

WHITE PAPER

How Digital Can Make Healthcare Communications Feel More Human

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Executive summary

In the dynamic and ever-evolving healthcare landscape, adopting personalization in digital interactions with Healthcare Providers (HCPs) is paramount for life sciences brand marketers. This IQVIA Digital white paper delves into how cutting-edge technologies and diverse data sources can transform healthcare communications, making more human and impactful connections. By understanding HCPs' information needs and applying AI tools to clinical and behavioral data sets, marketers can anticipate and address HCP needs with unparalleled accuracy. By adopting the advanced strategies laid out in this paper, life sciences brands can cultivate trust-based relationships with HCPs, ultimately driving superior health outcomes for patients and achieving commercial success.

Introduction

Healthcare is transforming radically before our eyes. Breakthroughs fueled by the last decade-plus of investment in research and development are now yielding results: 268 novel active substances have entered the market since 2019, and an estimated 50 to 55 new launches are expected annually through 2028,¹ an average of one new launch per week.

These new medicines bring hope to patients and their families through advancements in specialized therapeutics, new vaccines, and other novel treatments. Much of the forthcoming wave of therapeutic innovation will target rare diseases that affect smaller patient populations (particularly in Oncology).² Once seen as the future, personalized medicine is accelerating thanks to rapid advances in therapies tailored for specific genetic profiles, metabolic conditions, comorbidities, and other decisive factors.

However, the introduction of so many promising therapeutic options adds complexity in care decision making. These specialized therapies challenge brand teams to create effective strategies for educating HCPs. Healthcare marketers must help all stakeholders navigate these complexities and close knowledge gaps across the care continuum.

At the same time and as with any other consumer, HCPs are presented with increasingly tailored digital experiences by brands in countless other industries

(among them finance, hospitality and entertainment). Brands that do not follow suit risk losing attention and interest. For life sciences to achieve digital marketing success in similar fashion, personalization is a crucial component, as is a seamless user experience — both of which offer the potential for HCPs to access content relevant to their needs when and where they need it. In contrast, excessive, impersonal, and/or poorly timed outreach frustrates recipients and can even damage a brand's reputation.

SaaS marketing applications; AI, predictive modeling, natural language processing, and other technologies; as well as large near-real-time clinical and behavioral data sets and advanced analytics empower life sciences marketers with the tools to address — and even anticipate — HCP information needs. Applying these tools effectively provides audiences with personalized communications precisely when required, in the preferred format. Let's examine how.



Humanized interactions start with a rich data foundation

Today life sciences brands strive to make digital marketing efforts feel more human by understanding the healthcare information needs of HCP audiences and responding to these needs both faster and with greater precision. EPG Health, an IQVIA division that works with pharmaceutical customers to deliver educational messages to HCPs and measure the outcomes, reported that “HCP insight (needs and behavior)” is the industry’s number one strategic HCP engagement priority for the year ahead (cited by 57% of pharma).³

THE FUTURE OF HCP ENGAGEMENT IMPACT

Top priorities:



57%

HCP insight (needs and behavior)



47%

Improving customer experience



45%

Optimizing content for digital consumption

Source: IQVIA EPG Health.

The ability to personalize begins with a high volume, variety and velocity of data — behavioral data, clinical data that illuminates the needs of the patients within the practice, response data from prior digital activities, and additional first-party client sources including speaker program and CRM data, as examples.

Among these sources, digital research behavioral data is an essential ingredient enabling personalized connections between brands and audiences. Behavioral data generates insights by learning how HCPs research topics, respond (or do not respond) to specific types of outreaches, and helps inform them in making the optimal treatment decisions for patients within their



Personalization in marketing

is about using the best available data to know your customer’s specific interests, demographics and preferences to **anticipate and predict their needs** and deliver the most relevant messages and interactions using **content tailored to individual customers**.



Omnichannel personalization

is the capability to deliver personalized messaging and engagements across multiple channels, both online and offline, in a coordinated way that becomes more fine-tuned and relevant with each successful interaction.

care. Understanding what topics are relevant to an HCP’s immediate care challenges — for instance, dosing guidance, side effects of a treatment, or patient access to support programs — as well as HCP channel preferences help brands engage more effectively.

Identity resolution gives a brand team or its agency assurance that a given HCP is that same individual across multiple data sources. And deterministic data sets provide a much higher level of certainty than probabilistic data about someone’s identity, so marketers know which HCP is seeking to fill an information gap during a moment of clinical need. Deterministic datasets that validate identity give digital marketers the advantage of understanding a customer’s current challenges, topics of research, preferred channels, and more.

Having consent to communicate with each HCP conducting research increases the likelihood of a brand interaction meeting his or her expectations. The ability to safeguard the privacy of HCPs at scale is paramount to building trust. Life sciences brands gain peace of mind with the assurance that their data providers and digital marketing partners are protecting personal information.

A formula for humanizing interactions at scale

Information gaps vary from HCP to HCP (and even from appointment to appointment)

In its Global Reference 2024 annual review of pharmaceutical sales force and marketing channel performance, IQVIA ChannelDynamics reported that for HCPs who prefer 61–80% of their interactions via digital methods, only 64% of the digital content HCPs receive from the pharmaceutical industry aligns with their preferences. This means that life sciences companies are meeting the expectations of HCPs who have a high propensity to engage online less than two-thirds of the time.⁴

Better understanding an HCP empowers life sciences brands to engage with them in a more targeted, ‘one-size-fits-one’ approach. HCPs are researching specific topics at different points along the care continuum for a diverse number of disease states that may manifest themselves during their day-to-day service of patient needs. The rapid synthesis and analysis of behavioral data, digital response metrics, and field force engagements to identify unmet needs in a practice is known as *speed to insight*. These insights help brand

marketers and their agencies address HCP education gaps swiftly with more human interactions attuned to communications preferences.

In examining how these differences may be observed, a General Practitioner (GP) making the initial diagnosis has different educational gaps than an endocrinologist or cardiometabolic specialist who has been treating this chronic disease since fellowship. A GP may have a concern about lab results from a patient’s annual physical and is researching the next course of action — be those additional tests or referring that patient to a specialist. Conversely, an endocrinologist viewing the same results may be comparing medication options, calculating dosing for a prescription, or checking the formulary for cost and coverage of a treatment.

Additionally, patient demographics and practice composition present additional reasons brand interactions must become more personalized. A practitioner in one rural area may see more Medicare and Medicaid patients whereas a physician in a suburban group practice might have more patients with employer-paid private insurance. Social determinants of health also have different co-morbidities and access challenges, so HCPs may often have multiple information needs to address even for the same disease.

SAFEGUARDING PRIVACY IS CRUCIAL

With data-driven insights enabling brands to build precise HCP and patient audiences and tailor educational and promotional outreach, protecting individual privacy has become more vital (and more challenging).

Today’s patchwork of state and federal regulations creates complexity for digital marketers serving the life sciences and healthcare sectors. In developing a comprehensive privacy strategy, life sciences brands need the right people dedicated to keeping pace with changes in the regulatory, legal, and technology landscape. Resolute experts can perform ongoing due diligence, ensuring that a digital strategy complies with prevailing privacy requirements.

Similarly, brand teams should demand expertise and transparency about the methodologies used to safeguard data privacy from their agencies and other partners. This will help all parties balance innovation with risk management to foster trust among all partners.

Time is of the essence

Traditionally commercial teams receive claims data to understand which physicians are writing prescriptions and segment HCPs for territory alignment as well as identify personae such as loyalists, rising stars, or low volume script writers. Although published weekly, claims data may have a lag of a few weeks, during which time the HCP may choose to prescribe a competing brand.

On the other hand, behavioral data signals are available daily at the individual NPI level. This provides timely information to healthcare brands about which disease state or treatments an HCP is researching and the ideal moments to educate that HCP. This enables brand marketers to target relevant messages at specific times.

Further, by identifying information needs earlier in the decision-making process, brands and their agency partners can engage in deeper interactions and deliver content before an HCP makes a final treatment decision.

Triggering precise messages within hours of learning about an HCP need is known as *speed to action*. For a GP who may not receive field force resource allocation, it is crucial to provide educational information in digital form as quickly as possible. Follow up with a top decile endocrinologist might combine digital and personal engagement, such as sending an alert to the rep who calls on that HCP accompanied by targeted programmatic media or email to capitalize on the observed research event.

THE VITAL ROLE OF AGENCIES

Agencies are pivotal in the ever evolving and competitive healthcare marketing landscape. They craft and refine go-to-market strategies through forward-thinking approaches to help brands achieve their strategic goals. This both maximizes the effectiveness of marketing investments and enhances the brand's ability to improve health outcomes through greater personalization of content.

While life sciences companies have increased in-house capabilities in recent years, many still rely on agencies for their proven expertise and creativity to develop integrated content strategies and advertising solutions. The most impactful agencies are deeply integrated partners with pharmaceutical brands, contributing to overall commercial strategies in addition to performing their traditional roles of creative design and campaign planning and execution.

Agencies are increasingly applying technology and myriad deep data sources to deliver insight-driven, personalized omnichannel experiences. This is achieved by drawing insights from leading and trailing metrics as well as customer preferences, market conditions, and prescribing data, allowing agencies to measure, optimize, and demonstrate campaign performance.

Customer preferences shape engagements

In addition to knowing with assurance *who* an HCP is, *what* information he or she requires about specific stages of the treatment journey, and *when* to deliver that precise content, the other key ingredient in personalizing communications with HCPs is *how* or *where* to interact.

Channel preference analyzes historical engagement data with a target HCP to understand which channels have generated the best response. In a recent survey

of IQVIA's Healthcare Communications Network, responding physicians cited independent content sites and online professional journals as the top two sources they rely on for information about disease states or pharmaceutical products.⁵ By the same token, a life sciences brand applies channel preference insights to focus on the optimal combination of channels for different HCPs, while omitting ineffective communication channels.

TOP HCP INFORMATION SOURCES ABOUT DISEASES OR PHARMA PRODUCTS

69%

Independent content sites

Source: IQVIA Healthcare Communications Network.

Brand marketers are becoming more sophisticated in optimizing how they engage with targeted HCPs to increase the likelihood of successful interactions. For instance, a brand team recognizes that one specialist considering a new medication prefers listening to a podcast or viewing a video versus reading lengthy research papers early in the decision-making process. Upon learning that a specialist has detailed questions about dosing and possible side effects of a medication, the brand team can connect the HCP with a medical science

63%

Online professional journals

liaison as the next action rather than with a sales rep. Indeed, EPG Health found that Medical Science Liaison (MSL) activities — listed as critical or very important for 84% of respondents — have overtaken sales force (77%) as pharma's most important channel for delivering scientific information to healthcare professionals.⁶

By understanding and leveraging the “how” and “where” of preferred communication channels of each HCP, brand marketers can significantly enhance the effectiveness of their interactions.

TAP INTO THE POWER OF AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) including Generative AI is revolutionizing every aspect of healthcare and drug development, spanning initial discovery and clinical trials to commercialization efforts from launch to loss of exclusivity. AI already plays a vital role in supporting the digital strategies that brand teams and their agencies use to educate HCPs. For instance, brands can use Gen AI to understand HCP preference and recommend a particular programmatic or endemic ad unit, which will generate higher response based on color and imagery.

By automating the creation of customized content and continually updating materials, generative AI helps brand teams respond to the latest HCP engagement data as well as changing market conditions, competitive pressures, and evolving stakeholder needs. This enables life sciences companies to create more targeted educational and promotional content faster, at scale, and in multiple formats, for distribution across digital and personal channels.

AI use cases for engaging customers are increasing with the accelerating pace of innovation. Digital marketers can deploy AI in advanced analytics to scrutinize multiple behavioral and clinical data sources faster, understand channel and content preferences and drive more human interactions with HCPs. Brands can also implement AI-powered offerings such as chatbots and virtual assistants that provide real-time support to HCPs making treatment decisions.

Content affinity is emerging as one way to harness this data and make interactions between brands and HCP audiences feel even more human. Content affinity captures nuanced preferences of HCPs, such as tone, sentiment, language, and even learning style; and then optimizes brand communications accordingly.

Magic in the metrics

All life sciences brands measure marketing campaigns to varying degrees. More sophisticated measurement incorporates advanced analytics and timely insights to confirm that educational messages are reaching the right audiences, identify elements to optimize, and demonstrate return on investment. But EPG Health learned that the life sciences industry has room to improve in evaluating the impact of HCP education activities; for instance, only one in four respondents from pharma companies analyze HCP engagement data.⁷

Since HCP information gaps change across various stages of a care continuum and vary from patient to patient, brand teams must be able to measure performance and course correct swiftly. Was the interaction successful? If a rising star cardiologist opened an email but did not click through to explore

dosing information, what does that tell the digital marketer? The subject line may have resonated with the HCP, but the email message was no longer relevant, or the content was in the wrong format. Drawing insights from countless data points about each HCP interaction influences how to make the next communication more impactful. Evaluating HCP engagements at scale and adjusting tactics quickly are at the heart of *speed to measurement*.

Speed to measurement is a continuous exercise because repeated analysis steadily improves the quality of the HCP's experience interacting with a brand. As the engagements become more human and an HCP's trust in the relationship grows over time, forward-thinking brands can work to identify the changing needs of their audience members and address these with precise messaging and educational content delivered in preferred formats and channels.



Case Study: Informing HCPs about treatment access and affordability

One way that brands optimize therapy adoption is by reducing cost and coverage barriers. Poor adherence to prescribed therapies can worsen patient outcomes and negatively impact commercial revenues. A 2024 IQVIA Institute report highlighted that 98 million new-to-brand prescriptions in 2023 were abandoned due in part to high Out-Of-Pocket (OOP) costs.⁸ The rate of prescription abandonment increased with higher OOP costs; for instance, 55% of patients abandoned a prescription that cost \$250 or more.

IQVIA's recent survey of its Healthcare Communications Network of physicians cited cost and access as the top areas that led to prescribing challenges in their practices, with 45% of physicians calling "insurance limitations/formulary of (the) preferred product choice" barriers.⁹ A similar number of respondents stated that patient affordability can be a determining factor in therapeutic decision making. Solving for the potential health inequities that may arise when cost and/or access may be a barrier to patient care requires more effort, such as educating HCPs about lower-cost alternative treatments, the developing science- in this case of biosimilarity, and even on the evidence-based studies that solidify these as valuable alternatives to legacy treatment.



Situation

The newest and most advanced biologic medicines for Immunology create cost burdens for insurers and patients. While the U.S. Biologics Price Competition and Innovation Act aimed to reduce these costs by streamlining the introduction of more affordable biosimilar alternatives, adoption rates for biosimilars are uneven. In one instance, an IQVIA client wanted to address low adoption rates at launch, which the brand team suspected were due to education gaps among HCPs and patients.

Although other biosimilars had reached as much as 82% of the market, this pharmaceutical product found itself with only 2% share by the end of 2023 — despite being 85% more cost effective than the market leader.¹⁰

Solution

IQVIA Digital partnered with this client on an omnichannel pilot to reach HCPs via multiple channels and close information gaps about a biosimilar treatment. This program took a two-prong approach using digital and personal channels:

- Coordinated programmatic banners and emails to HCPs using custom trigger rules.
- Sent daily alerts to sales representatives through the brand's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, driving more focused face-to-face interactions with HCPs.

The pilot integrated traditional data sets with behavioral insight signals among opted-in HCPs. These insights deterministically identified in real-time HCPs who were researching biosimilars on medically endemic websites and then contextualized daily HCP research activity at the National Provider Identifier (NPI) level.

Results

The results of these campaigns were overwhelmingly positive:¹¹

- Email open rates of 37.5% — exceeding industry benchmarks by 2 to 3 times
- Banner click-through rates between 0.20% and 0.57%
- 68% of the field force representatives reported an increase in quality of conversations with HCPs
- 88% of the field reps wanted the brand to continue investing in this solution

The pilot generated 350 additional total prescriptions (TRx) for the brand. This program also met the client's objectives of demonstrating the value of personalized digital execution and improving the field's HCP engagements. Moreover, this program succeeded in broadening HCP awareness about this cost-effective therapeutic option and in providing essential information about the product and its benefits. As a result, more immunologists reported to the field force that they would consider the biosimilar for their patients.



Successfully engaged **4.5K HCPs**



4.7K alerts delivered to reps in pilot program



Gross TRx +350



**Apply
business
rules**



Daily emails to HCP

Open rate **37.5%**



Daily programmatic
banners
(via IQVIA Media OS)

CTR **0.2-0.57%**



Alerts to field via CRM

68% of reps say data has improved quality of conversations they have with customers

88% of the reps want to continue to invest in this solution with key optimizations

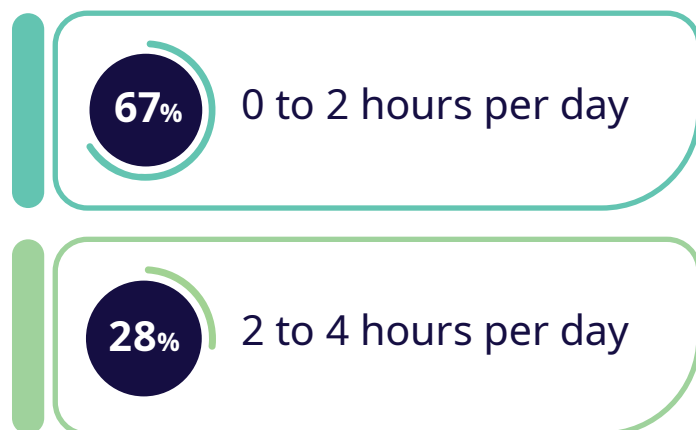
Conclusion

Given the increasing complexity and specialization of today's innovative therapies, life sciences brands must anchor their marketing strategies on a deeper, data-driven understanding of the needs, behaviors and preferences of prescribers. By accessing a broader range of real-time and longitudinal data sources and harnessing sophisticated data analytics and modeling technologies, brand marketers and their agencies have powerful digital tools to engage with their audiences in more personalized and effective ways.

IQVIA's recent Healthcare Communications Network survey revealed that nearly one-third of responding physicians spend between two and four hours per day on professional online resources (excluding EMR activity). Anticipating and providing crucial brand information to HCPs in moments when they need it can free up some of those precious hours to spend with patients and families.¹²

When brand teams tailor the content, channels, and timing of their outreach at scale to help close knowledge gaps, HCPs are in a better position to prescribe the most appropriate therapy at the point of care. Personalized touchpoints also enable richer, well-informed conversations between HCPs and patients, so both

TIME PHYSICIANS SPEND ON PROFESSIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES



Source: IQVIA Healthcare Communications Network.

parties better understand treatment options and factors such as side effects and cost considerations. These more human interactions cultivate trust between audiences and brands, improve health outcomes for patients, and drive sales for life sciences companies.

When evaluating digital marketing partners, it is important to select one with world-class data assets that accelerate powerful insights, integrated solutions that deliver personalized engagements, and advanced analytics that measure results and optimize engagements. The right partnership empowers brands to better connect with their constituents, improving clinical and commercial outcomes.



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