

Digital listening drives a new relationship with doctors

The best customer relationships have always been based on a high level of trust, built upon a strong understanding of real customer needs. Novel digital technologies now enable the pharma industry to efficiently listen to each and every doctor, laying the foundations for success.

True pull-marketing needs individual customer segmentation

For the pharmaceutical industry, digital technology has enabled much more efficient and regular connectivity with its principal customers - the prescribers. But this increased level of dialogue between doctors and pharma is only useful if it is on mutually beneficial terms. Doctors want specific pieces of information, at the right time and via the right channels. The pharma industry wants to ensure doctors are clear on the benefits of its products.

When pharma sales focusses too much on delivering product messages, doctors are bombarded with information that they may not want or need; an approach known as push-marketing. Pull-marketing, in contrast, seeks to understand the specific needs of individual customers to deliver exactly what they need.

Pharma marketing has historically attempted to embrace pull-marketing by using market research to segment doctors based on demographic information, prescribing preferences and attitudes towards particular products. This approach, while representing a step in the right direction, fails to segment to the level of the individual. Therefore, to achieve true pull-marketing pharma must be able to listen to the needs of every doctor, and act on them.

This article comes from Agnitio's Digital Academy - an information series that aims to create debate and communicate best practice in digital sales communication. To sign up for more simply **join the mailing list**.

Digital listening enables pull-marketing

The only way to achieve the granularity required to truly profile individual doctors is to enable them to directly feedback their information needs and preferential engagement pathways. Digital technology has now enabled this level of listening, when applied in the right way.

The arbiters of efficiently collecting this information, the key listeners, are the pharma sales representatives who spend time with doctors every day. Within each conversation they hear vital nuggets of feedback from the doctor, which can be used to tailor future interactions, including:

- Which aspects of the brand messaging they see value in.
- Which aspects are the most important differentiators versus other products.
- Specific types of patients for whom they intend to use the brand.
- What times and channels are most appropriate for them in receiving brand information.



But listening is not enough. To be utilised as part of pull-marketing this information must be captured and imparted across the organisation so that all future customer interactions take account of it. It must also be updated over time as the customer feedback changes. This is where technology becomes really valuable - not as a tool for allowing more efficient push-marketing, but as a powerful digital ear for enabling true, individual level pull-marketing.

The benefits of listening to the individual

For companies that can implement true pull-marketing, delivering highly personalised messages to each prescriber in exactly the right way, the benefits are manifold.

An immediate advantage is that the objective for pharma - delivering the message around product benefits - is more effectively achieved. When the right information is delivered in the right way the receptivity of the recipient is increased, as is their retention of the message.

But the benefits of pull-marketing stretch beyond better recall of brand differentiators. The pharma industry has entered an age where real-world outcomes for its products have become just as important as the initial clinical stack up beyond the clinic, and which may be encountering real world difficulties, which can be used to inform better targeting by patient type and identify any additional supportive needs, e.g. adherence programs.

In addition, doctors often like to discuss outstanding unmet need, those difficult areas for patients where no product is currently delivering a solution. A push-marketing approach has nowhere to go with such feedback, but one based on the listening principle of pull-marketing can capture this and impact it internally to drive new product development.

This type of discussion underpins a relationship focussed on delivering against real patient needs, rather than product sales, and is the basis for real trust and closer collaboration.

Using digital listening as part of a pull-marketing approach therefore delivers both immediate benefit and has the potential to shape a fundamentally new, and more beneficial relationship between doctors and the pharma industry.

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