The New Rules of HCP Engagement

Connecting pharma and HCPs through flexible, two-way communication

Veeva

While digital engagement has opened new doors for interacting with healthcare professionals (HCPs), it has also created questions about how and when to use each channel with customers. Due to individual HCP preferences, it's often challenging for pharma reps to determine the best engagement strategies for each HCP. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for engaging with doctors, but personalization of communication is a top factor in doctor satisfaction with pharma.[1]

It's time for pharma companies to rethink engagement and respond to HCPs on demand. Using digital tools and two-way communication enables pharma and HCPs to stay connected in a new, compliant way.

CHAPTER 1
Shifting engagement preferences

The shift to omnichannel—tailoring customer interactions across multiple channels to match HCPs' profile-specific needs[2]—affects how pharma teams operate and measure performance.

This shift is compounded by the fact that HCP expectations for engagement are changing. For example, 87% of HCPs say they want all virtual or a mix of virtual and in-person meetings with pharma representatives even in the post-pandemic era.[3]

Because of these changes, companies find traditional one-way push communication models initiated by pharma reps are less effective. In a recent report, 66% of respondents said companies would move away from the traditional sales rep model due to the perceived low return on investment.[4]

Therefore, pharma companies must complement push communication by adding a pull strategy, a new approach that enables two-way communication and empowers HCPs to get the information they need, when they need it.

87% of HCPs say they want all virtual or a mix of virtual and in-person meetings with pharma representatives.

1 "Doctors' changing expectations of pharma are here to stay," BCG, September 2021.
2 "Omnichannel engagement in pharma—key success factors and case examples," L.E.K. May 2021.
3 "Is COVID-19 altering how pharma engages with HCPs?" Accenture, August 2020.
4 "A new operating model for pharma: How the pandemic has influenced priorities," McKinsey, December 2021.

Supporting digital native HCPs

The demographic makeup of HCPs is an essential consideration when it comes to communication preferences. Today, 70% of HCPs are digital natives.[5] These physicians have varying preferences, and specific segments are now turning to digital channels for primary information sources. As such, pharma companies must be flexible in engaging with HCPs based on their preferences and business needs.

❝

Physicians are increasingly open to digital communication, with more than 70% of HCPs now identifying as digital natives.

70%

DIGITAL NATIVES PREFER TO:

➜ **Turn to digital sources for information first**

➜ **Control the information they consume**

➜ **Trust peers' opinions**

➜ **Generate social and other content, serve as influencers, and potential advocates**

➜ **Participate in high-quality digital interactions**

---
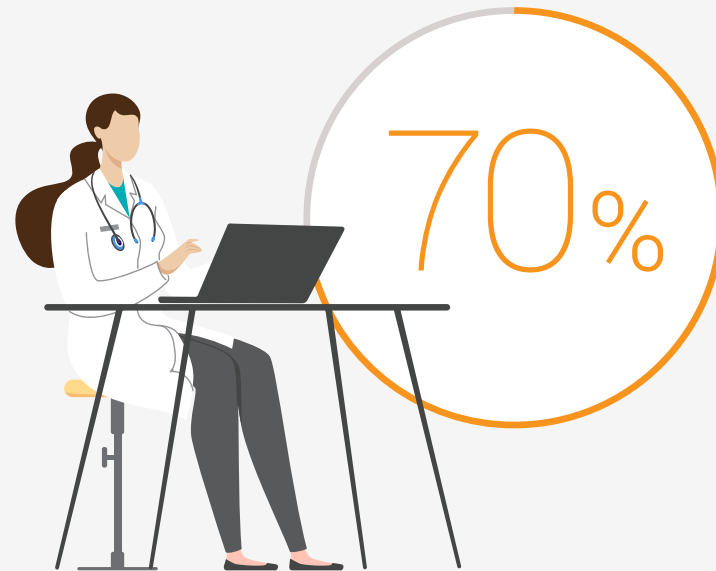
[5] "Intelligent HCP engagement in Europe," Veeva, 2018.

Changing HCP expectations

Whether HCPs are digital natives or not, their needs and behaviors are changing, but pharma doesn't always meet their expectations. Here are some of the challenges HCPs report when engaging with pharma:

< 20% of HCPs find messages personalized to their needs[6]	**16%** prefer medical education, but only 9% receive this content[7]	**89%** of HCPs want to access meetings online[8]

Of course, most pharma companies believe they are trying to relate to HCPs according to their preferences, but the data suggests there is room for improvement. With each pharma company managing its own tools, portals, channels, and applications, the reality is that it's becoming more challenging for HCPs to find the relevant, personalized information they need.

An additional challenge for HCPs is maintaining current contacts for each brand they interact with. When HCPs need timely information between meetings and events, it's often difficult to determine which field reps and companies to contact.

Given the numerous changes in HCP demographics, preferences, business needs, expectations, and behaviors, it's time to shift the pharma engagement paradigm and enable pull communication.

Enabling flexible engagement

Adding a pull strategy enables two-way digital engagement with healthcare professionals. You provide the content and a solution for HCPs to reach out to you for information when they need it. Of course, pull works best as part of an established relationship, and building relationships and understanding what your HCPs need[9] to know is central to your success.

Recently, companies have recognized that they need to adapt their communications to HCPs for a more human and personalized concierge-like experience. Generally, a pull model helps meet HCP needs because it enables convenient interaction between HCPs and medical science liaisons (MSLs) or pharma sales reps.

"

Moving from a traditional push to a pull model means being where our customers already are, engaging them with valuable and relevant content that's specific to their clinical practice, in the locations they're already interacting with content.

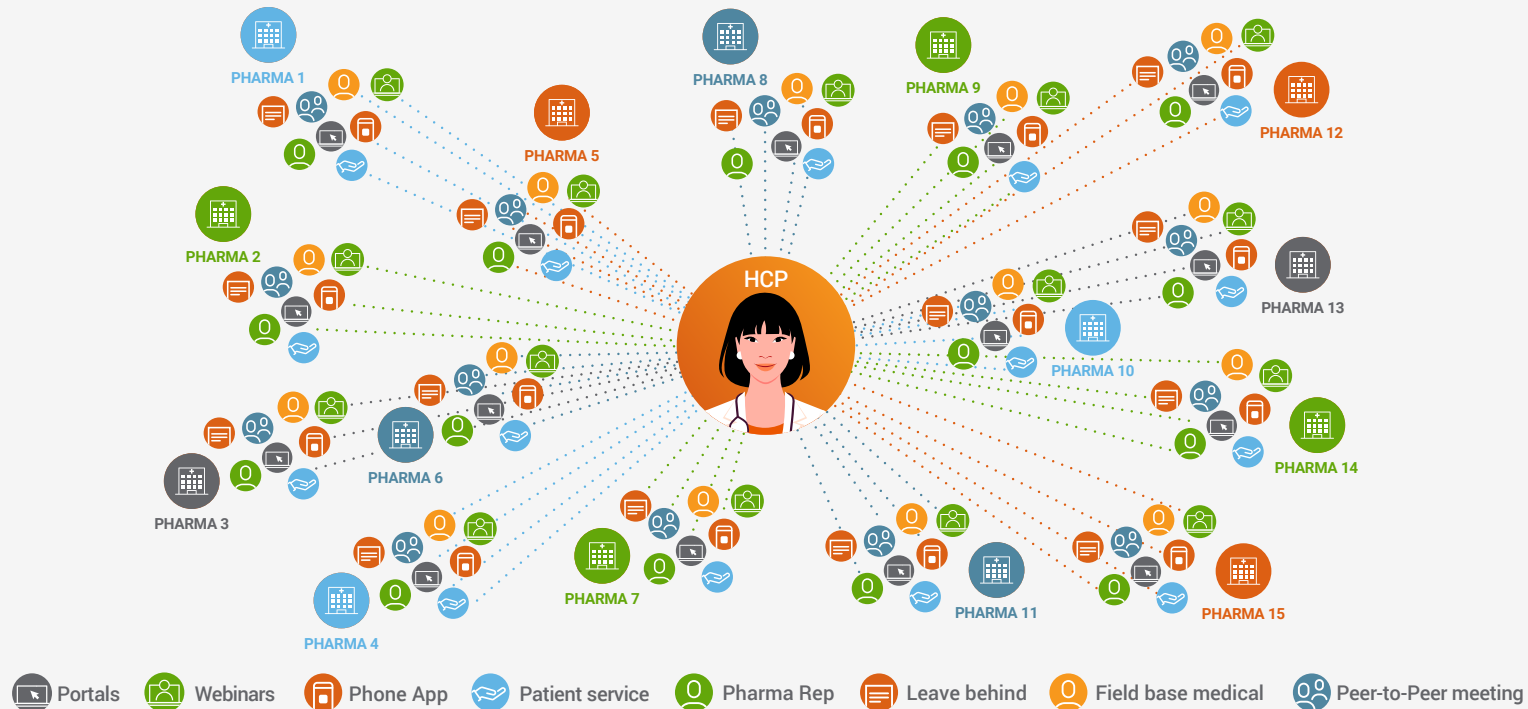Alex Day, Innovation and Business Excellence Director, AstraZeneca

HCPs are no different from most of us, with regards to how they communicate personally and professionally. When interacting with pharma companies, they want flexible, convenient communications and to easily search and send text requests. However, maintaining their privacy and ensuring personal and professional separation may prevent HCPs from texting their pharma contacts.

Given patient care and other professional demands, it comes as no surprise that many HCPs find it challenging to schedule face-to-face meetings. That's why physicians want pharma to provide a range of digital engagement tools, including virtual chat (36%) and apps (34%).[10] You can build trust and sustain your relationships by listening and responding to HCPs' communication preferences.

---

[9] "How biopharma leaders are shifting to hybrid engagement," Veeva, July 2021.
[10] AbelsonTaylor/Veeva report: "Physicians are adjusting to COVID-era uncertainty, but want support from pharma," MM+M, July 2020.

FINDING RELEVANT INFORMATION IS COMPLEX

Portals · **Webinars** · **Phone App** · **Patient service** · **Pharma Rep** · **Leave behind** · **Field base medical** · **Peer-to-Peer meeting**

> 66
>
> *The holy grail is being multichannel—using all of the devices in our reach. This will give HCPs more flexibility in how and when they decide to engage with companies and reps. Ultimately, the goal should be to make it easier for HCPs to get the information they need through the right combination of channels. It's also critical to provide HCPs with a way for them to raise their hand to initiate the dialogue.*[11]

Dr. Dolores Corbacho, Povisa Hospital, Spain

[11] "A cross-cultural lens on going digital: The physician viewpoint," MedAd News, June 2021.

CHAPTER 3
Reimagining HCP engagement

Companies can use pull engagement, including on-demand information and meetings, a new approach to content, and a CRM system fit for omnichannel, to make it easier for doctors to quickly find the people, information, and services they need. With a greater focus on customer-centricity, two-way engagement allows HCPs to connect with experts, request samples, and find patient-facing materials online instantly. This approach means being available when doctors need pharma most, making it more efficient to get the right treatments into patients' hands.

As you rethink your approach to HCP engagement, you can meet their expectations by using digital solutions to connect in a compliant industry-wide pull channel. Recently, COVID-19 reset customer expectations, and everyone—including HCPs—became more digitally-savvy as a matter of necessity.[12] Combining virtual and in-person engagement, a new hybrid model represents an opportunity for commercial pharma and medical teams to reimagine and optimize working methods, from planning meetings to creating relevant online journeys. Fortunately, digital solutions can help ease the transition to working in a hybrid world.
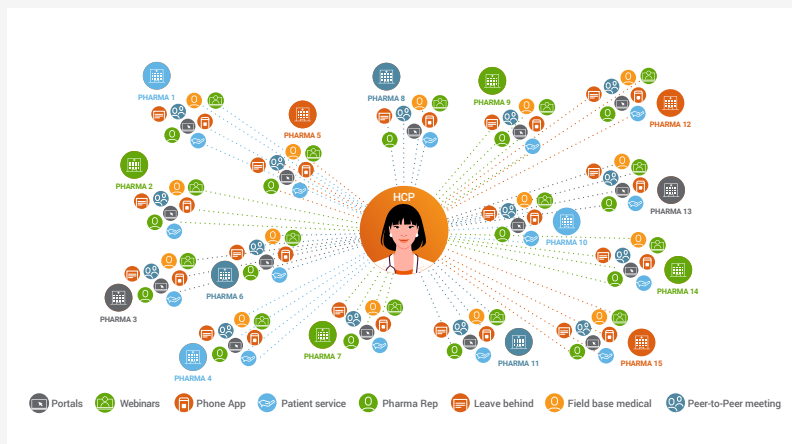
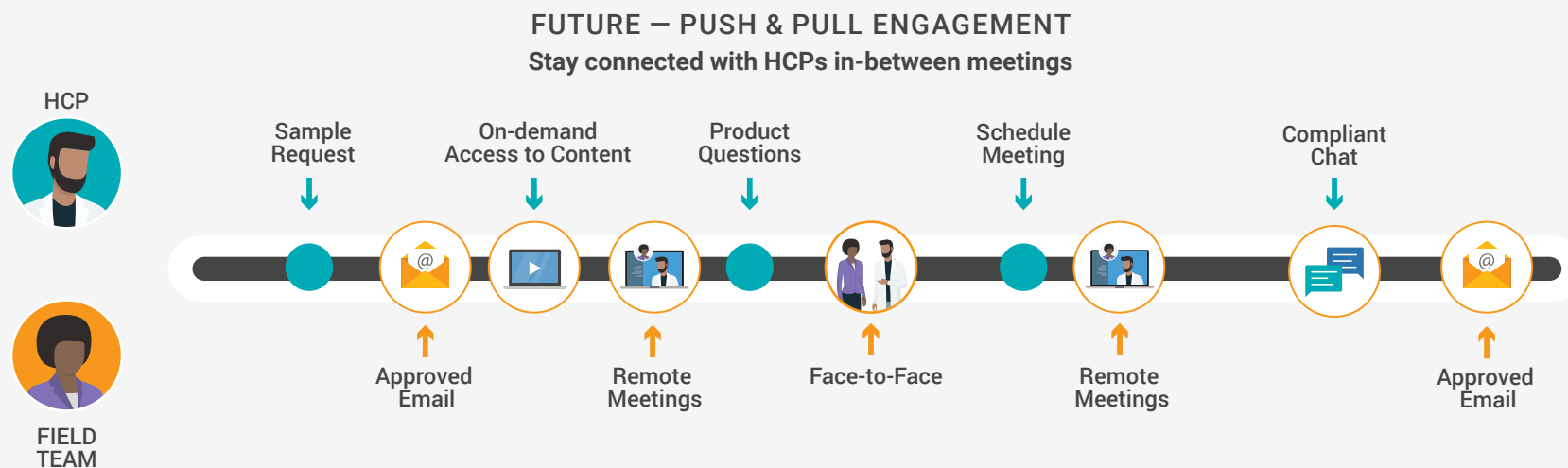[12] "Emerging trends in global HCP engagement," Veeva Pulse Report, 2021.

> **"**
>
> *Pull strategy allows real-time, bi-directional interaction between HCPs and MSLs, or pharmaceutical sales reps, and helps increase engagement with underserved or hard-to-reach HCPs. That way, we avoid missed opportunities and can share compliant content when and how physicians want it.[13]*
>
> Deborah Sullivan, Director of Field Force Automation, Sanofi

A single industry-wide pull channel for pharma and HCPs to message, meet, request, and share content and services offers many benefits. For example, it creates opportunities for pharma to build new relationships with HCPs and engage with them according to their preferences.

Stay connected with HCPs

For pharma teams, staying connected with busy, hard-to-reach HCPs can be challenging in-between meetings. It often requires a lot of back and forth and may even result in no meeting.

FUTURE — PUSH & PULL ENGAGEMENT
Stay connected with HCPs in-between meetings

HCP

Sample Request

On-demand Access to Content

Product Questions

Schedule Meeting

Compliant Chat

FIELD TEAM

Approved Email

Remote Meetings

Face-to-Face

Remote Meetings

Approved Email

---

[13] "How biopharma leaders are shifting to hybrid engagement," Veeva, July 2021.

Digital solutions provide the missing piece in your omnichannel pull strategy puzzle. They are particularly well suited to in-between interactions, such as sample requests, product questions, and scheduling meetings. You can use digital channels, an essential part of your pull strategy, to build relationships with HCPs and help them find the relevant information they need.

Everyone wants HCPs to have easy on-demand access to pharma commercial teams and brands so they can spend more of their time on essential patient care. In an ideal world, HCPs have access to timely self-service and compliant educational materials. They can also access a solution to search for and connect with field reps and MSLs, initiate compliant chats, request samples, and schedule and join meetings.

Setting up a meeting does not have to be complex. HCPs should be able to see pharma reps' availability—across commercial teams and brands— via an online solution and select their preferred meeting format (video, phone, or in-person) and schedule a convenient meeting time.

The bottom line is that HCPs need an efficient, convenient, and modern connection to pharma based on their needs. One solution to the problem is an integrated scheduling capability that streamlines the entire process, making it faster and easier to connect than ever before.

Rethinking your content approach

Having the right content is a critical element for developing your pull strategy. Here are three essential content considerations:

Relevance
There's no mystery regarding the types of content HCPs require in this on-demand world. Ultimately, it comes down to providing relevant content that adds value. If you provide valuable content, you will increase your opportunities for engagement and may even see HCPs reach out for more.

Speed
Pull engagement strategies require faster content creation and review to provide the personalized content HCPs seek. That's why brands embrace new modular content strategies that help them quickly deliver and repurpose compliant, personalized content across markets, channels, and regions.

Quality
Less is often more when it comes to engaging with HCPs. There's value in focusing on quality content over quantity.

Are you ready for a push and pull model?

4 QUESTIONS TO GAUGE YOUR READINESS

1.	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**
Can HCPs easily find your product information when they need it?	Can HCPs easily request samples and materials?	Are your field teams able to stay connected with HCPs between in-person meetings in a compliant way?	Can HCPs initiate contact with you and other reps to schedule meetings at their convenience?

Next steps

HCPs' preferences have shifted, making push communication less effective. Many HCPs are adapting to new ways of working with digital tools. But the landscape is still fairly complex, with each pharma company managing its own tools, portals, channels, and applications, resulting in varying levels of HCP engagement. Pull communication and digital solutions can help you increase access and engagement with HCPs and deliver the experiences they expect.

To help you meet the dynamic needs of HCPs and build engagement, learn more about Veeva CRM Engage.