A balanced multichannel communications process

Uncover the customer experience and reflect it in your strategy

By combining my 20-plus years of broad experience as a multichannel practitioner and Complete HealthVizion's extensive communications experience working within the healthcare market, we've developed a balanced process for delivering multichannel communications ideally suited to the pharmaceutical and healthcare markets.

If you follow this straightforward customer-focused approach, you'll deliver a more fulfilling experience and be better positioned to positively shape the outcome.

'Understanding real-life customer behaviour is critical in driving an effective multichannel approach'

Get closer to your customers

Understanding real-life customer behaviour, both on and offline, is central to an effective multichannel approach. The landscape is constantly changing and nuances between different customer types need to be factored in: content and channel preferences of payers and key experts will invariably differ from those of the wider healthcare professional (HCP) community and patients.

There's a danger that we may make assumptions without robust validation, so it's important to use the research process to build the personas that represent customers' needs. What are their current and desired behaviours? Why, where and when do they consume content? What do they trust and value, and which formats suit their needs?

By drawing up the most likely customer-information journeys, content development and delivery can be more relevant and focused to achieve positive results and behaviour change.

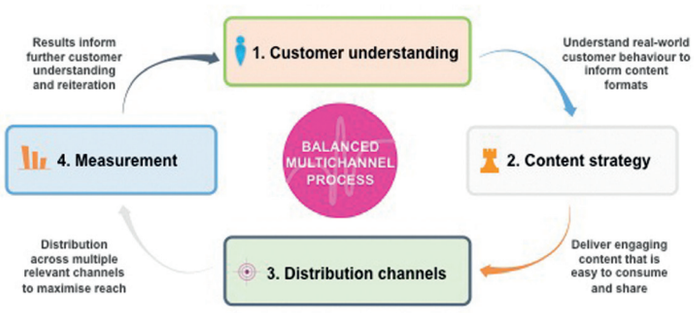
Front-line teams can be important in building this picture but using wider input will help to validate and fill any knowledge gaps quickly and cost-effectively. By drawing on broader experiences, assumptions can be constructively challenged.

Make the content engaging and accessible

Once you've built a compelling scientific story, the next step is presenting it to best effect. The variety of formats available can make decisions more difficult but don't assume because you've done things a certain way previously that's always the optimal solution.

Personas and information journeys will inform you but the guiding principle is to make it easy for customers to access, consume and share content with others.

HCPs are time-poor but have a large appetite for knowledge. Therefore, channels such as digital can complement traditional routes (which are still highly valued) but give additional control and interactivity for the user with a brevity that helps embed knowledge.



'Ensure your content is easy to consume and share with others'

Many customers look to fill knowledge gaps online, using a wide range of devices to consume rich media and because of this, the digital user experience should be grounded in this real-life context: if a website isn't mobile friendly, they will leave; if the app isn't easy to use or practical, it will sit on the shelf.

Think about distribution

If customers don't see your content, the investment won't be fully realised. No single channel used in isolation will change behaviour, it's the combination that encourages greater likelihood of engagement and change. It's a series of small interactions or 'nudges' that accumulate and work together, and we need to move away from single to multichannel attribution that reflects the real world more accurately.

Also, content should sit in the places that HCPs frequent and trust, so natural search engine optimisation and recognised paid networks have a role to play in increasing the visibility of this content. However, it's interesting to see some physicians setting up their own Facebook groups to discuss published studies and clinical challenges.

Of course, face-to-face interactions are still highly valued, so it's important to use focal points such as congresses and meetings to best effect. For example, deepen and widen the information journey by re-purposing and developing interactive scientific posters to engage with the customer in a more detailed way and to broaden the audience.

RICHARD WHITE

Measure it

By measuring the value of multichannel activity you can build a strong case for investment. Whether it be 'footfall', visitors, engagement or awareness, identify how you intend to measure behaviour change and what works best both in terms of content formats and channels to facilitate this.

Digital activity itself is infinitely measurable but technology can also be used to assess the performance of different concepts through traditional channels. For example, by quickly and cost-effectively measuring changes in attitudes and behaviours using linguistics analysis, ongoing communications can be optimised for effectiveness. Usability studies allied to rapid prototyping can be powerful tools to test overall engagement and user-friendliness prior to launch, and evolve and improve understanding of your product's value.

Successful multichannel marketing involves a balanced process reflecting real life. By uncovering the customer experience and reflecting it back in your content and distribution strategy, then measuring and evolving the output, you can achieve better outcomes for you, your customers and for patients.

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