

The Future of Commercial Innovation in a Global Multichannel Marketplace



In an increasingly global marketplace, the challenge facing life sciences companies to harmonise their operations for maximum efficiency is greater than ever. This growth in commercial opportunities is paralleled by an explosion in communication channels between healthcare organisations and stakeholders.

Veeva Systems recently hosted an industry roundtable at its European Commercial Summit to share perspectives on how life sciences leaders are using data and technology to meet growth objectives and strengthen relationships with a diverse and growing global customer and patient base.

Each discussion focused on disruptive innovations shaping life sciences, and how to turn regulatory realities into competitive advantage. Panellists debated how a new drug's route from laboratories to hospitals is being transformed by rapid developments in technology. Experts agreed that the companies that will gain advantage tomorrow are recruiting smart data collectors today. From improving compliance and reputation through transparency reporting to optimising customer interactions, enterprise-wide data analytics are at the centre of a variety of efforts to unlock new value in the global sales and marketing of new therapies.

Business Transformation as the Digital World Takes Over and Emphasis Settles on the End Customer

The dialogue centred on the pivotal question of whether life sciences companies need to radically reinvent themselves in order to gain competitive advantage in today's multichannel global environment. Across all industries, companies will benefit from quickly harnessing the power of emerging communication channels to better engage customers, gain more insight, and identify new efficiency savings. Can today's life sciences companies use digital advancements such as data analytics and social media to facilitate more effective exchanges with stakeholders and meet the unmet needs of patients?

For Nestle Nutrition, a leading supplier of natal and antenatal health products, the business challenge is to remain focused on the end customer, while navigating changing regulatory environments and a head-spinning number of new digital and non-digital engagement and communication channels. In response, the company put compliance and transparency at the heart of the company's commercial and IT strategy for 2015 and beyond as this is part of the company's DNA, and is migrating to a cloud-based enterprise environment that integrates commercial interactions, data, and content platforms, providing a single snapshot of customer interactions.

Dirk Abeel, global performance development manager at Nestlé Nutrition, believes, "In a business like ours, face-to-face interactions between a company representative and healthcare professionals remain the most effective marketing channel. But we know HCPs are time crunched and facing information overload. At the same time, the parameters of our marketing are continually being tweaked and influenced by new regulations. To effectively differentiate ourselves among HCPs, we need a clear idea of when and how our customers prefer to be approached, and to easily access records of every customer interaction, to allow us to better serve them."

Raj Wickramasinghe, life sciences lead for SaaS in Accenture's CRM business, agreed that life sciences marketers are making a necessary shift from masters of the message to managers of data and analysts of insight. "Brand marketing is getting much more cross-functional, sometimes reaching back almost into the discovery stages to inform positioning and market-entry strategy. Global brand management is really about insight gathering, strategy setting, and data mining."

Using Analytics to Put the End Customer at the Centre of Commercial Strategy

Through the widespread adoption of cloud computing, data mining has already grown exponentially, and over

the last few years the life sciences industry has discovered many new and profitable uses for data analytics. Insight is driving improvements in everything from clinical trial management to marketing plans, and from quality control to regulatory compliance. How will Big Data drive commercial innovation in 2015?

There was strong consensus among the panellists that the declining contact with front-line doctors and increased pressure to get new drugs to market quickly put customers and trial data analytics at the heart of commercial strategy for life sciences companies.

"The decline in one-on-one brand-physician relationships can teach us something important as an industry," said Abeel. "Even putting regulatory restrictions to one side, HCPs are not willing to make time to meet with company reps who simply regurgitate messages. Physicians want us to engage them in an intelligent conversation about their patients' needs. Too many companies still follow the old approach in their HCP communications."

Data analytics, he argues, allows commercial strategists to "change this paradigm, this tendency, by really taking healthcare providers seriously. We can use data to understand what physicians are looking for. What are they expecting from us? What channels do they use to research new therapies? If we can use aggregated customer data to answer these questions, as a company, we can begin the shift from product provider to solutions provider."

According to Jan van den Burg, vice president of commercial systems at Veeva, this shift will require a significant change in marketing managers' mindset, and in the CRM and data analytics systems that support their cross-functional collaboration and decision-making. A life sciences sales rep with a full view of the customer, for example, can effectively coordinate what information goes to which customer through what channels, when and, importantly, based on a customer-centric engagement strategy. That is not to say that sales determine

the marketing plan. Instead, the informed multichannel sales rep can serve as a “solutions provider” – with the ability to provide physicians with the information they require through the channels they frequent.

The result is a sales rep who takes into account physician preferences and builds a useful, personal relationship through a mix of communication channels. Each communication will be more impactful and more likely to be consumed, whether it's a personal email, an online detail, or a face-to-face interaction. With each positive experience, the physician is more receptive to communications from the rep in the future.

Talking to End Patients in the Digital World

As social media grows in ubiquity, it is an increasingly important channel for reaching physicians and engaging them about therapies. The official hashtag of the 2014 American Congress of Oncology generated 39,000 tweets over the five-day meeting – an increase of nearly 4,000% compared with the 979 tweets sent at the 2010 congress. Although many life sciences brands have been wary of venturing into social media, as more physicians use Twitter and other platforms to communicate professionally, how is pharma keeping its voice in the conversation about its therapies?

Tim White, senior director and head of global customer interaction of Lundbeck, which develops therapies to improve the quality of life of people suffering from brain diseases, sees social media as a game-changer in how life sciences companies build relationships with partners, customers, and patients.

“Social media means we are no longer the only source of information about our therapies, and this is a very powerful shift,” said White. “The stories our patients and customers are telling about our brands online are, in many ways, more important than what we're saying about them. They expect us to be present online, and somehow part of the dialogue.” This, he said, has led to a greater demand for companies to be present and responsive online. A customer's ability to call, click, like, follow, or visit should not be mistaken for an optimised approach to digital customer communication. Many life sciences companies are still hard-pressed to deliver a seamless and consistent customer

experience. Although the industry is moving toward integrated technology platforms that effectively support multiple communication channels, incorporating social media is an additional challenge. According to van den Burg, cloud-based content management systems are among the tools the industry is using to manage communications with customers and stakeholders. When integrated with CRM and data platforms, companies can gather an accurate view of what information customers and their patients need from the company.

As instant cross-platform mobile messaging apps such as WhatsApp grow in popularity, establishing a compelling and holistic multichannel customer journey will be critical to success. Panellists agree that pharma needs to fully embrace integrated, cloud-based content, data, and CRM to enhance customer and patient communications. Ultimately, whether delivered face-to-face or online, useful real-time information will engage HCPs, build trust among patient groups, and help life sciences companies establish their voice in the multiple, multichannel, global conversations taking place about their therapies.

Customer-outcome Focus Causes Patient Engagement and Services to Grow

As patient groups form cross-border networks online, many life sciences companies are mirroring these efforts and experimenting with new patient engagement teams. With the growth of speciality pharma and a shift toward outcomes-based reimbursement, leading drug makers are realigning research, sales, and marketing resources to build networks of patients, payers, healthcare professionals, and life sciences stakeholders. The question remains, is patient engagement a new way to create value, or just the latest in a long line of pharma marketing buzzwords?

“Patient engagement has always been a priority for Janssen and the industry. The better we understand the patient journey, the better we can serve our primary customer – the physician,” said Michel Baes, vice president of marketing operations, customer orientation, and transformation at Janssen. “Those companies working in heavily researched, rapidly developing therapy areas like oncology are already seeing the need to stop focusing on product information only, and start offering

patients and physicians holistic solutions – from prevention through to aftercare.”

As 4G and sensor technology grow, the opportunities to gather accurate, context-based data from large patient groups in real time are also changing how life sciences companies approach patient engagement. Some pharma companies are seeking to bring clinicians, payers, and patients together in therapy-specific social networks, online, and through traditional professional conferences and sponsorships, which they hope will result in greater information exchange and data-mining capabilities. There are two technical challenges life sciences companies face when building successful multi-stakeholder therapy-area networks: providing relevant, compliant content, and managing the impending flood of incoming context-based data from customers and patients.

According to van den Burg, forward-thinking life sciences technology leaders are resolving this dual challenge by integrating their CRM and content management systems into a unified cloud-based system that supports a holistic approach to customer engagement and data management. From ensuring all communications are compliant to gathering and analysing customer insight, integrating disparate legacy platforms in the cloud has potential to make big pharma agile and responsive enough to effectively lead global networks of multiple stakeholders around a specific therapy area.

Looking Ahead

The combination of skyrocketing sources of data and the scalable cloud-based technology to manage it all is transforming how the life sciences industry informs customers and uses patient data to develop life-saving therapies. By combining next-generation technology with well-informed brand marketing teams, companies are finding new ways to more holistically engage physicians, patients, clinicians, and payers and enhance these relationships.



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