5 insights for executives

Helping patients and providers make the connections
Big data and analytics can help life sciences bridge the communication gap

Of special interest to
Chief executive officer
Chief information officer
Chief marketing officer
Chief operating officer
Mary has been experiencing a worrisome shortness of breath. Before she makes a doctor’s appointment, she goes to her laptop to do a quick search of her symptoms. She wants to take an active role in her well-being and make sure her doctor is up on the latest treatments.

Smart Pharma Company X knows that informed and demanding patients are now partners in their own health care.

Smart Pharma Company X wants to do all it can to make it easier for Mary to find answers to her questions and encourage a meaningful dialogue with her physician … all while adhering to its strict privacy compliance standards. Thanks to advances in digital data analytics, it has the power to leverage vast amounts of anonymous visit data collected from Mary’s use of web search engines. A web-based self-assessment tool that its brand team recently launched collects her click data. The research team collects survey data from Mary after her website visit to evaluate her satisfaction with the experience. Based on the insights derived from data analysis, the company optimizes brand websites and mobile applications that are truly helpful tools for educating and engaging patients like Mary – so that Smart Pharma Company X can play a part in continually enriching the interactions between patient and doctor.
What’s the issue?

Life sciences companies are under increasing pressure to do more with less – and are correct to examine digital technologies as a way to transform their entire enterprise. This includes how they improve operations, develop more effective communications, streamline research and development, and lower costs. Pharma companies see that the digitally transformed enterprise also brings an explosion in data. Data coming from websites, email, mobile devices, interactive applications and social media now drives a significant volume of this info explosion. Advanced analytics go a long way in helping life sciences gather – and analyze – data that informs strategic and tactical decision making. Such insights lead to a better understanding for how to craft content and messaging to both health care practitioners (HCPs) and consumers. Bonus: it leads to personalization that delivers this messaging at the right time and to the right place.

It is important to keep in mind that mounds of big data without the analytics to understand and funnel them to the right channels are, well, mounds of big data.

Why now?

Life sciences companies need the right channels and appropriate messaging to communicate the benefits of their products to HCPs, informed consumers and regulators globally. In addition, companies need to balance reputation and compliance risk with message quality to position themselves as credible sources of information. This calculation is particularly important in addressing newer audiences, such as health care payers and patient advocacy groups.

At the same time, they face the challenge of incorporating new digital channels. These will replace or augment the more traditional reliance on broadcast and print media, in-the-field sales teams, conferences, and speaking events.

New channels being tested include:

- Web portals and other technologies that patients, physicians and other stakeholders can access on diseases and/or treatments
- Social media sites to engage consumers and provide educational medical information
- Applications to engage HCPs and detail them for product or service promotions
- Dynamic channel management that integrates content and engagement history across HCP-directed channels to create a seamless experience
How does it affect you?

Pharmas have been slow to undertake digital transformation in the areas of marketing and communication compared with other highly regulated industries. They continue to invest millions of dollars in conventional methods such as broadcast, print, direct mail and field sales teams – even though their results appear to be deteriorating over time.

And a greater threat comes in the form of non-traditional players. They could enter the conversation directly to consumers and HCPs through innovative, digital means. New players are evolving rapidly.

Insert analytics into development

- Maintain data collection
- Verify that results are used
- Build into web design, development and testing processes

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What's the fix?

Pharma investment in the use of digital channels reveals that too little attention has been paid to creating a high-value infrastructure to manage data. This requires:

- Commitment from executive leadership to support investment into technical platforms
- Hiring qualified resources to manage and analyze the data
- A governance framework and training and advocacy programs that promote the integration of digital data insights into new and ongoing digital initiatives

A treasure trove of great data – without the backup of a world class digital analytics system, processes and methods – is often just lost data. In a world where medical records could be worth more than one’s banking details, life sciences companies need to have an analytics strategy that focuses on the use of multichannel methods.

Here are some elements for an effective framework:

- **Executive sponsorship and digital channel governance** – Enterprise-wide adoption of digital analytics insights is most successful in organizations that have clearly articulated digital strategies. They have governance mechanisms that prioritize investment in digital initiatives and mandate accountability for their successful delivery.

- **Process** – Successful digital analytics initiatives depend on a set of defined and documented processes that provide consistency and responsiveness. We commonly see digital analytics programs that deal with strings of ad hoc “fire drill” requests or have to constantly defend their management of data collection and analysis.

- **Roles, resources and responsibilities** – Digital analytics resources are scarce. Organizations must recognize and integrate this experience at the business unit level to encourage adoption in areas such as digital operations, marketing, content management, application development, customer relationship management, business intelligence and so on.

- **Digital metrics and analysis** – Meaningful metrics, reporting and analysis from fixed digital data are critical. Rather than rely on pre-packaged reporting from analytics platforms, organizations are best served by building metrics driven by the business objectives and goals.

- **Data governance and privacy policies** – HCPs and consumers are moving towards online management of their personalized content. Life science companies must have policies in place that draw a clear line between deeper understanding of customer behavior for improvement of the customer experience vs real or perceived misuse of personal data.

- **Analytics platforms** – Technology and the tools for the collection, analysis and reporting of digital behavior are a vital component of any measurement effort. But the web analytics platform is just one piece of a larger digital analytics technical foundation that needs to capture and unify data from other sources, such as social media, competitive intelligence and purchase data in order to provide a cohesive view of the multichannel digital customer experience.

- **Training and communications** – All too often, there are scenarios where reports are created and not interpreted, or they are interpreted, but the analysis is not shared. Communications provides the glue that holds a digital analytics program together.
What's the bottom line?

Life sciences need an overarching digital strategy that incorporates patient information, digital data, innovation, testing and accountability through the use of analytics to measure success against targets. The magic moment will come when data is connected across all systems — from pharmas to payers to HCPs to consumers. The upside: life science players will become trusted partners in the ever-growing, ever-vital global health care industry.
Want to learn more?

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