



Point of View

Why Differentiate Digital Health from Health Tech?



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What's the difference between health technology and digital health? This question was posed by one of the presenters at this year's Digital Pharma West (DPW), held at the end of June in the San Francisco Bay area.

Health technology refers to the solutions being developed to tackle a given challenge, including everything from websites and email, to the software and hardware we use to deploy them.

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Digital health is more encompassing; it refers to the convergence of health and technology to improve health delivery and outcomes.

While the difference at first blush appears to be a nuance in terminology, **it can reframe how we think and change how we interact with our customers, drive results for our brands, and ultimately improve the lives of the people we are trying to help.** Simply put, one asks us to consider the tools and the tactics, while the other makes us imagine what's possible before finding a way to make it happen.

With this shift in thinking, I look back at DPW 2019 as more than just a great chance to catch up with old friends, meet some new ones, and explore some of the latest tactics and tech in the industry. Looking through the digital health lens, three themes stand out, which I think are going to continue having an impact on healthcare and the work we do:

1. A new healthcare team is emerging (or has already emerged).

While healthcare decisions will continue to be made by the patient and the healthcare professional (HCP), there was a lot of talk about artificial intelligence (AI) at DPW this year, and its potential use cases in supporting the healthcare team. By looking deeper, with the digital health point of view, the real excitement here was around AI's role in data assessment and insights, with companies today literally drowning in data. Many of our clients in pharma have invested in a variety of data streams yet have difficulty finding the time to leverage all of this information and optimize engagements that can ultimately benefit their customers—not to mention their brands. With AI, we can share and learn information faster. **This technology has the potential to present HCPs and patients with focused and proven options that allow them to determine the best path forward—quickly and efficiently—for their unique case.**



2. More than just a tactic, the real value of social media is unlocked through its application.

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to social strategy, through the digital health lens, social media can serve as an evolving “engagement plan” with our customers. **By appropriately designing a program, social can build long-term engagement, taking new users (consumers and HCPs) who are simply looking at content and then getting them to join the conversation as contributors and content creators, highlighting their experiences with products and services.** Stories at DPW echoed how the increase in social engagement was proportional to the level of brand advocacy as the plan moved customers from more passive to becoming active users.

3. The future of digital health is personalized.

Our expectations that brands are “customized to me” only continues to rise—and is aligned with engagement durability among consumers and HCPs alike. Health literacy was a great example discussed during one of the DPW sessions as one area of opportunity for personalization. With peak search behavior occurring when symptoms present, and again following a diagnosis, healthcare companies need to recognize that customers have very different needs. Some need information at a “101” level while others are looking for more specific details that go beyond awareness and education to deliver on their expectations for information on things like treatment and therapies. **The technology exists to help us customize these search results, but we must think with a digital health mindset to meet these user expectations, creating a more durable customer experience.**

In some ways, digital health and health technology, are two sides of the same coin. One looks at technology and asks what can it do and how can it be applied to solve a health problem. The other looks at the bigger health challenges and asks how can we design integrated, connected solutions.

Some companies see the digital customer experience as a way to drive efficiencies or automation. While those are true, at Evoke we are driven to make “Health More Human,” and see digital as more than just a channel, but as a way to improve customer experiences—and lives. In this time of significant data acquisition, quality metrics, and engagement feedback, we have excelled at creating brands and campaigns that drive engagement and communicate complex medical information in a personalized way that customers want. To learn more, reach out to your Evoke Client Services lead or contact me at eric.steckelman@evokegroup.com.

A LOOK AT CHATBOTS

Take chatbots for example. A hot topic at DPW, this technology is gaining popularity around the globe. However, the majority of consumers say they still want human assistance. In a recent survey, more than 50% of people reported that they prefer to speak with a human instead of getting help from a chatbot. In the United States, that number is even higher, at nearly 60%, which was reflected in the experiences shared by conference attendees. But if we look beyond the health technology and see chatbots through the lens of digital health, we may discover that this tool still has the potential to offer real value—but maybe later in the journey, after an initial, human interaction that builds trust, when a customer is seeking something more specific and values a quick response..