

# Emerging Trends in Global HCP Engagement

## 2021 Veeva Pulse Report

### Executive Summary: Digital Leads the Way Forward

COVID-19 dramatically accelerated the move to digital channels across nearly every industry. The life sciences sector is no exception. While in-person access to healthcare professionals (HCPs) had already been decreasing, it's become virtually non-existent since the onset of the pandemic.

Yet digital engagement with HCPs—in the form of virtual meetings, email, and online events—not only filled the in-person gap, it's also allowed for deeper, longer conversations between reps and doctors. There's never been a better time for commercial leaders to reimagine the HCP customer experience, with an eye towards improving engagement and rep productivity moving forward.

Veeva's 2020 Global Pulse data gives us insight into how new digital trends are unfolding and highlights the benefits that life sciences companies have experienced since January 2020. We'll take a look at adoption across virtual meetings and email for rep-to-HCP engagement as well as changes in the length of sales calls since COVID-19. The data also sheds light on a major challenge going forward: producing enough relevant content to power continued digital engagement success.

#### HOW HCP ENGAGEMENT CHANGED IN 2020



**6x**

Virtual rep-to-HCP meetings increased 6x



**19min**

Virtual sales call duration averaged 19 minutes



**36%**

Rep-sent emails went up 5x, with 36% average open rate



**4x**

Commercial content volume increased 4x

## About Veeva Pulse

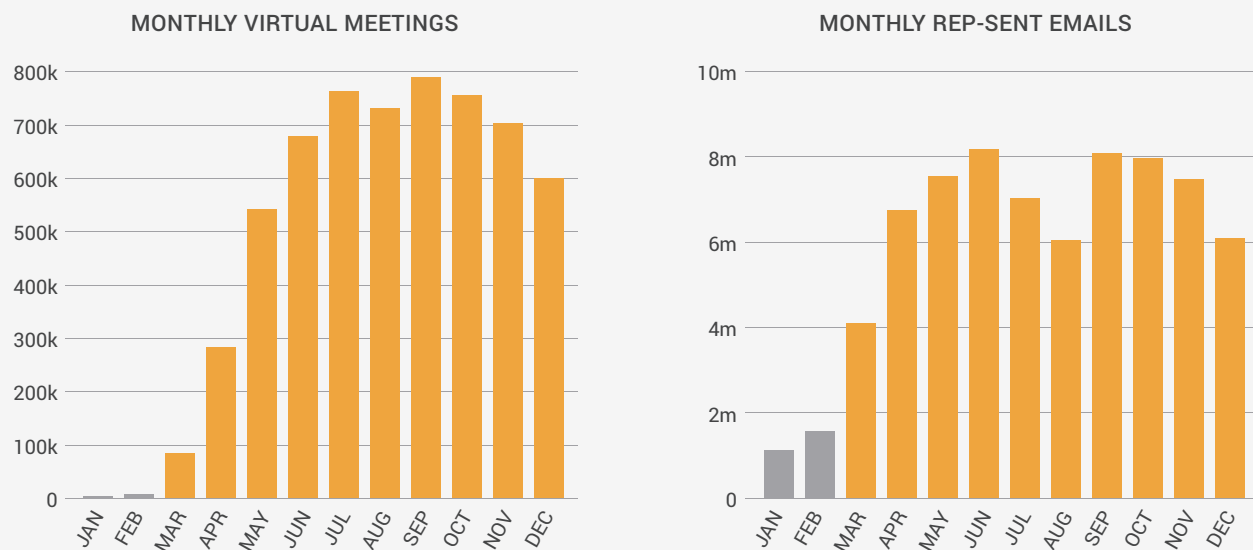
As an industry benchmark, Veeva Pulse data provides a global and local view of HCP engagement across the life sciences industry. The findings presented here are based on hundreds of thousands of field representative activities that were captured in Veeva CRM Engage Meeting and Veeva CRM Approved Emails between January 1 and December 31, 2020.

## Digital engagement sets new records

As COVID-19 unfolded, life sciences companies quickly adapted their selling models to shift away from in-person meetings to reach new heights of digital engagement with HCPs. Veeva Pulse data confirms that the volume of virtual meetings and field email increased substantially in 2020.

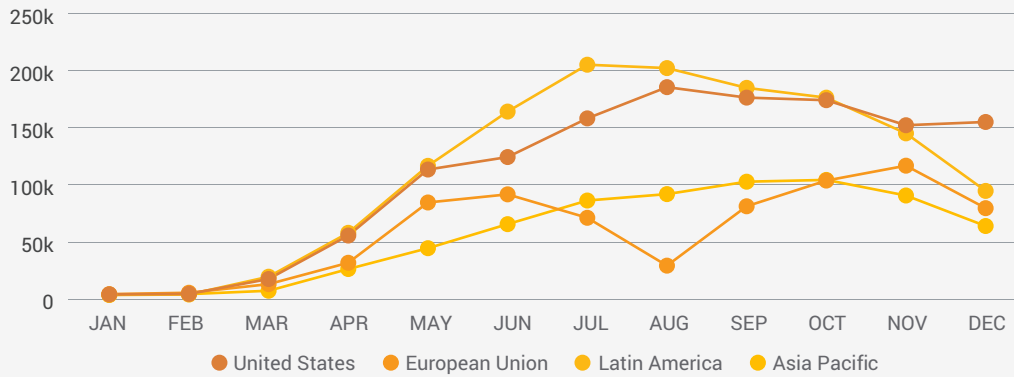
Globally, the use of virtual meetings for rep-to-HCP engagement increased sixfold, while rep-sent emails rose nearly fivefold (see Figure 1). Digital engagement models quickly and rapidly replaced in-person connections, with some areas of the world going from no digital engagement to thousands of meetings and emails in the span of a few months.

**FIGURE 1: COVID-19 ACCELERATES DIGITAL ENGAGEMENTS GLOBALLY**



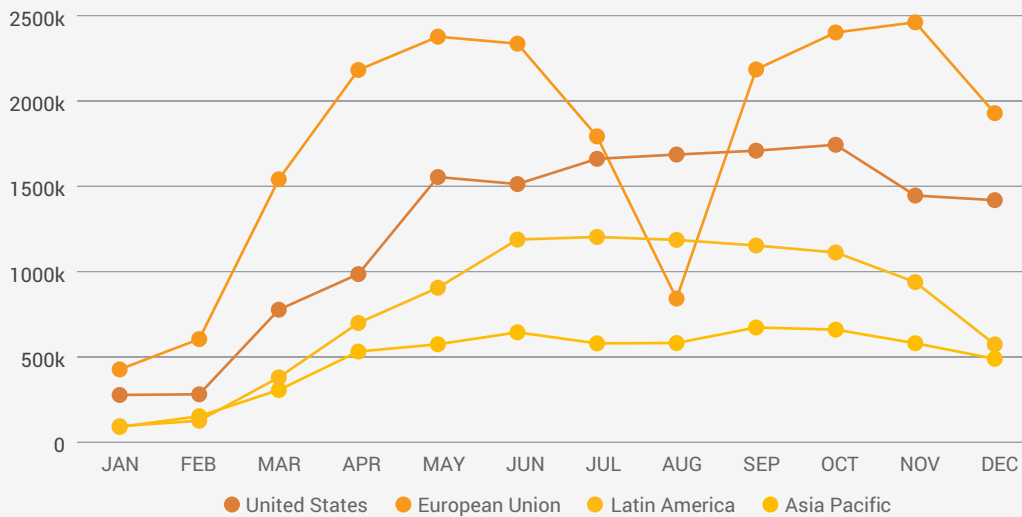
Regionally, the Asia Pacific region saw the greatest expansion in virtual meetings with a 13x increase, followed by the U.S. with 9x, the pre-Brexit European Union (EU) with 8x, and Latin America with 4x (see Figure 2). Some countries experienced more dramatic rises than others. Indonesia, for example, started from no virtual meetings at the beginning of 2020 to grow by 143x throughout the rest of the year.

FIGURE 2: RANKED GROWTH IN VIRTUAL MEETINGS BY REGION



For rep-sent email, Latin America experienced the greatest overall regional boost in volume at 7x, with Asia Pacific following at 6x, the U.S. at 4x, and the EU at 3x (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: RANKED GROWTH IN REP-SENT EMAILS BY REGION



**ACTION PLAN**

Help reps use digital meetings and email effectively to deliver the experiences that HCPs want. One way to do this is by changing how you measure their productivity. Instead of metrics that focus on the number of in-person visits, shift to measuring total HCP touchpoints across all channels. Create coaching and training plans to encourage customer-centric approach by meeting the HCP on their terms.

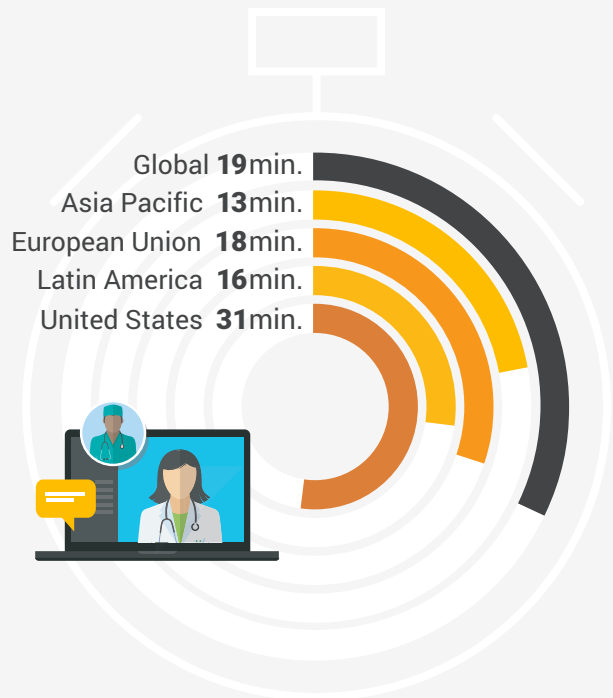
## Virtual meetings facilitate more meaningful discussion

One of the most compelling findings from the Veeva Pulse data is that virtual meetings extended the amount of time HCPs met with reps by a factor of six. At the global level, the duration of virtual sales calls in 2020 since COVID was 19 minutes on average, compared to less than three minutes, on average,<sup>1</sup> for in-person meetings (see Figure 4).

In the U.S., the increase was even more pronounced, with virtual meetings lasting an average of 31 minutes. In the pre-Brexit EU, digital meetings saw an average duration of 18 minutes, Latin America was next at 16 minutes, and then Asia Pacific at 13 minutes on average.

More time to deliver in-depth and meaningful information makes a virtual format a highly effective alternative to in-person meetings for both HCPs and reps. In fact, a recent survey of 720 HCPs found that 87% want either all virtual or a mix of virtual and in-person meetings even after the pandemic ends.<sup>2</sup>

FIGURE 4: AVERAGE MEETING DURATION SINCE COVID (GLOBAL AND REGIONAL)



### ACTION PLAN

Take advantage of deeper engagement and more time for meaningful discussion by ensuring reps have the data they need to understand customers' expectations and needs. A complete and holistic customer profile, including channel preferences, helps reps understand which HCPs are most receptive to digital engagement, blended approaches, or traditional in-person selling. This eliminates the guesswork and makes reps' weekly and monthly planning more efficient and effective.

<sup>1</sup> "The Three-Minute Sales Rep: Optimizing HCP Access," Louella Morton, ReutersEvents, March 2015

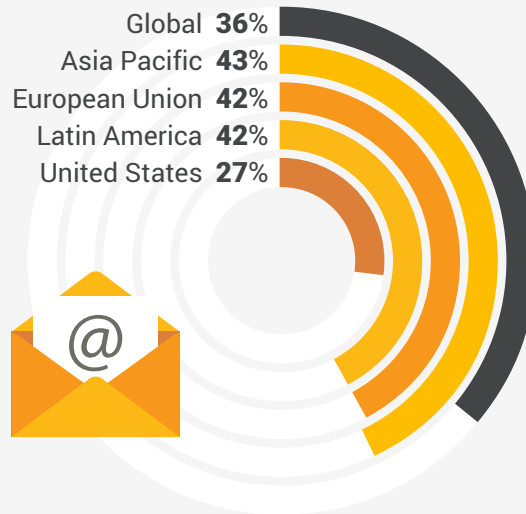
<sup>2</sup> "Is COVID-19 altering how pharma engages with HCPs?" Accenture, August 2020.

## Email is a powerful engagement channel for reps (not just HQ)

As the volume of rep-sent emails increased, so did customer engagement, far surpassing average open rates for emails sent from headquarters. Veeva Pulse data shows that rep-sent emails achieved an average open rate of 36%, in contrast to the 3% average open rate of headquarters emails (see Figure 5). Similar to virtual meetings, rep emails are also finding greater relevance with HCPs, who need and value improved access to information on products and services.

In the U.S., the average email open rate was 27%. Other regions fared even better with Asia Pacific experiencing a 43% average open rate, and the EU and Latin America both seeing a 42% open rate.

FIGURE 5: AVERAGE OPEN RATE FOR REP-SENT EMAILS (GLOBAL AND REGIONAL)



### ACTION PLAN

Encourage your reps to extend their engagement with HCPs by using email to provide relevant, pre-approved, and compliant content. Common opportunities for emails include sending materials as a follow-up to a meeting (whether virtual or in-person), new product indications, and invitations to digital or in-person events.

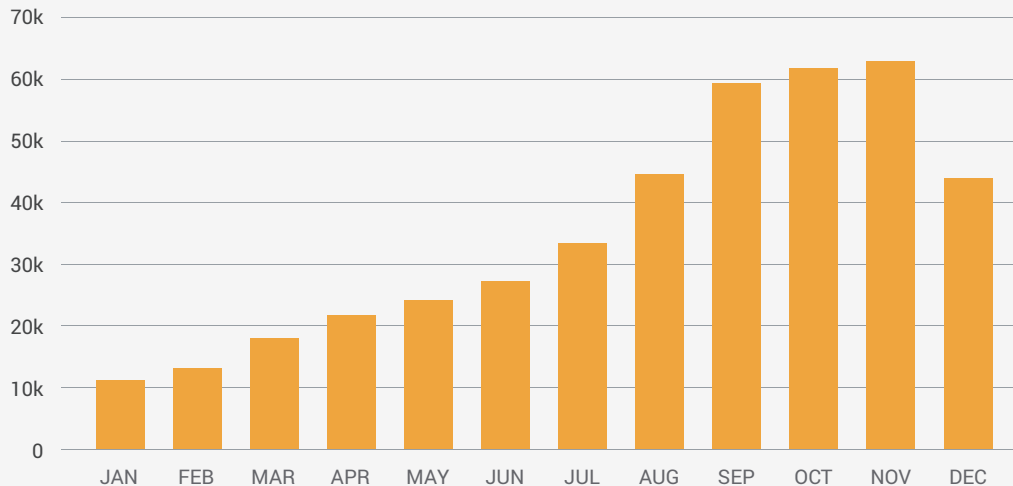
## Digital engagement requires more content, faster

Veeva Pulse data shows that the volume of digital and email content increased more than fourfold between January and December of 2020 (see figure 6). And it's no wonder: Roughly 80% of virtual meetings used content as part of closed-loop marketing (CLM) versus just 30% of in-person HCP calls.

Clearly companies are producing more content than they were pre-COVID to fulfill the greater need for more content to share in longer virtual meetings and in rep-sent emails. Companies producing the greatest amount of new content are applying a more scalable and agile approach to have the right content readily available when engaging HCPs.

Considering the growing demands of digital engagement, especially in the face of new product and indication launches, the volume of content will likely continue to grow in 2021.

FIGURE 6: INCREASE IN COMMERCIAL CONTENT VOLUME



### ACTION PLAN

Implement a modular approach to content to give reps faster access to more compliant assets that they can share in longer virtual meetings and emails. Instead of building each new asset from scratch, a modular approach reassembles existing, pre-approved content blocks to create relevant content faster and at scale, with customization for different audiences and channels.

## Conclusion

While the rapid adoption and growth of digital engagement was primarily driven by the restrictions brought about by COVID-19, life sciences companies and HCPs are finding that a full return to in-person, business-as-usual approaches is no longer needed. They appreciate the convenience, efficiency, and fewer interruptions that digital channels provide.

Digital engagement is here to stay and offers lasting benefits for HCPs and the life sciences industry. As you begin to reimagine how you engage with your customers, consider the critical role of digital channels in driving more meaningful relationships and greater impact throughout 2021 and beyond.

Learn how you can improve HCP engagement at [veeva.com/business-consulting](https://veeva.com/business-consulting).