

The Rise of the Rep Orchestrator Model in Asia

How pharmaceutical sales reps are becoming “orchestrators” and delivering enhanced customer experiences in the digital world.

This paper looks at how the traditional pharmaceutical sales rep has evolved to become an orchestrator, tailoring the use of face-to-face and digital channels to deliver an enhanced customer experience.

Although the rep orchestrator model is not new to the industry, getting it right has been a challenge for many pharma companies. Those who have been successful, however, are realising impressive benefits, including increased customer engagement and market share growth.

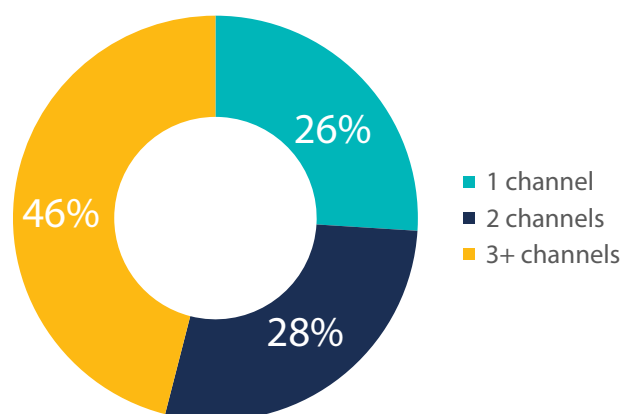
Learn how leading pharma companies are adopting the rep orchestrator model and the five critical enablers to successfully embed the model in your organisation.

Digital is here to stay, and leaders are acting quickly

Across APAC, we have seen different market responses to the pandemic. Overnight, face-to-face (F2F) was no longer an option in some markets, forcing pharma companies to look at alternative ways to engage HCPs. Interestingly, Veeva Pulse data shows that even in APAC markets where HCP access has improved and F2F interactions have recovered to pre-pandemic volumes, pharma companies have continued to use digital channels to complement F2F activity.

It is clear that digital is here to stay, and pharma companies are adapting to this new reality. Today, pharma sales reps are using more channels than ever before to engage with HCPs. Recent data shows that nearly half of reps in APAC are using 3 or more channels in May '22.

Usage of channels by reps, APAC*



Source: Veeva Pulse data, May 2022



46%

of reps used 3 or more channels in May 2022

As new channels emerge and customer preferences evolve, the industry inevitably faces new challenges as they shift from the traditional F2F engagement model to a multi-channel one:



New digital expectations

Today, customers have heightened expectations of a seamless customer experience. HCPs are comparing digital interactions with pharma companies against their experiences in everyday life such as online banking, shopping and food delivery. Ensuring every interaction is seamless and intuitive is no longer nice to have, but basic hygiene for pharma companies.



Different engagement preferences

At the same time, pharma companies need to recognise that not all customers have the same engagement preferences. Customers' preferences are likely to continue to change. A pharma company's customer engagement model therefore needs to be flexible to accommodate the diverse needs of customers, and be able to evolve as preferences change.

The emergence of the rep orchestrator model

Among the many customer engagement models which have emerged as a response to these new challenges, one model has established dominance in the life sciences industry – the rep orchestrator model. In fact, Veeva analysis found that 90% of industry thought leaders and professional services providers predict that the rep orchestrator model will be the new model for engagement in the future.

Sitting at the heart of the model is the rep who plays the critical role of the “orchestrator” of the customer experience. The orchestrator rep is highly skilled in leveraging a variety of digital channels and uses channels according to customers’ preferences. They have access to a repository of content which has been optimised for different channels at their fingertips and select and present relevant content to the right customer at the right time. Finally, the orchestrator rep plays a critical role in collecting customer insights, including understanding channel preferences and collecting feedback on marketing content, to drive ongoing improvements to the customer experience.

The goal of the rep orchestrator model is to ensure that the overall experience across F2F and digital channels is seamless and tailored to the individual customer. But beyond providing a great customer experience for the HCP, there are other benefits which pharma companies are seeing from adopting the rep orchestrator model, including increased market

What are the benefits of the rep orchestrator model?

When done right, the rep orchestrator model offers several opportunities for pharma companies:

Enhanced customer experience



The orchestrator rep model helps drive greater engagement and a better overall customer experience as it ensures the experience for each customer is tailored to their interests and preferences.

Market share growth



Some have even reported increased market share after shifting to the rep orchestrator model. One pharma company found a strong correlation between the number of channels being used to engage with HCPs and market share growth, when comparing the performance of a brand in two regions at different stages of embedding the rep orchestrator model. This has helped drive greater excitement across the organisation for the potential of the rep orchestrator model, as they are still early in their

Engaged and motivated employees



By placing the rep at the centre of the model, and empowering reps with the tools and skills they need to thrive across offline and online channels, some pharma companies have reported that employee engagement has significantly improved.

Five critical enablers to embed

For many organisations, the rep orchestrator model represents a significant shift from the traditional F2F only engagement model. New capabilities across people, platforms and processes are required. Based on our experience working with pharma companies who have adopted the model, there are five critical enablers which are needed to ensure success.

01

New skills and competencies

To be leading “orchestrators”, reps need to have the right mindset, skills and tools to deliver a tailored experience for the customer. Sales training should include how to leverage digital channels most effectively, planning a customer journey across multiple channels and building and maintaining relationships in a digital world. Training needs to extend beyond reps to sales managers so they can coach reps to be effective orchestrators.

Recognising new skills are needed for reps, sales managers, as well as other roles including marketing, some pharma companies have reviewed and updated job descriptions and competency models to better reflect the new skills required for the rep orchestrator model.

02

Data-based decision making

To measure, monitor and optimise the customer experience, pharma companies need to be able to track engagement activity, customer data and feedback efficiently across all channels. Key to this will be an effective data infrastructure which enables a 360-degree view of the customer.

Having the right insights at the right time is critical to enable reps to make more informed decisions when planning their customer interactions. We’ve seen pharma organisations implement guided ‘nudges’ for reps suggesting next best actions with links to content that have been optimised for the customer’s preferred channel.

Similarly, marketers need to be able to continually optimize their content and channel mix strategy based on feedback and engagement insights. Marketers should also have visibility of what content is being shared with HCPs. Working with pharma companies, we have found that there is often a gap between the strategy and what is executed in field. For example, we have observed instances where only a small portion of content developed was shown to HCPs or, despite content being developed for different ‘personas’, the same



03

Multi-channel cycle planning

As the number of touchpoints increases, so does the complexity of engagement planning. Leading pharma companies are moving away from traditional cycle planning which only set targets for F2F interactions and incorporating digital channels in their cycle plans.

Adding new channels to the cycle plan leads to new considerations such as the value of activity in different channels. What is the value of a F2F call compared to an opened email? Does this value change for different customers? We have seen different approaches being taken to answer these questions. Some pharma companies have conducted analysis to measure the impact of an interaction in one channel compared to another on sales performance to determine channel weights which are then applied to engagement activity.

04

Access to relevant content

To deliver a personalised experience, reps need to be able to easily access relevant content for the HCP based on where they are in the customer journey. Some pharma companies have made it easier for reps to find relevant content by surfacing relevant content based on the HCP's persona and where they are on the adoption curve.

Another shift we are seeing is pharma companies with diverse product portfolios across multiple therapy areas moving to 'patient-centric' rather than 'HCP-centric' content. For example, instead of having separate e-detailer content for two brands, combining the content for both brands based on patient profiles. The result is a better experience for both



05

Cross-functional collaboration

While the rep sits at the core of the rep orchestrator model, medical representatives, sales managers, marketers, commercial excellence teams and IT are all critical to supporting the overall HCP experience.

Several pharma companies have set up regular, cross-functional meetings to share customer feedback, discuss options and assign tasks quickly. We have also seen the increasing use of social channels to facilitate more agile collaboration within and across therapy areas.

Conclusion



Talking to pharma companies who have adopted the rep orchestrator model, many noted that the journey is challenging but also necessary to future-proof their organisation and stay relevant to customers. While F2F relationship-building remains important, it is clear the traditional F2F only engagement model no longer meets the needs of today's customers who demand greater choice in the channels to engage with and quality customer experience.

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