, manufacturing, etc.) is a key enterprise expectation from future CRM platforms. This is essential as HCPs and patients engage with different enterprise functions depending on where they are in the product life cycle. For example, if the marketing team runs a campaign to raise awareness about a recent adverse event, that information should be surfaced to both Medical Science Liaison (MSLs) and field reps to appropriately engage respective Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and HCPs, to amplify the go-to-market messaging. Such seamless and compliant inter- and intra-function interoperability helps break data silos, enhance collaboration, and build connected stakeholder engagement journeys.

No/Low-code customization: empower enterprise stakeholders to drive agile decision-making

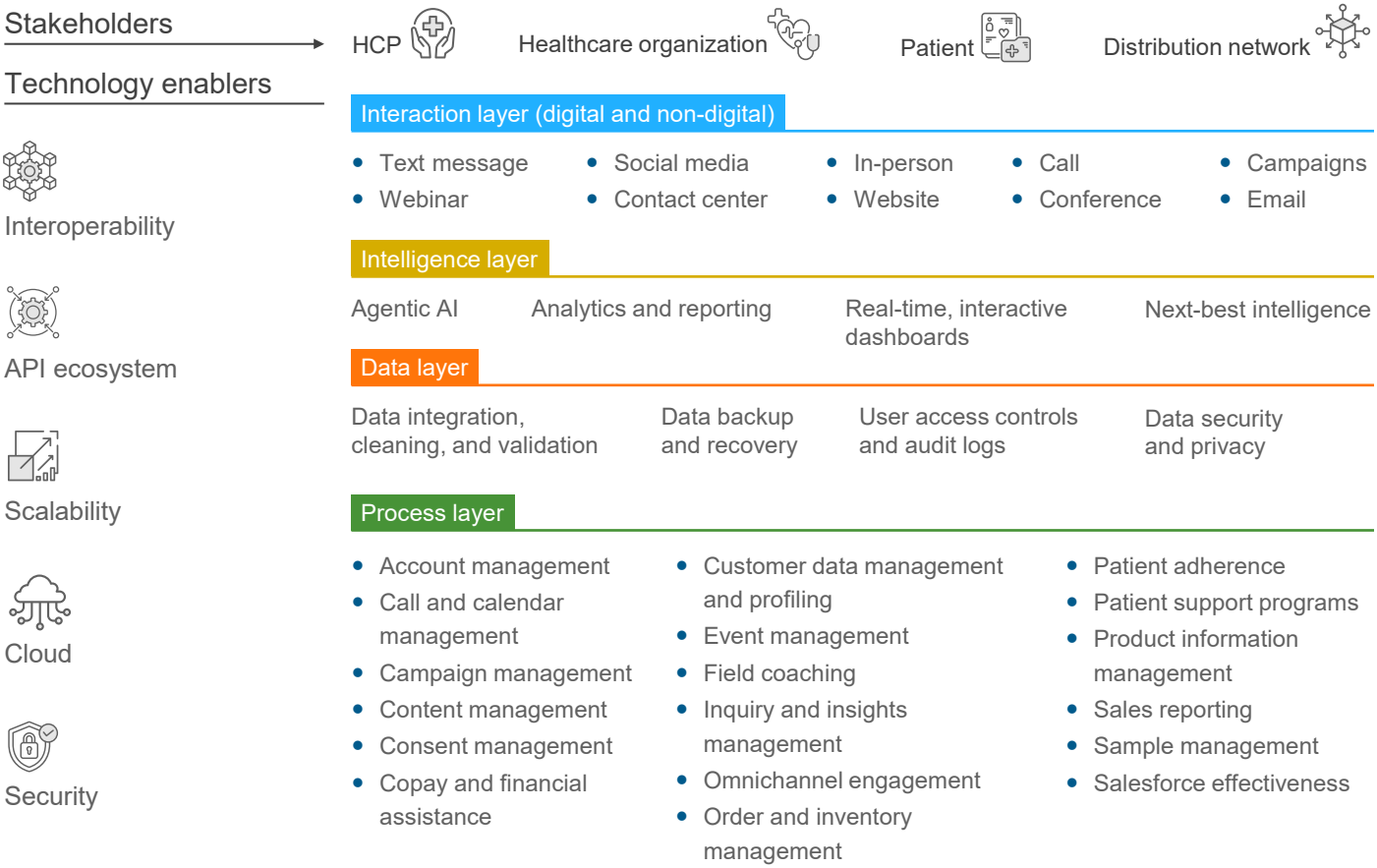
Future CRM platforms should empower business users across all functions with no/low-code tools, reducing reliance on IT and accelerating a configuration-driven approach and innovation. Such tools are expected to enable sales, marketing, medical affairs, and patient services teams to independently configure workflows, automate routine tasks, and quickly adapt to evolving market and customer needs, fostering agile decision-making at scale. This democratization of digital capabilities allows field teams, including sales reps, MSLs, and more to personalize engagement strategies, refine targeting, and respond swiftly to local market dynamics. For example, a field rep could quickly create a territory-specific follow-up workflow or configure a local campaign without IT support.

Snapshot of the future CRM technology stack

Considering enterprises' expectations from their future CRM platforms, Exhibit 2 illustrates the future pharma CRM technology stack, designed to address the limitations of traditional CRM platforms and meet evolving industry needs.

Exhibit 2: Future pharma CRM technology stack

Source: Everest Group (2025)

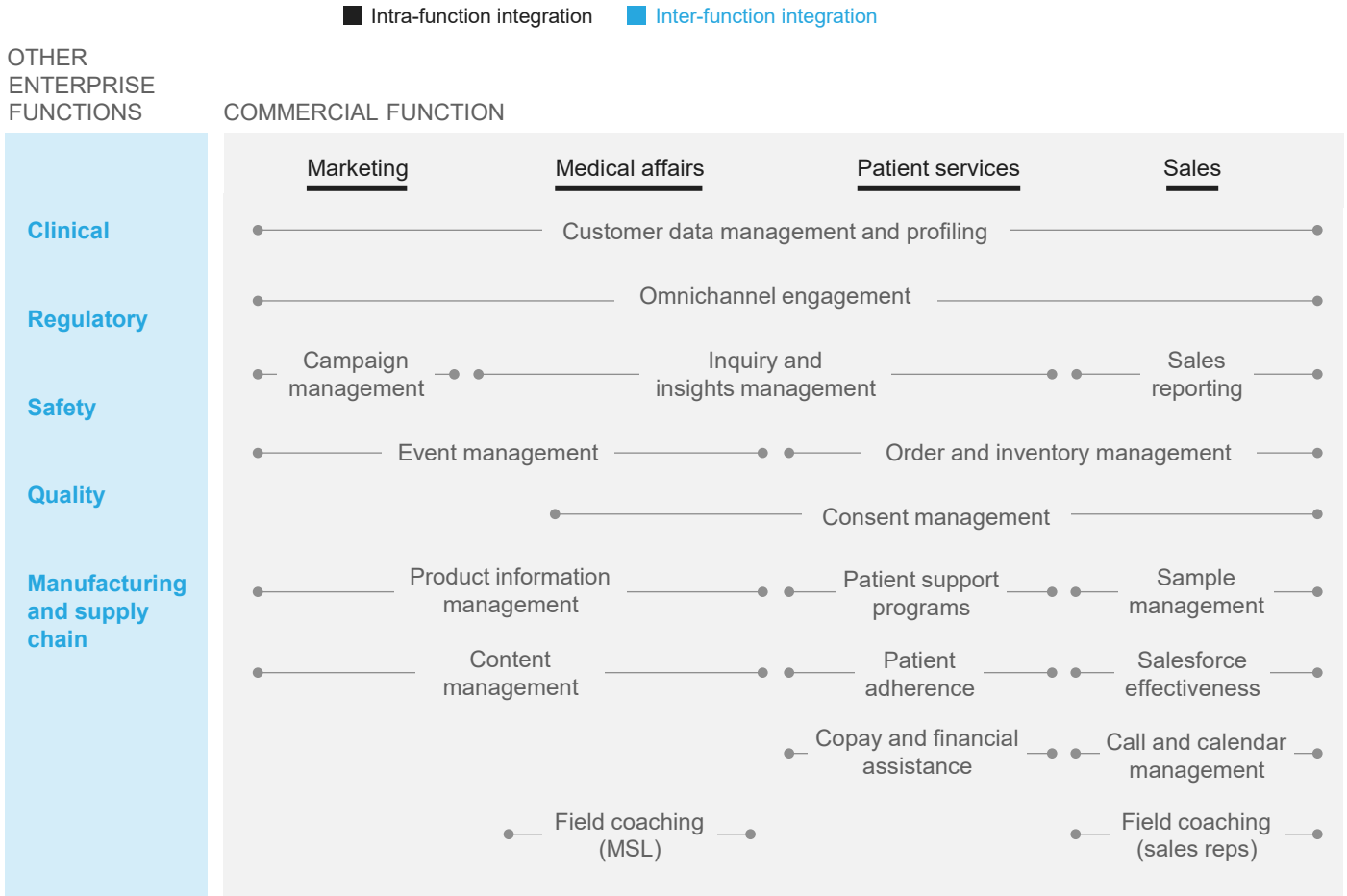


At its foundation lies the process layer, which includes core CRM process capabilities that handle day-to-day internal and external workflows, relevant for all commercial functions. This is consecutively stacked by data, intelligence, and interaction layers, which will help pharma enterprises deliver data, AI-driven personalized engagements across all digital and non-digital touchpoints with all relevant stakeholders, including HCPs, patients, healthcare providers, distribution networks, and more. Agentic AI will play a key role in autonomously orchestrating NBAs, content delivery, and engagement workflows across stakeholders. It will act as an intelligent decision-making layer that continuously learns from HCP and patient interactions and proactively coordinates actions across enterprise functions. By reducing manual handoffs and enabling real-time, context-aware decision-making, agentic AI will help pharma enterprises deliver seamless, compliant, and hyper-personalized experiences at scale.

Delivering on enterprises' vision of not just personalized but also consistent and connected engagement will require the future CRM technology stack to enable technology integration both at an intra-functional level (within sales, marketing, medical affairs, and patient services) and inter-functional level (across commercial, clinical, regulatory, quality, safety, and supply chain functions). For instance, when marketing develops a campaign with scientific claims, the CRM platform's content approval workflow routes the material to medical affairs, which serves as the scientific gatekeeper responsible for validating the content's accuracy. Medical affairs may also consult clinical function to substantiate these claims, ensuring that all promotional materials are evidence-based, compliant, and aligned with internal and regulatory standards before release. These integrations are essential to ensure workflow synchronization across core process capabilities that are operated at the intersection of multiple enterprise functions, as depicted in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3: Inter/Intra-function technology integrations across core CRM process capabilities

Source: Everest Group (2025)



While no single platform currently offers this future CRM technology stack, both incumbents have taken significant steps toward enabling them.

Veeva, with its strong foundation in the process layer, is focused on augmenting the data and intelligence layers through investments in Veeva Link and its AI Partner Program.

Similarly, Salesforce is enhancing its data and intelligence layers through IQVIA partnerships and its Agentforce offering, enabling AI-driven insights and dynamic decision-making across commercial and patient-facing workflows.

Furthermore, both Veeva and Salesforce's visions also account for the inter- and intra-function technology integrations needed in the future CRM technology stack.

Enterprise expectations at each process level

While we previously discussed enterprise expectations from their future CRM platform at a holistic level, we now examine the specific expectations of pharma enterprises from core process capabilities. These expectations, mapped to each capability, are detailed below:

Account management

- The CRM platform should provide a unified, real-time view of each account by integrating and cleansing data from multiple sources, enabling dynamic segmentation based on evolving behaviors and preferences
- It should proactively surface strategic account opportunities and risks using predictive analytics, enabling commercial teams to make timely, data-backed decisions

Call and calendar management

- The CRM platform should provide AI-powered recommendations for optimal engagement times based on HCP/KOL availability, preferences, and historical interaction patterns, improving sales rep productivity, MSL interaction effectiveness, and eventually HCP responsiveness
- The platform should allow field teams to automatically schedule, update, and track calls directly within their calendars, with real-time syncing and compliance-ready logging of activities

Campaign management

- The CRM platform should offer end-to-end visibility into campaign performance with real-time metrics, enabling timely adjustments and improved marketing effectiveness
- It should support dynamic content management, channel optimization, and AI-driven recommendations to enhance precision in targeting and maximize RoI on marketing effort

Content management

- The CRM platform should automate the end-to-end content life cycle – creation, Medical, Legal, and Regulatory (MLR) review, and distribution – using AI/NLP-enabled workflows, ensuring real-time access to tailored content across sales, marketing, and medical affairs functions based on engagement history and behavior
- It should support modular content structures that align with regulatory guidelines and dynamically adapt to the delivery channel (email, WhatsApp, social media, etc.) and target recipient, enabling faster approvals, content reuse, and consistent, compliant messaging

Consent management

- The CRM platform should enable automated, audit-ready consent tracking for HCPs and patients to ensure full compliance with global regulations such as GDPR and local data privacy laws
- The platform should offer a seamless and user-friendly interface for HCPs and patients to manage their consent preferences across all channels, enabling trust and transparency

Copay and financial assistance

- The CRM platform should automate end-to-end benefit verification management by integrating with payer databases and data sources, such as longitudinal patient data, medical records, EHRs, insurance, and pharmacy data, to flag access barriers early in the treatment journey
- It should orchestrate workflows for prior authorizations, copay cards, bridge programs – tracking status, documentation, and patient communications in a compliant, auditable format

Customer data management and profiling

- The CRM platform should consolidate customer data such as demographics, therapeutic area focus, engagement history, and prescribing behavior to generate real-time, AI-driven segmentation and profiles
- It should transform integrated, dynamic customer data into relevant, personalized insights to support targeted engagement strategies across sales, marketing, and medical affairs functions

Event management

- The CRM platform should manage end-to-end event execution – live, virtual, or hybrid – while capturing participant data, queries, and feedback in a centralized, analytics-enabled system
- It should provide real-time engagement metrics, sentiment analysis, and seamless integration with omnichannel and customer 360 modules to facilitate timely, personalized post-event follow-ups

Field coaching

- The CRM platform should support gamified, on-demand training journeys using AI-powered assistants, simulations, and adaptive content to equip sales reps, MSLs, and key account managers with relevant skills and knowledge
- It should deliver personalized learning paths tailored to individual roles, competencies, and performance gaps, ensuring that coaching is targeted, dynamic, and role-specific rather than one-size-fits-all

Inquiry and insights management

- The CRM platform should enable end-to-end, streamlined management of HCP and patient inquiries across channels through automated triage, intelligent routing, and integrated case tracking, ensuring timely and consistent follow-ups
- It should leverage connected knowledge systems, approved content repositories, and AI-driven search to deliver accurate, compliant responses while capturing actionable insights that can inform medical, commercial, and regulatory strategies

Omnichannel engagement

- The CRM platform should enable AI-powered orchestration of personalized interactions across digital and non-digital channels, tailored to stakeholder preferences, behavior, and engagement history
- It should ensure a consistent experience and deliver actionable analytics on channel effectiveness to help teams optimize the timing, format, and mix of engagement

Order and inventory management

- The CRM platform should offer end-to-end visibility into inventory levels, support automated replenishment, and leverage AI-driven demand forecasting to prevent stockouts and ensure inventory control
- It should track order patterns and seamlessly integrate with ERP systems to enable accurate order entry, efficient processing, and real-time order status visibility

Patient adherence

- The CRM platform should provide real-time, AI-driven adherence monitoring (for example, prescription refill patterns, missed doses, medication reminders) by integrating with pharmacy systems, health monitoring applications, and connected devices
- It should automate intelligent nudges, escalate non-adherence cases to care teams, and continuously learn from behavioral patterns to personalize future adherence strategies at scale

Patient support programs

- The CRM platform should enable seamless patient onboarding by integrating eligibility checks and digital consent, while also personalizing journeys to provide a smooth and unified experience across channels
- It should leverage AI to dynamically adapt and deliver educational content based on patient profiles, learning preferences, and engagement patterns – ensuring higher activation and long-term retention

Product information management

- The CRM platform should provide comprehensive product data with insights based on lifecycle stage, prescription trends, competitor analytics, adverse events, and compliance tracking to support informed decision-making
- It should ensure real-time integration with inventory and ERP systems, enabling accurate stock visibility, streamlined operations, and proactive supply-demand planning

Sales reporting

- The CRM platform should provide real-time, interactive, role-based dashboards to help sales leaders track performance, monitor KPIs, and identify growth opportunities
- It should seamlessly integrate data across channels and geographies to enable territory performance benchmarking and support informed, data-driven sales planning

Sample management

- The CRM platform should offer automated tracking of sample inventory, allocation, and distribution with real-time insights to ensure availability and reduce wastage
- It should support AI-based sample forecasting and enable a compliant, streamlined approval process, ensuring adherence to regulatory guidelines for sample handling and reporting

Salesforce effectiveness

- The CRM platform should deliver real-time, AI-powered recommendations and NBAs, enabling sales reps to have the right conversation at the right time, tailored to customers, specialty areas, and engagement history across all commercial functions
- It should support dynamic performance tracking and territory management, enhancing field agility, precision targeting, and overall commercial impact

A roadmap for future CRM platform selection and implementation

Key technology and sourcing considerations influencing CRM platform selection

Enterprise expectations from future CRM platforms are extensive, resulting in a broad set of technology and sourcing considerations that vary across decision-makers. For instance, IT teams typically prioritize data ecosystem integration and robustness of the technology stack to ensure technical flexibility and scalability. Meanwhile, business and procurement stakeholders focus more on AI capabilities and TCO, respectively.

Exhibit 4 captures these technology and sourcing considerations that influence CRM platform selection, along with the priority assigned to each in choosing between Veeva and Salesforce.

Exhibit 4: Technology and sourcing considerations influencing CRM platform selection

Source: Everest Group (2025)

● Technology considerations ● Other considerations

Decreasing order of influence in choosing between **Veeva and Salesforce**

1 Regulatory compliance	2 Ease of platform customization	3 TCO	4 Intuitive and user-friendly UI/UX
5 Integration across enterprise functions	6 Robustness of technology infrastructure	7 Integration with third-party data ecosystem	8 Ease of migration and change management
9 Maturity of AI recommendations and intelligent insights	10 Partner ecosystem and third-party technology integration	11 Content management capabilities	12 Vision of their future CRM

While all parameters are considered, it is evident that some have limited influence in final decision-making when evaluating between Veeva and Salesforce. For example, vision of future CRM, both providers have articulated forward-looking ambitions but the industry is placing limited emphasis on this factor, as organizations are focused on making decisions in the near term. The uncertainty around how long-term roadmaps will translate into actionable capabilities makes this parameter less impactful, contributing to its relatively lower rating. Similarly, although intuitive and user-friendly UI/UX ranks high as a decision-making parameter, both Veeva and Salesforce are viewed as comparable and generally intuitive with similar strengths and trade-offs unlike other decision-making parameters.

What is clear is that enterprises are not willing to wait indefinitely when it comes to migration – 66% plan to migrate within the next 24 months. To support pharma enterprises in the decision-making, we have developed a structured framework to apply the decision-making parameters to real-world platform choices – specifically between Veeva and Salesforce. While initial preferences often shape aspirational platform choices, pharma enterprises ultimately need a platform that aligns with their immediate priorities and operational realities. Recognizing that current CRM platforms do not fully meet pharma's future expectations, the decision-making framework highlights trade-offs and relative strengths across each parameter, without presenting any obvious choice. As shown in Exhibit 5, this approach enables stakeholders to logically weigh ambition against practicality and make a decision grounded in the organization's actual needs – not just its ideal vision.

For example, options for the total cost of ownership include:

- "A platform with lower upfront licensing cost is appealing to us, even if it leads to higher ongoing service fees."
- "A platform with a higher upfront licensing fee is appealing to us if it leads to lower long-term service and maintenance costs."

This structure ensures that no option is clearly better, encouraging a more balanced and thoughtful decision.

Exhibit 5: CRM platform selection framework – Veeva versus Salesforce

Source: Everest Group (2025)

Decision-making parameter	Evaluating benefits vs trade-offs Choose one	
Customizability and regulatory fit	A platform that allows for deployment of customized solutions, even if it means working with basic out-of-the-box compliance features	A platform with strong in-built compliance and regulatory controls is a priority for us, even if it limits our ability to customize solutions
Technology robustness and domain-specificity	A robust technology stack with advanced AI and analytics is a key factor for us, even if it means having fewer life sciences-specific services	A platform that provides a life sciences-specific suite of services, even if it has fewer AI capabilities, primarily focused on sales and marketing
Partner ecosystem (services, marketing automation, and analytics and AI tools) and third-party integration	A platform that integrates seamlessly with a wide range of industry-agnostic technology partners (such as document management and productivity tools) while providing numerous pre-built applications and native integrations	A platform that partners with specialized firms in life sciences (such as content providers and CROs), even if it requires middleware or custom integrations to connect with other systems
Content management, specifically intelligent Digital Asset Management (DAM) and modular content management	A platform that integrates easily with third-party or homegrown life sciences CMS/DAM tools giving us the flexibility of choice, even if its own CMS capabilities are more general-purpose	A platform with a built-in, life sciences-specific CMS that supports content creation, MLR review, archival, and distribution with modular content capabilities
TCO	A platform with lower upfront licensing cost is appealing to us, even if it leads to higher ongoing service fees	A platform with a higher upfront licensing fee is appealing to us if it leads to lower long-term service and maintenance costs
Data ecosystem (types of data sets: KOL, patient, RWE)	A platform that enables integration with external data sources such as HCP, KOL, patient data, and competitive/market intelligence is more important to us than one that offers built-in datasets	A platform with built-in KOL, HCP, and patient data that is easily accessible across modules is preferable, even if it provides less competitive and market intelligence data
Existing level of CRM investment and change management / ease of migration	• Current platform approach for the different functions (commercial, medical, clinical, regulatory, safety) – one platform for all functions or best of breed (basis functions) • Current platform – Veeva or Salesforce or others • Extent of geographical adoption – global or major markets (NA, EU) or emerging markets (ME, APAC, LATAM)	

Close to 62% of pharma enterprises indicate a preference for unified CRM platform while picking their future CRM platform of choice.

The parameter existing level of investment and change management / ease of migration is relatively complex as compared to others, as the intricacies in handling platform migration and change management can vary significantly basis the existing platform investment and extent of adoption across enterprise functions and geographies.

To effectively assess this parameter, pharma enterprises should evaluate current platform investment of different enterprise functions across three layers:

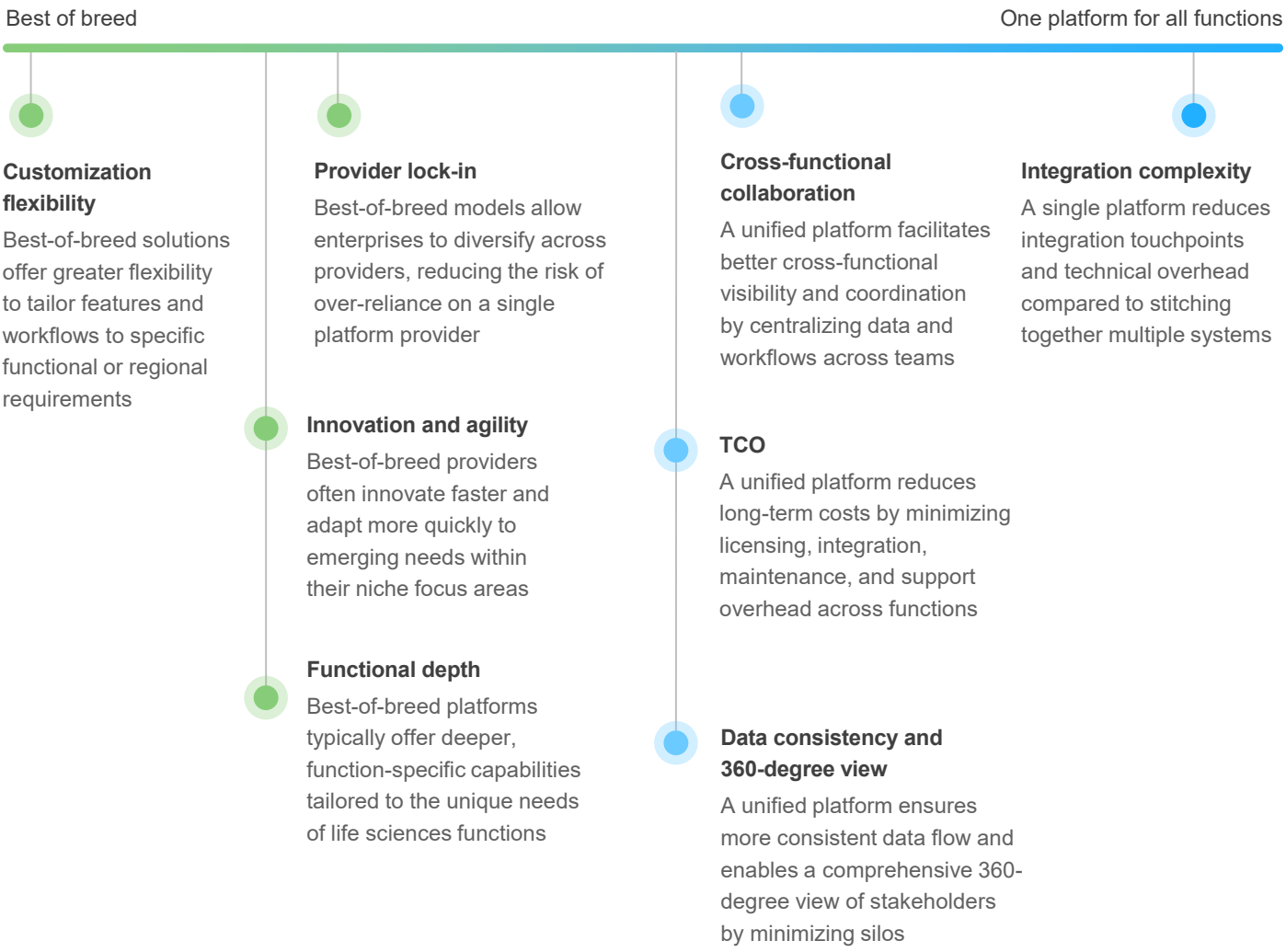
- **Platform strategy:** whether the organization follows a unified platform approach or a best-of-breed model
- **Platform choice:** whether Veeva, Salesforce, or alternative solutions
- **Geographical adoption:** the extent of platform deployment across global, major, or emerging markets

Best-of-breed versus unified CRM platform

One other debated consideration in this decision-making process is the architectural approach – whether to adopt a best-of-breed model or consolidate on a single, unified platform. 62% of pharma enterprises indicate a preference for one CRM platform for all functions while picking their future CRM platform of choice. While some enterprises seek the depth and flexibility of best-of-breed systems, others prioritize the simplicity and integration benefits of a unified platform, depending on their specific context and requirements. The trade-offs between best-of-breed versus one-platform-for-all approach across key parameters are illustrated in Exhibit 6.

Exhibit 6: Best-of-breed versus one-platform-for-all approach

Source: Everest Group (2025)



Key success factors to drive enterprise-wide adoption

After selecting the platform and architectural approach, smooth change management is just as essential to ensure seamless enterprise-wide adoption and minimize disruption to critical business operations. Effective change management requires coordinated efforts across the entire life cycle – planning, execution, and monitoring. Each stage plays a critical role in not only driving adoption across functions, but also for maximizing long-term RoI. To better understand what can help pharma enterprises drive successful change, Exhibit 7 highlights the key success factors for effective change management, along with their relative importance.

Exhibit 7: Key success factors for smooth change management

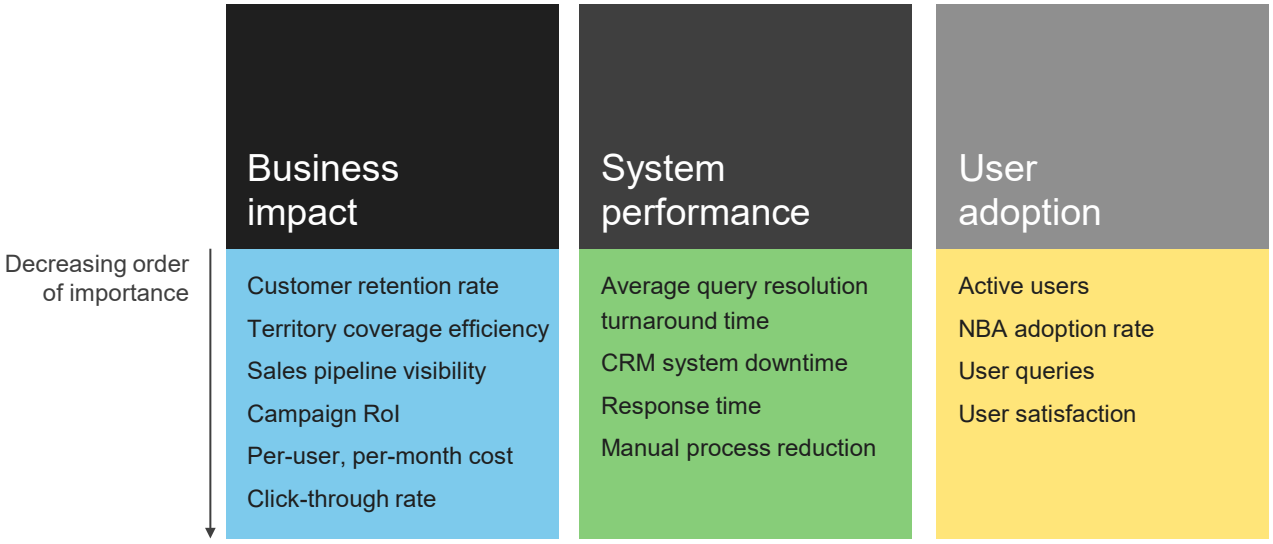
Source: Everest Group (2025)

Strategy	Define a clear CRM adoption roadmap aligned with business objectives, ensuring stakeholder buy-in and phased implementation
Training	Provide role-based training programs to help teams quickly adapt to the new CRM platform, minimizing inefficiencies and ensuring seamless adoption
Regulatory compliance	Ensure regulatory adherence through built-in compliance checks, audit trails, and automated data governance
Data migration	Implement data cleansing and validation to ensure seamless migration from legacy systems without loss or duplication
System integration	Ensure the new CRM seamlessly integrates with existing infrastructure without causing disruptions to ongoing operations by leveraging middleware platforms, pre-built connectors, and phased integration strategies
Continuous improvement	Use AI-powered insights, such as user adoption trends, sentiment analysis, and behavioral data, to refine CRM workflows, optimize user experience, and adapt to evolving business needs
Performance monitoring	Establish KPI-driven dashboards to track CRM adoption, effectiveness, and performance in real time
Support	Implement a structured user query resolution system to ensure timely support, reduce resistance, and enhance CRM adoption

Among the various key success factors, performance monitoring stands as both essential and nuanced. Identifying the right KPIs to accurately reflect adoption, usability, and business impact can be complex, but getting this right is key to tracking progress and enabling continuous improvement. To bring clarity to this challenge, Exhibit 8 identifies the KPIs that can help pharma enterprises in measuring the successful implementation and adoption of a future CRM platform.

Exhibit 8: KPIs to measure the successful implementation and adoption of future CRM platform

Source: Everest Group (2025)



Conclusion

As pharma enterprises navigate the post Veeva-Salesforce era, CRM transformation has shifted from an option to a strategic imperative. The shift toward personalized and omnichannel engagement demands that current CRM platforms evolve from static, sales-centric tools into agile platforms that serve all stakeholders. While readiness levels vary, the momentum to modernize is clear. Success will depend on translating intent into timely, coordinated action. Enterprises that act decisively today will be better positioned to lead tomorrow's CRM transformation, enabling smarter, more connected, and impactful engagement across the stakeholder journey.

Everest Group®
With you on the journey

Everest Group is a leading research firm helping business leaders make confident decisions. We guide clients through today's market challenges and strengthen their strategies by applying contextualized problem-solving to their unique situations. This drives maximized operational and financial performance and transformative experiences. Our deep expertise and tenacious research focused on technology, business processes, and engineering through the lenses of talent, sustainability, and sourcing delivers precise and action-oriented guidance. Find further details and in-depth content at www.everestgrp.com.

This study was funded, in part, by Cognizant

For more information about Everest Group, please contact:

+1-214-451-3000

info@everestgrp.com

For more information about this topic please contact the author(s):

Manu Aggarwal, Partner
manu.aggarwal@everestgrp.com

Abhishek Singh, Partner
abhishek.singh@everestgrp.com

Chunky Satija, Vice President
chunky.satija@everestgrp.com

Durga Ambati, Practice Director
durga.ambati@everestgrp.com

M Mihir, Senior Analyst
m.mihir@everestgrp.com

Rushil Goel, Analyst
rushil.goel@everestgrp.com

Notice and Disclaimers

Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSH) engineers modern businesses. We help our clients modernize technology, reimagine processes and transform experiences so they can stay ahead in our fast-changing world. Together, we're improving everyday life. See how at **www.cognizant.com** or @cognizant.

World Headquarters

300 Frank W. Burr Blvd.
Suite 36, 6th Floor
Teaneck, NJ 07666 USA
Phone: +1 201 801 0233
Fax: +1 201 801 0243
Toll Free: +1 888 937 3277

European Headquarters

280 Bishopsgate
London
EC2M 4RB
Phone: +44 207 297 7600

India Operations Headquarters

5/535, Okkiam Thoraipakkam,
Old Mahabalipuram Road,
Chennai 600 096
Tel: 1-800-208-6999
Fax: +91 (01) 44 4209 6060

APAC Headquarters

1 Fusionopolis Link, Level 5
NEXUS@One-North, North Tower
Singapore 138542
Phone: +65 6812 4000

WF 3610554