

Communicating in perfect harmony

Rising expectations from payers and prescribers demand a step change in the way pharma companies engage with them

The end of the blockbuster era has meant many things for pharmaceutical companies, not least the need to evolve. One of the areas that requires change is customer engagement.

Previously, a blockbuster budget meant that it was affordable, if not entirely advisable, for brand teams to operate in silos. But in today's multichannel world this approach is rapidly eroding customer trust and loyalty; to rebuild both, the choir needs to be singing from the same hymn sheet at every performance.

"The entire industry suffers from a trust deficit with its surrogate stakeholders like doctors and payers, as well as its end consumer, the patient," notes Richie Etwaru, chief digital officer at QuintilesIMS. The firm's thinking on what constitutes optimal customer engagement has zeroed in on the role, and consistency, of the messages shared with influencers.

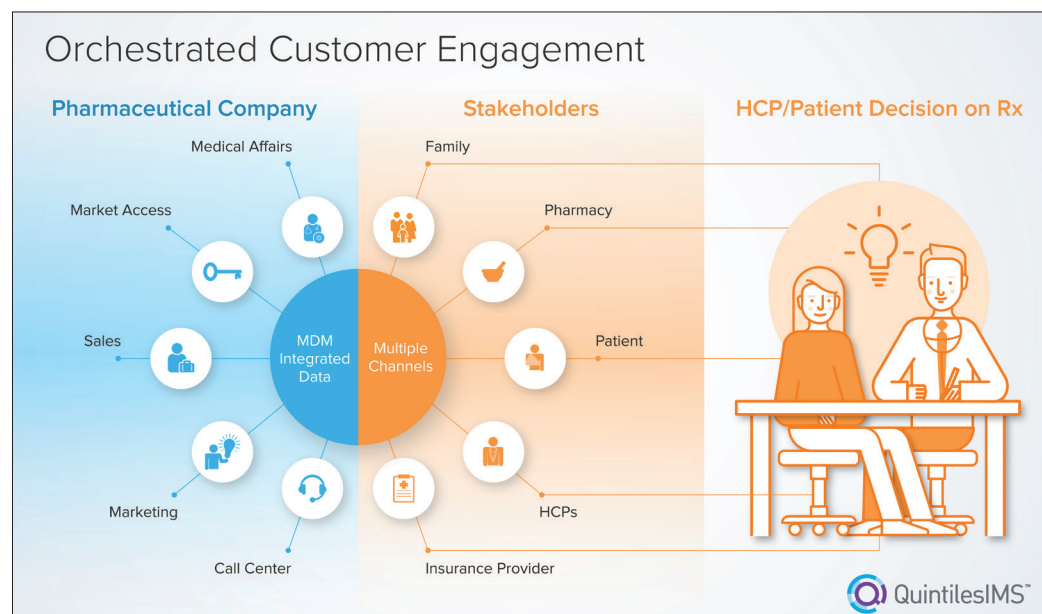
release later this year, that integrates key functions to improve customer engagement and generate internal efficiencies.

The frictionless system allows cases to be passed seamlessly from one team to another, providing a 360-degree view of customers and moving beyond multichannel marketing (MCM) and sales force effectiveness (SFE).

It's the difference between talented soloists working in isolation, versus an orchestra of strings, brass, woodwind and percussion working in harmony with a conductor following a single score.

"We looked at the impact on both patients and the pharmaceutical industry of the multi-stakeholder

environment, which has always been there but has gained more influence on prescribing decisions. Each of those influencers has an influencer from a pharma company behind him or her, forming a secondary circle of influence," Richie says, adding: "The challenge is that each of those lines pointing to the patient is a single business workflow – whether from the rep to the doctor to the patient or the market access rep to the payer to the patient and so on. But there's limited connectivity between those workflows."



"You would imagine with digital systems that messages would be consistent – how could they not be? But there are more inconsistent messages going to prescribers and patients now than ever before. Every time this happens, trust deteriorates."

Richie says part of the problem comes from the 'multiplicity effect', whereby multiple multichannel efforts target the patient, payer and prescriber with a multitude of messages. "It's a problem that we've created for ourselves by not having systems that are aware of each other."

Conducting the orchestra

A solution lies in orchestrated customer engagement (OCE). It's a new sales and marketing strategy QuintilesIMS has developed, and will

A single, clear refrain

Acknowledging the complicated landscape, OCE involves

functions such as market access and medical affairs as part of its drive to avoid the discordant clash of repeated refrains that are guaranteed to annoy prescribers.

To accomplish this QuintilesIMS has invested in several exciting areas of new technology, including artificial intelligence, to be able to answer pharma's 'next best' question – from who is a company's next best customer to what is its next best channel, conversation or content. But, Richie explains, the company isn't simply proposing a technology-led change. It's taking aim at a "business model-led revolution".