



EXECUTIVE INSIGHTS

Realising the Promise of Omnichannel Engagement

Omnichannel customer engagement is an integrated customer-centric approach that orchestrates touchpoints with customers across multiple communication channels seamlessly. It has been held up as the next frontier for engaging with customers, promising to enrich customer experience and value. However, for many organisations, the journey has proved challenging and, at times, arduous.

L.E.K. Consulting recently hosted an expert panel discussion in Singapore that was aimed at demystifying omnichannel engagement and sharing strategies and learnings that leading pharma/medtech companies have gleaned from implementing omnichannel strategies. The event was attended by a range of senior executives across global and regional pharmaceutical and medtech companies. Below, we summarise some of the key messages and takeaways from the panel discussion.

COVID-19 has accelerated the omnichannel efforts across many pharma and medtech companies. In the absence of traditional, face-to-face interactions between sales representatives, medical science liaisons (MSLs) and customers, pharma and medtech companies have had to rapidly develop their digital engagement approaches in order to continue to serve their customers. Customers' awareness and acceptance of these digital engagement approaches have increased rapidly through the pandemic. It is clear that the future of customer engagement for pharma and medtech companies will involve a mix of face-to-face and digital customer engagement approaches. Enhancing organisation omnichannel capabilities to deliver better customer engagement outcomes is no longer an option, it is a necessity.

Five key challenges have surfaced as pharma and medtech organisations have embarked upon their respective omnichannel journeys. These are summarised in the exhibit below.

Five challenges facing organisations in setting up omnichannel engagement

 <p>Lack of know-how among senior leadership on operationalising omnichannel approaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst there is typically support for omnichannel transformations from senior leadership in many organisations, there is a lack of understanding among senior leaders regarding the operationalisation of omnichannel approaches • Senior leaders need to understand the right questions that need to be asked of the organisation, the appropriate omnichannel key performance indicators (KPIs), and the metrics and behaviours they should be focusing on driving within the organisation • Senior leaders also need to be aware that a shift to omnichannel engagement will require significant changes to the organisation’s operating model; such awareness among senior leaders can often be lacking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees across different functional areas like sales, marketing and medical have not been fully informed regarding which activities they should prioritise through the omnichannel transformation journey and equally importantly, which activities and behaviours they should stop in order to afford sufficient focus and time to omnichannel efforts. As a result, employees can be overwhelmed with additional work and the pace of change hampered. 	 <p>Insufficient prioritisation of activities</p>
 <p>Immature understanding of customer preferences and behaviours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharma and medtech companies often do not fully understand their customers’ digital journeys and preferences (e.g. what content do different customer segments like to engage with through which channels) • Nor is the information readily captured and stored for it to be efficiently sourced and used, e.g. in automation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As digital engagement is rapidly growing in other industry segments (e.g. Netflix and Amazon in media and communications), customer expectations and needs are rapidly evolving • Consequently, customers are benchmarking their user experience of the digital engagement tools being developed by pharma and medtech companies against these digital leaders • Therefore, pharma and medtech companies have to ensure their digital engagement tools provide a comparable level of customer experience in order to gain traction with customers 	 <p>Rapidly evolving customer expectations and needs</p>
 <p>Integrating data across channels to orchestrate the right customer journeys</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations have found it difficult to harvest and integrate customer data across multiple channels (e.g. website, EDMs) • Even for organisations that collect data across multiple online and offline channels, analysing that data to determine the “next best action” for the customer based on their needs and preferences is challenging

The experiences of pharma and medtech organisations that have embarked on omnichannel engagement journeys have revealed a few critical building blocks that need to be in place in order to enable a successful omnichannel transformation.

1. Develop a robust data strategy

A robust data strategy for the organisation as a whole that takes into account data that needs to be captured, curated and analysed across brands/business units (BUs), customer segments and channels is required. This is critical, as it will ensure that:

- There is clear visibility across different functional areas of the spectrum of data that needs to be collected, curated and managed
- Areas where data requirements overlap and areas where there are data gaps across different brands/Business Units are identified and appropriate solutions are developed
- Appropriate data infrastructure and tools that can support the data strategy are established with a view to ensuring future scalability and adaptability

Once the data is collated and curated in an integrated fashion across channels, this data can then be analysed to determine how different customer segments consume information, what content they look for, and through which channels.

2. Engage customer-facing teams and build omnichannel capabilities

The role of sales representatives and MSLs will evolve as omnichannel approaches mature. These customer-facing team members will continue to play a key role, as they are the point of contact with customers who gather data and insight around customer preferences and behaviours. However, sales reps and MSL teams are still incorrectly being left out of conversations pertaining to the omnichannel strategy and plans. Rather, these team members need to be involved in and brought along the omnichannel journey from the beginning so that they are engaged and fully understand the value they can create through omnichannel engagement.

"Everyone needs to understand what the objectives are ... teams must understand the data they are receiving, and be able to segment and analyse the data to understand customer needs and then develop appropriate actions." — Sandra Perez Rauda, Director Pharma Tech (SG, TW, HK and Greater China) and Intercontinental Channels Lead, GSK

Medtech companies often have more touchpoints with customers when compared to pharma companies.

Therefore, medtech companies should consider a broader set of customer engagement approaches that includes augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), as these can offer unique opportunities to enhance value to customers. For example, AR or VR technologies can be an efficient mechanism to provide maintenance and troubleshooting support to clinicians. Doing so offers the potential to reduce the downtime of medical devices/instrumentation and also improve the efficiency of medtech support staff who will no longer need to travel to sites for certain types of visits.

“In medtech, there is more engagement with customers because there are more facets to a medical device, such as training, service, etc.” —

James Chiang, VP/GM Asia, Embecta

Customer-facing teams need to be adequately trained in omnichannel approaches in order to ensure that customer data collection and analysis of customer needs is of the highest quality.

This training should ideally encompass the following key elements:

- Understanding of the omnichannel vision and objectives for the brand/BU
 - Thorough understanding of the customer data that needs to be collected and analysed and how that will translate into “next best actions” including when to use digital versus face-to-face channels; a collaborative approach across sales, marketing and medical as well as digital teams is critical to create seamless experiences and create a coordinated view of the desired customer experience
 - Use of relevant software tools such as Veeva Suggestions and Salesforce Marketing Cloud
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“Digital channels will not replace face-to-face interactions, so developing soft, interpersonal skills will remain as critical as digital capabilities ...” — Glenn Cross, Global Process Owner, Commercial Launch and Lifecycle, Novartis

Importantly, the development of capability cannot be achieved in one or two training sessions. L.E.K.'s experience is that these competencies need to be developed through multiple facilitated cycles of learning-by-doing with coaches or team members experienced in designing and delivering omnichannel journeys.

3. Develop a step-wise implementation plan

A step-wise implementation plan for omnichannel transformation needs to be developed to ensure there is a clear plan to progress and scale pilot programs to the broader organisation. Key elements that should be considered when developing the implementation plan are:

- A pragmatic, phased approach to conducting and scaling pilot programs
 - Clear articulation of the KPIs/metrics that will evaluate pilot programs and drive subsequent stages of implementation
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- Detailed understanding of the level of change required to the operating model and processes within the organisation, e.g. brand strategy and tactical plan development, campaign review cycles, content development and tagging
- Dedicated change management plan to ensure momentum and support for the transformation are maintained throughout the implementation

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- Glenn Cross, Global Process Owner, Commercial Launch and Lifecycle, Novartis
- James Chiang, VP/GM Asia, Embecta
- Sandra Perez Rauda, Director Pharma Tech (SG, TW, HK and Greater China) and Intercontinental Channels Lead, GSK

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