

Front & Center

Orchestrated Customer Engagement

Building trust to build results starts at the top

The biopharmaceutical industry needs more trust. Three-quarters of prescribers do not trust the information industry provides. A quarter of prescribers do not allow meetings with pharma representatives due to a lack of trust and transparency.

Trust is similarly lacking *within* biopharma firms. The familiar organizational model segments companies into deliberately disconnected siloes. Each vertical silo—sales, marketing, call center, medical affairs and so on—focuses on its own objectives, systems and messages. The result is a cacophony of messages that confuse, irritate and alienate prescribers as it encourages internal inefficiencies, increases costs and depresses profits.

The solution is to orchestrate customer engagement across the organization. Orchestrated customer engagement (OCE) uses strategic IT systems to enable cooperation and coordination by creating horizontal integration across all customer facing functions including multichannel marketing, sales force effectiveness, market access, medical affairs and call center. This new horizontal mindset provides consistent context, precision and transparency of information. The result is coordination of decisions and activities that avoids customer confusion and deepens trust.

Pharmaceutical Executive recently discussed the emerging concept of OCE with Richie Etwaru, Chief Digital Officer of QuintilesIMS. Improved trust, improved ROI, improved profitability, lower costs and faster time to market for new therapies are just some of the benefits of orchestrating customer engagement from the C-suite.

Trust is a basic requirement for all busi-

ness relationships. And when it comes to relationships between biopharmaceutical manufacturers and their primary customers, physicians and other prescribers, trust is lacking.

A 2015 survey by Deloitte Consulting found that 75 percent of physicians expressed a lack of trust in the information provided by the biopharmaceutical companies. The 2015 EPG Health Media survey found that a 25 percent of health care providers (HCPs) ban meetings with pharma representatives because of a lack of trust or transparency. Biopharma firms fail to communicate with HCPs in ways that create trust.

“Banking, automotive, consumer products and other industry categories have faced similar challenges,” Etwaru said. “They created customer relationship management (CRM), sales force automation, marketing automation and a host of other digital tools to help manage, refine and orchestrate customer communications across multiple channels and markets. Pharma has not made a similar transition to orchestrating the customer experience.”

Most industries deal directly with the end user or customer. Biopharma has no direct relationship with its end users, the patients who use its products. Biopharma manufacturers deal with HCPs, pharmacists, health systems, regulators, policy makers, key opinion leaders, third-party payers and other surrogates who play pivotal roles in purchasing decisions but do not use the products themselves.

Biopharma is also more heavily regulated than most industries. Many large organizations exist in siloes, but many biopharma verticals are mandated by law or regulation. A field sales rep, for example, may only deliver marketing, clinical

and pricing messages. A medical science liaison (MSL) may only deliver medical and efficacy messages. And the two may not communicate details about what they might have shared with the same HCP.

The combination of surrogate customers and strict regulatory requirements has created bright vertical lines in biopharma organizational structures. Sales, marketing, market access, medical affairs, patient services, regulatory and home office operate with relative autonomy.

“Each vertical has its own array of multichannel communication programs to educate and influence its own subset of surrogate customers,” Etwaru continued. “Every brand sends its own clinical messages, marketing messages, pricing messages, medical messages, efficacy messages, regulatory messages. And HCPs see a deluge of communications at inappropriate times, containing inappropriate information and inappropriate calls to action.”

Contrast this unorchestrated flood of messaging to the education and marketing approaches that HCPs see in their consumer lives. Companies such as Amazon have demonstrated that orchestrating customer messaging and communication does more than communicate product details and reviews that move customers to a purchase decision. Customer-centered messaging has created powerful expectations of a customer experience that meets their individual interests, needs and preferences. Orchestrated customer engagement builds trust, confidence and bottom-line results.

Building Trust to Build Results

The dichotomy between the orchestrated consumer experience and the un-

orchestrated biopharma experience has profound effects. HCPs see an industry that is not transparent, seems incapable of rationalizing customer contacts, cannot answer simple questions in a single email or phone call, speaks with multiple voices and can't be trusted.

At the commercial level, lack of trust may prevent a company from getting its message through to prescribers. That may open the way to competing brands that are seen as more trustworthy and reduce sales. That same distrust may lead to decisions to not use a particular product, which may harm patients.

“Lack of trust can harm HCPs, too, Etwaru said. “By the time the patient gets to the office, most have already consulted Dr. Google, Nurse Wikipedia or patient-powered resources such as PatientsLikeMe to come up with a likely—and likely wrong—diagnosis. Replacing the patient's initial conclusion with a medically valid diagnosis requires evidence. Lack of trust in biopharma deprives HCPs of a key source of evidence to support their diagnosis and treatment recommendations.”

Biopharma is making significant investments in digital technology to improve the customer experience. The industry is learning that while digital can be computationally precise, it is deaf to human tone and context. The very multichannel marketing, sales force effectiveness and closed loop marketing programs intended to ensure that no HCP misses a vital message are responsible for sending multiple messages to the same HCP because no program and no vertical knows what any other entity is doing.

Customer Engagement, Orchestrated From the Top

Biopharma recognizes the need to unify and orchestrate the customer experience while continuing to meet regulatory re-

quirements. A survey by EY and Forbes Insights found that more than 91 percent of chief marketing officers see building trust as a key focus of their strategic and competitive visions. Nearly as many, 87 percent, see digital technology as the tool to build credibility, trust and long-term relationships. Most, 67 percent, see collaboration across business units as the way to manage and improve the customer experience.

There are multiple approaches to orchestrating customer engagement. One method is to build OCE from the ground up. That could work for a new firm, but massive disruption in an existing organization rarely produces positive long-term results.

QuintilesIMS is developing an IT overlay that sits atop existing information systems to provide horizontal awareness and connectivity. The goal, Etwaru said, is not to abolish the bright lines that separate verticals, but to soften them.

“The entire commercial operations arm of a biopharma must be orchestrated horizontally so that each of the vertical departments converge on the shared goal of improving brand performance,” he explained. “And that means orchestration from the very top of the organization.”

Outside the C-suite, no single individual or department is expected or rewarded to think outside a single vertical. Even within the C-suite, many senior executives are focused on a single vertical. Senior executives need to adopt a horizontal mindset and consider the entire enterprise beyond their own vertical of interest.

Who orchestrates customer engagement depends largely on organizational culture and the personalities at the top. In some firms, the Chief Operating Officer may be the most effective champion to focus attention on customer engagement. In other firms, it could

be the Chief Information Officer, the Chief Digital Officer, even a newly-created Chief Orchestration or Chief Engagement Officer.

Regardless of who champions OCE, the goal is to expand perceptions, rewards and activities beyond the bright lines that separate verticals to focus the entire organization on the needs of the customer. Every vertical benefits from improving information management to better understand HCPs, their interests and the channels that each customer prefers.

Thinking horizontally and communicating beyond verticals to better understand and more effectively win the customer is the underlying concept. Orchestration is emerging as the commercialization vehicle of choice to drive market acquisition, revenues and margins higher.

“Sales and marketing will never become a single entity, Etwaru said. “But OCE can help them collaborate and move along parallel trajectories to more successfully support the brand. The concept is to listen more to HCPs and talk less so that each message is consistent, correct and deeply contextual to build trust.”

OCE is evolution, not revolution. And the evolution has already begun. OCE offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet one of the most vexing challenges in biopharma, the growing lack of trust among HCPs. Streamlining communications and coordinating customer interactions helps companies build relationships with HCPs based on trust and transparency.

As OCE helps increase organizational efficiency, it also builds internal trust and transparency by integrating processes and moving best practices across verticals. The result is improved ROI, improved profitability, lower costs and faster time to market for new therapies.