



POINT OF VIEW

Rethinking HCP Engagement at Digital Pharma East: Future-Proofing Your Brand With Empathy



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The art, science, and business of practicing medicine has changed radically in the past decade.

In addition to the sea of change within physicians' practices, there have been dramatic culture shifts in how we engage with people, technology, and brands—setting a new wave of expectation for brands to deliver value, ease, and understanding through every experience. The concern becomes, “Is my brand falling behind?”

Future-proofing your brand engagement strategy isn't about the race to any one fancy new technology, tool, or touchpoint. The future will be won by rethinking how to deliver tailored experiences of value that meet customers where they are (not where brands want them to be)—experiences that innately understand the realities of being an HCP today.

Taking an empathetic view towards HCP engagement will be critical to helping brands evolve as better partners who can anticipate and adapt to their customers' evolving needs.

Meeting HCPs where they are

To understand where to meet a brand's customers, we must become mindset experts in customers' wants, needs, and preferences on how we engage.

Feeling tired, burned out, and nearing the “breaking point”

Shortly before walking into Digital Pharma East, a colleague shared an interesting analysis that investigated the state of working in healthcare today.¹ As the gap between societal expectation of HCPs and their ability to deliver quality care widens, **nearly half (46%) of US physicians** now regularly report symptoms of burnout. **More than two-thirds of family physicians (85%) and general internists (73%)** surveyed regret choosing their career path, saying things like:

“The joy of practicing medicine is gone.”

“I can't tell you how defeated I feel... The feeling of being punished for delivering good care is nerve-racking.”

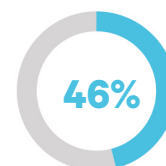
“I am no longer a physician, but the data manager, data entry clerk... I became a doctor to take care of patients. I have become the typist.”

It's increasingly difficult to be a healthcare worker today. The next question in understanding the HCP becomes, “What experiences are shaping this mindset?”

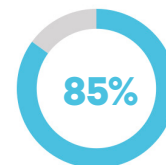
Short on time, more “on their own,” balancing practice burden and satisfaction

We know rep access to physicians is at an all-time low,² putting more onus on prescribers to be their own experts and brands to deepen investment in “non-personal” channels. But we also see HCPs are spending more time worrying about the business of their practice, desperately fighting to keep patients satisfied (enough) with the service received.

This year at Digital Pharma East, Linda Ruschau—Chief Client Officer at PatientPoint—shared that HCPs are feeling pressure to innovate the waiting time. These physicians are increasingly doing things like using the exam room as a secondary waiting room, to provide the illusion of progress, for an average of nine additional minutes without medical staff present.



US physicians regularly report symptoms of burnout



family physicians (85%) and general internists (73%) surveyed regret choosing their career path

TAKEAWAY:

HCPs are being stressed to wear multiple-hats: businessperson, logistics manager, researcher, and treasurer. Brands will be successful when they offer turnkey solutions in areas where physicians were not formally trained.



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Time pressure is straining relationships with patients

It's no secret to anyone who's seen a doctor in the last few years that these time pressures are hindering the doctor-patient relationship. HCPs are spending less time in the exam room, with higher patient load per physician, yielding a rushed and pressured experience.

In another presentation at Digital Pharma East, Tracy Yedlin—Customer Engagement and Marketing Innovation Team Lead at Takeda—shared, “Patients have an average of [just] 11 seconds to explain their symptoms” before the physician “begins interrupting” as a way to illustrate how empathic content design can better support patients in the exam room.

TAKEAWAY:

Brands can demonstrate empathy towards the over-stressed physician by creating experiences that value the time of, and ability to hold the attention of, ever-crunched HCPs.

Getting into the customer mindset through empathetic content creation

Shaped by their experiences, HCPs increasingly expect more from Pharma to deliver engaging content that surprises, entertains, and makes their jobs easier. Three engagement strategies we're excited about are:

- **Maximizing micro-moments:** With physicians' attention at an all-time premium, we see more engagement in small pockets (think 2 to 5 minutes) throughout the day. Platforms like Figure 1 specialize in helping brands serialize content into bite-size pieces, using case-based learning with peers to challenge, pique curiosity, and inspire HCPs.
- **Tailor for daypart, format, and density:** While it may seem obvious, brands all too often deploy one-size-fits-all messaging through non-personal tactics. Break out of “pre-approved” content and tailor for the media experience where your brand will most likely encounter your customer. For example, consider the evolving trends in physician digital dayparts to deploy long-form clinical content in evening hours or streamlining emails as reminders for quick, mobile engagements during fast-paced office hours.³
- **Take an “edutainment” approach to engagement:** In the era of shortening attention spans and higher expectations, brands must make each interaction work harder to grip users. AR technology offers new ways to experience things like disease pathology that often fall short in static media. Likewise, platforms such as Level Ex help drive learning objectives for patient identification, dosing, and even side effect minimization through gameplay mechanics as the indirect consequence of play. Leveraging well-established video game psychology principles, game-based engagement has proven to maximize learning potential, change behavior, and build skills across industries.

How to rethink HCP engagement in 2020:

Not sure where to start? Next year, commit to differentiating your brand by demonstrating true understanding of your customers from a 360-perspective, meeting them with more empathic, useful experiences that exemplify these best practices:

- **Simplify:** Make content easy to engage with for stressed, pressed, on-the-go physicians.
- **Prove Worth at the Outset:** Set honest expectations upfront for the attention you seek.
- **Waste Not:** Frontload experiences with value and maximize each second thereafter.
- **Make Content a Release:** Turn experiences into a purposeful escape from the everyday.
- **Feed the Ego:** Tap into competitive nature and relentless pursuit to “be the best.”

From understanding your audience, to identifying the right message to resonate in channel, Evoke can help take your brand to the next level. Contact us at business@evokegroup.com or 646.561.4002 to discuss your engagement strategy.

1. From Triple to Quadruple Aim: Care of the Patient Requires Care of the Provider | Annals of Family Medicine (2018) <http://www.annfammed.org/content/12/6/573.full>
2. Sales Rep Access to Doctors At All Time Low: “Accessible Prescribers” Down From 77% in 2008 to 51% in 2014 | Policy & Medicine (2018) <https://www.policy.med.com/2014/07/sales-rep-access-to-doctors-at-all-time-low-accessible-prescribers-down-from-77-in-2008-to-51-in-2014.html>
3. The Digital Savvy HCP Survey: Top Trends 2019 | PharmaFuture (2019)