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# **HCP PREFERENCES** **WHITE PAPER**

## **Evaluation of US HCP Preferences for Pharma Communications and Interactions**

Consequences and Opportunities for Biopharma Brand Strategies and Tactics

This white paper will explore the data supporting the change in HCPs' interaction preferences, the outlook on their interactions with the pharmaceutical industry, and reveal opportunities for brands to improve the value they provide to Health Care Professionals.

*“The tasks required of physicians, PA's, and NP's are increasingly time consuming and complex. At the same, there is so much innovation in pharma, and our need for up to date knowledge of the innovations grows. This creates an opportunity for a system which can deliver the information at the point of care in a frictionless manner with actionable steps.”*

**-Ashish C. Bhatia, MD, FAAD**

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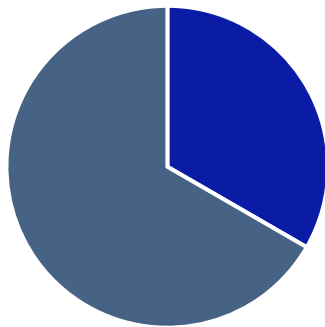
# Executive Summary

As the world migrates towards a post-pandemic period, the communication channels that Health Care Professionals (HCPs) prefer for communications with pharmaceutical brands and their services are accelerating away from historically reliable platforms. With over 8.6 million HCPs currently active on LinkedIn alone, data suggest that HCPs are increasingly scrutinizing the platform where they are exposed to branded communication, are engaging in SMS/messaging/social platforms at a greater rate, and desire a virtual relationship with pharma customer-facing personnel.

## VIRTUAL CALLS

# 87%

HCPs want all virtual or a mix of virtual and in-person meetings <sup>1</sup>



# 1/3

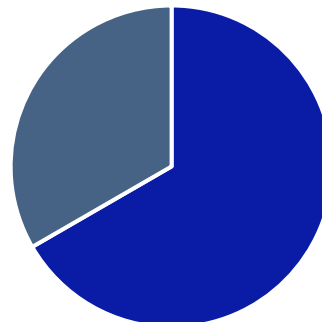
Of HCPs

Feel a big void in their ability to stay informed of product updates <sup>2</sup>

# 2/3

Of Product Launches

Biopharma products launched since January 2020 have failed to meet analyst expectations <sup>3</sup>



# Concerning Outlook for Pharma's Customer Engagement Playbook

*87% of Health Care Professionals want either all virtual or a mix of virtual and in-person meetings even after the pandemic ends according to consulting firm Accenture.<sup>1</sup>*

As the pandemic wanes, it's more important than ever to reach health care professionals (HCPs) where they are— but to pharma's dismay, customer interaction continues to be largely virtual. In a recent survey of HCPs, 87% said they want either all virtual or a mix of virtual and in-person meetings even after the pandemic ends.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, biopharma organizations have relied on talented field personnel in medical affairs and sales roles to engage in face-to-face, onsite interactions with health care professionals to build brand awareness, offer supportive products and services, and provide education on both brands and disease states.

Numerous publicly traded companies reported the marketplace challenges facing their sales and clinical efforts during the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> These challenges included:

- Increasing brand awareness
- Clinical trial recruitment
- Launching new products and indications

Analysis of sales and marketing activities confirms that the challenges created during the pandemic are not fully resolving. In fact, new challenges extend beyond biopharma. Consider the preferences stated by physicians and healthcare providers, which, compared to pharma's current offerings, represent a misalignment of interests.

One-third of the polled HCPs feel a big void in their ability to stay informed on product updates since they cannot meet with sales reps face to face. Physicians want pharmaceutical companies to use non-personal promotional messaging to communicate product information to help fill the gap created by the lack of sales rep access and medical conference interactions, according to research from media group SSCG.<sup>2</sup>

# Increasingly High Stakes for Biopharma Leaders and Their Companies

In the first half of 2022, the stock market signaled its concern with the industry's risk, showcased by the SPDR S&P Biotech Index down some 35%.<sup>4</sup>

Senior leaders need to find ways to overcome market challenges to deliver performance and provide confidence to stakeholders. Any continuation of poor performance reflects on management, dissuades investors, frustrates customers, and leaves eligible patients behind.

As demonstrated by several pharmaceutical launches in the last 3 years, deploying typical tactics has not yielded satisfactory results. According to EY, more than two-thirds of biopharma products launched since January 2020 have failed to meet analyst expectations.<sup>3</sup>

Pharma cannot rely on traditional launch models to compete in the new marketplace. While the pandemic disrupted pharma's time-tested commercial playbook, it is not recovering. Specifically, Total HCP interactions are down compared to pre-pandemic<sup>5</sup>

Virtual calls continue to make up one-third of total interactions<sup>6</sup>

Physician communication preferences have changed, favoring virtual engagement<sup>7</sup>

To meet HCPs where they are, pharmaceutical and biotech companies need to ensure their marketing is omnichannel. That means using a mix of digital channels like telehealth, SMS marketing, and digital apps, as well as traditional channels like print and direct mail.

*The contemporary challenge for brand leaders goes a step further. While providing digital and virtual tactics is necessary considering the interaction constraints, brand plans need to account for the gap between pharma's and the HCP's definition of value when interacting with the brand.*

# Pharma and Doctors Do Not Align on What Is Valuable

*94% of pharma executives see the field force as very important to critically important in the minds of the HCP to deliver scientific information. Sadly, only 47% of HCPs agree.<sup>8</sup>*

This research explores the channels, content needs, and credibility of pharma's information to HCPs.

Importantly, it quantifies the gaps in how these parties see the value and preference of healthcare professionals.

What HCPs see as important and preferential to them isn't always aligned with what pharma thinks is important to their healthcare customers.

## How To Win

To be seen as delivering value, pharma campaigns need to leverage several things whenever possible:

- Hyper personalized content: think time, place, and personality
- Efficient: content needs to be easily and rapidly digestible
- Digitally agile: content can be accessed on demand, sharable, referencable in time of need

## Opportunity to Listen to the HCP Customer Preferences<sup>8</sup>

**How important are the following for discovering scientific content?**

1. Scientific Meetings
2. Search Engines (e.g. Google)
3. Email Notifications
4. Text Messages
5. Social Media
6. Pharma Sales Force

**How important are the following in how you help HCPs find your scientific content?**

1. Pharma Sales Force
2. Scientific Meetings
3. Search Engines (e.g. Google)
4. Email Notifications
5. Social Media
6. Text Messages

# The New Goal is Personal Interaction, Not General Impressions

Historically, the goal of most healthcare marketing has been to reach as many potential customers as possible through mass media campaigns. But in recent years, there has been a shift toward more targeted, customer-centric marketing efforts.

## Growing Communication Channel

One trend that is gaining popularity is customer engagement through SMS marketing. SMS (short message service) marketing allows businesses to send text messages directly to their customers' phones.<sup>7</sup>

There are several benefits of using SMS marketing for healthcare businesses. First, it is a very direct way to reach potential customers. Second, it is a relatively inexpensive way to reach many people. Third, it allows businesses to track and measure the response rate to their campaigns. And finally, it opens up the opportunity for interactive communication to help the HCP act on compelling offers and information.

Overall, SMS marketing is an effective way to reach and engage potential healthcare customers. If you are planning on starting an SMS marketing campaign for your business, be sure to keep the following tips in mind:

- Keep messages clear and concise. Stick to one call-to-action per message.
- Use strong keywords and calls-to-action that encourage customers to take action.
- Focus on new and compelling content that is relevant for the HCP as opposed to just the brand.
- Test different messages and calls-to-action to see what works best with your audience.
- Use multiple layered messages to create a personalized two-way communication experience.
- Recognize the criticality of the information coming from a trusted source.

## HCP Viewpoints on Communication Channels

"Independent content is more likely to have accurate guidelines."

"Company websites will always be regarded as pure advertisement."

"To be medically independent, they can collaborate with others."

"Independent eliminates bias in providing medical knowledge."

## Conclusion

There are three forces at play impacting biopharmaceutical customer engagement performance.

First, the marketplace has permanently changed with Health Care Professionals finding efficiency and satisfaction with virtual platforms that offer near real-time value delivery.<sup>6</sup>

Second, many brand teams have been obsessed with pursuing omnichannel marketing efforts; however, if the provider isn't logged in, seeking information, or lured to be exposed to the messaging, the value is not omnipresent. Consider channels that enable the HCP to access information, engage further, and extract the value they desire on their time.

Finally, an SMS strategy is critical to a comprehensive marketing plan. The platform, value, and engagement opportunities align with the trending preferences of the HCP communication needs and their expectations for biopharma brands to deliver on their promise to add value to the providers and the patients they serve.



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