

The New Frontier: Omnichannel Strategies for Pharma

A customer-centric approach
to patient engagement



Multichannel: The Way It Was

It was a model that had endured for decades, and its **foundation was the sales force.**

Pharmaceutical companies developed new and effective products; their representatives met with health care providers and supplied samples and information. As a company's repertoire of medications expanded, the size of its sales sector swelled in lockstep. Each new product demanded more representatives to directly engage health care providers and educate them on the benefits of the medication. It was all one-on-one.

In recent years, pharma marketing evolved. Additional channels came into play: email marketing, websites, and PR assumed a more prominent role. But progress toward this new model was slow – until early 2020, when a novel coronavirus emerged.



The Great Disruption

COVID-19 changed everything. Social interactions, supply chains, the retail sector – and the pharmaceutical industry.

In very short order, pharma representatives found they could no longer meet with health care providers due to coronavirus concerns. And without those direct engagements, sales and revenues lagged. For more than a year, the pharmaceutical industry grappled with the fracturing of its basic business model. An alternative approach, however, ultimately emerged.

Digital technology played a role in pharmaceutical sales and marketing prior to COVID-19, but strictly in a support capacity. Examples: company websites provided essential information on new products and initiatives, mass e-mailings augmented advertising campaigns, and social media platforms enhanced customer engagement. But these multichannel strategies were limited in their approach. They excel at broad promotion of a brand or product, but individual customers are not the focus.

That's a particular pain point in the pharmaceutical industry, given that the customer needs and concerns must always be paramount – human lives, after all, are at stake. **Multichannel marketing is and will remain a keystone commerce strategy, but pharma requires a more nuanced and individualized approach.**

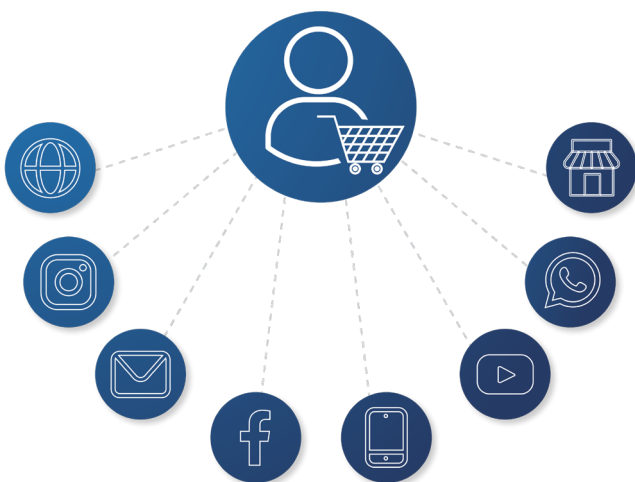
Enter the Omnichannel

Omnichannel applications evolved from multichannel strategies but provide richer engagement.

Multichannel approaches are relatively simple in intent: harness different channels – various online platforms, brick-and-mortar outlets, print – to distribute informational and promotional content.

But content is siloed in the individual channels, and interaction is minimal. A consumer may engage with one or the other outlet but is unlikely to connect with others. Transitions from one channel to another are difficult at best, and usually impossible. Communication is typically one way, with no effective means for profound engagement with the brand.

MULTICHANNEL



OMNICHANNEL



An omnichannel strategy also incorporates both online and offline channels but takes the process to a deeper level. Consumers can use any device to move seamlessly from one platform to another, with prior engagements informing companies of each customer’s interests and concerns. Omnichannel strategies don’t just lay out possibilities for the customer; **they guide and accommodate the consumer, assuring optimal customer journeys that are fully supported at every contact point.**



Why It Matters for Pharma

An omnichannel approach can yield dividends for any commercial sector, but it's **critical for the pharmaceutical industry**.

That's because pharmaceutical companies deal with literal issues of life and death. The medications they create save lives and alleviate suffering, but they are also products that must be used in line with strict protocols. Each new product requires the **dissemination of detailed educational content, contacts with health care providers, and full patient engagement** to assure good outcomes.

But perhaps the most compelling rationale for a comprehensive omnichannel strategy is the priorities of the health care provider community. HCP preferences for engagement have changed dramatically since COVID-19. Providers are demanding quicker access to information, and they're now comfortable connecting via remote channels due to the speed and convenience they offer. This shift is evident in the Veeva Pulse Report, IQVIA data, and DT consultancy reports.

Omnichannel capabilities don't wholly supersede the old system of broad sales representative deployment; they refine it, augment it, and make it more efficient.

Sales representatives may be fewer in number in an omnichannel environment, but their remit and their power are broadened. They can maintain contact with health care providers and patients in real time, providing additional information as required and helping respond to queries and concerns.

True Customer Engagement

Pharmaceutical companies serve two distinct customer categories: **health care providers and patients.**

Both must be satisfied for success, and a solid omnichannel program provides the kind of customer experience that differentiates brands and creates loyalty with both groups.

Benefits include:

Enhanced Communication



In an omnichannel environment, pharma sales representatives function as digital enablers – and as “channels” in their own right.

They serve as liaisons between the company and both customer bases (health care providers and patients).

Physicians can reach out at any time with questions, ideas, or observations, allowing companies to fine-tune campaigns and messaging at any time.

Superior Customer Experience



Individual channels are not the focus in an omnichannel strategy: the emphasis is on enriching the experience of the individual customer as they range across all channels on all devices.

By concentrating on optimizing user experience in all spaces and places rather than on individual siloed platforms, established customers are retained and new ones are attracted.

Strengthening Brand Identity



Smooth and unimpeded omnichannel capability scales brand awareness dramatically; it also allows companies to dovetail specific brand qualities with individual customer values and aspirations.

Companies thus benefit from both a general expansion of brand awareness and the enhanced loyalty of individual customers.

Direct Patient Support

Pharmaceutical companies invest a great deal of capital and time toward a simple goal – **ensuring patients have the information and medications they need to improve health outcomes.**



For pharma, a key omnichannel value is its power to leverage tools for education, disease awareness, medication compliance and risk reduction, leading to better patient outcomes.

This allows companies to optimize both service and influence. The company is transformed from a vendor to the health care community to a true consultant and collaborator, available through integrated multiple channels to advise and assist individual HCPs at any time.

But even more critically, **the company becomes a trusted partner to the patient, providing critical support at every step of the treatment journey.**



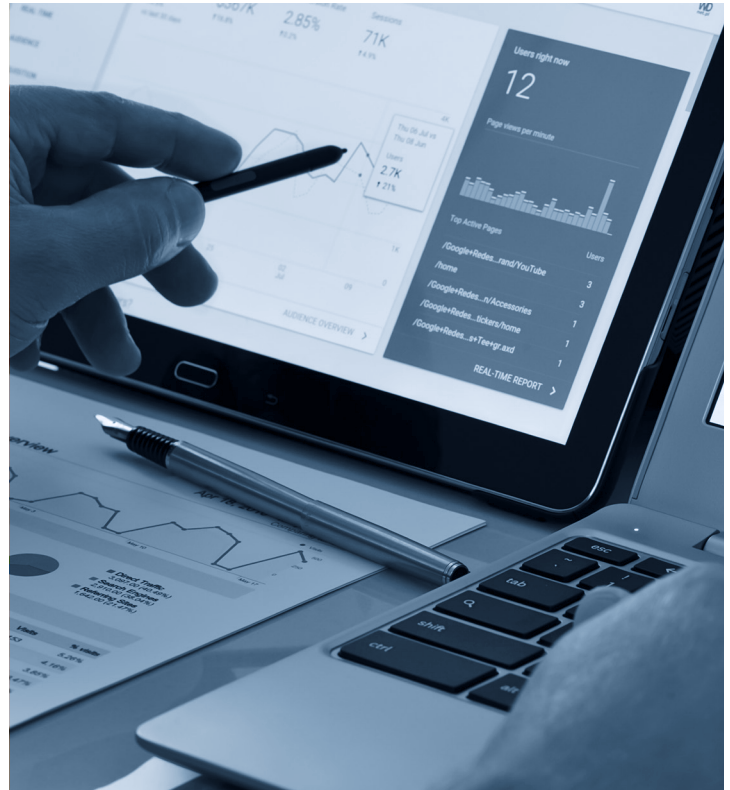
Improved Attribution Data

Omnichannel strategies do more than improve CX; they also **leverage the utility of data analytics**.

By employing artificial intelligence and machine learning to accrue and parse customer engagement data on individual channels, companies can identify the messaging and platforms that yield the best results, increasing campaign efficacy at every cycle.

Often, the opportunity for connecting a health care provider or patient with a product is available only for a short period of time.

A sound omnichannel strategy provides the powerful data analytics needed to identify such moments and capitalize on them.



The Bottom Line

Omnichannel capability increases engagement points – and each of those touchpoints represents an opportunity for **demonstrating product value, enhancing brand awareness, and maximizing revenue**.

Increased engagement across multiple platforms drives customer retention. And as a rule of thumb, repeat customers are the foundation for any company's success, **driving 40% of revenue** despite constituting a proportionally smaller segment of the customer base.

Finding the Right Partner

Developing and implementing a successful pharma omnichannel strategy typically involves engaging a solutions partner, one deeply versed in all aspects of both the technology and the pharmaceutical industry.

Choosing the right partner, then, is critical. Qualities to consider include:

The Channel Suite

Your partner should demonstrate expertise in delivering and supporting a wide range of channels, from WhatsApp, Instagram Business, Twitter Business and Facebook Messenger to SMS, RCS – and more.

Reporting and Analytics

Customer engagement is the bedrock of any omnichannel program – which means your partner must be able to ensure accurate and timely reporting of all customer engagement, allowing ongoing strategy refinement.

Scalability

Confirm your partner can scale all channels to meet company growth, ensuring customer support is always visible, available, and responsive to health care provider and patient queries and input.

Seamless Integrations

Given that customer engagement is the primary objective of any omnichannel strategy, your partner must be able to merge your omnichannel platform with your current tech stack and create solutions that seamlessly integrate messaging and collaboration services with existing customer management tools.

A Clear Roadmap for Success

Your partner's plan must be comprehensive, anchored by specific milestones and deadlines, and tailored to your specific priorities. Reaching any business destination in a timely and pain-free fashion requires a clear route and a detailed map.

Security Options

Security is a concern for all business enterprises, but it's paramount for the pharmaceutical sector. Your omnichannel communications provider must be able to provide bulletproof solutions to protect customer data, e.g., employing 2FA and encrypted channel options.

Strategy

1

The first step in effective omnichannel communication: **choose your channels.**

Possibilities for pharma include (but are not limited to):

Websites

Blogs

Youtube

PPC

Social Media

Emails

Amazon posts

2

The second step: **keep fine-tuning.**

What's optimal today may not be ideal tomorrow. Review each channel's data regularly and adjust as necessary.

A seamless omnichannel program is never static; customer interests and concerns constantly evolve, and your program must evolve with it.

Tools

Basic tools for a **powerful and flexible omnichannel program** include:



A **content management system (CMS)** that allows painless content creation and easy data management and review.

Messaging tools that provide personalization across all channels.

Pharma audiences are differentiated not only by the health care professional and patient categories, but by medical disorder, medical history, and stage of treatment.

The ability to send personalized push notifications predicated on each customer's journey is essential.

A **customer relationship system (CRM)** that securely stores customer data and enables interactions across all channels.



Summary

Omnichannel strategies are no longer optional for pharmaceutical companies – **they're essential.**

Open and reciprocal communication with health care providers and patients is central to the pharmaceutical industry's ethos. To provide the best possible information and support to health care providers and patients, pharmaceutical companies **must employ every messaging channel available** – and each channel must function as a component of a larger whole.

Individual channels can't stand alone and isolated, limited in both content and communication potential. They **must merge seamlessly, communicate clearly and at any scale, and provide the means for feedback and response in real time.**



Leveraging multiple communication channels in a coherent and connected way will enhance customer engagement, improve patient outcomes, optimize marketing strategies – and ultimately, increase revenues.

Transforming Pharmaceuticals

The experts at Customertimes can build, implement, or revise an omnichannel strategy for any pharma organization.

If you're ready to make the switch to omnichannel or want to optimize your existing approach, please reach out today.

Vishal Dass is a highly accomplished and results-driven marketing professional with a passion for driving business growth through strategic marketing initiatives. With a proven track record of success in diverse industries, Vishal brings a wealth of expertise in digital marketing, brand management, and customer experience optimization.

Throughout his career, Vishal has demonstrated a strong ability to leverage data-driven insights and market trends to develop innovative marketing strategies that deliver measurable results. He is known for his exceptional leadership skills, effectively managing cross-functional teams and fostering a collaborative work environment to achieve shared objectives.

Vishal's deep understanding of the power of customer-centric marketing has allowed him to create compelling and personalized experiences that resonate with target audiences. He has a keen eye for identifying customer needs and translating them into impactful marketing campaigns that drive engagement and loyalty.

EXPLORE PHARMA SOLUTIONS



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