

# FROM ASPIRATION *TO ACTION*

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Embracing a customer-centric  
mindset in Medical Affairs through  
digital transformation



# Foreword

Never before has customer experience been so important in Medical Affairs. A wealth of data exists around customer experience and digital transformation, but only a few papers focus on the pharmaceutical industry or specifically Medical Affairs. That is why the Medical Affairs Digital Strategy Council has developed a white paper that provides tangible and solution-oriented insights on how to embrace a customer-centric mindset driven by digital transformation to improve customer experience.

Although Medical Affairs engages with multiple customer groups, this paper focuses on the customer experience of healthcare professionals (HCPs). Ensuring HCPs have a greater understanding of our medicines and supporting their clinical decision-making process, the experience, and outcomes of patients will also improve. It is planned that there will be subsequent white papers that focus on other customer groups, including patients.

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**Mary Alice Dwyer**

Chair, Medical Affairs Digital Strategy Council™

## Putting the customer first

Fundamental shifts in prescribing patterns and patient behavior are directly impacting the status quo of Medical Affairs organizations.

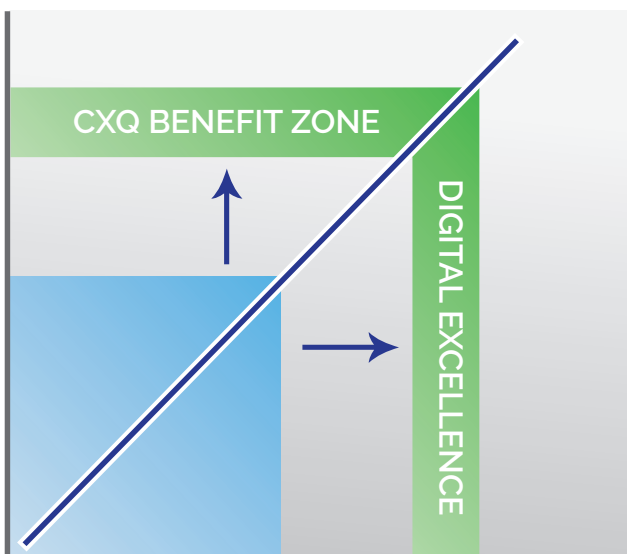
Digital evolution is at the core of this transformation, with technology rapidly changing business orthodoxies. Customer expectations are increasing as we now desire the same level of customer experience that we get from companies such as Amazon, Apple, and Google in every other interaction, including healthcare.

For most pharmaceutical companies, this represents a major shift in thinking. It requires putting the customer, as opposed to the

medicine, first and addressing customers' emotional, social, and behavioral needs, as well as their clinical ones. Industries that have embraced digital transformation as a key driver for improved customer experience and have embedded this into every aspect of their business are gaining competitive advantage.<sup>1</sup>

This white paper explores why Medical Affairs must act now to embrace a customer-centric culture and work cross-functionally to find solutions to regulatory hurdles. It calls for action to champion the technological changes needed to deliver good customer experience.

**Disciplined digital transformation enables customer teams to create and sustain great customer experience.**



*Research indicates that many life sciences companies aren't fully leveraging customer experience to differentiate themselves in the market and gain the trust of key audiences—especially physicians. Organizations that work to align their offerings with their audience's channel and content preferences will be better positioned to deliver relevant and valuable content that increases brand affinity and loyalty over the long term.<sup>1</sup> -DT Consulting, an Indegene Company.*

## Why Medical Affairs is strategically positioned to drive positive customer experience

Scientific exchange is a core function of any Medical Affairs group, and therefore, Medical Affairs has always been at the frontline, leading external medical interactions with HCPs as well as other key customers.

With science becoming more and more complex, HCPs are looking to pharmaceutical companies for high-level non-promotional scientific content and engagement. The focus on personalization of healthcare delivery and characterization of individual patients also means there is an increasing need to differentiate based on outcomes and to optimize care delivery. Medical Affairs is

**“Before we can change customer experience, we need to first change the mindset and how we think, feel, and emotionally engage with our customers. It’s more than just replacing existing activities with digital solutions. To be truly customer centric, we need to first think about the patient or healthcare professional and what is the job that they are trying to get done. This has to come before we consider the product or the requirements of the business.”**

**Kevin Asher, Allergan**

uniquely positioned to lead in these areas with the deep-rooted scientific capabilities and expertise that is required.

HCPs want to have immediate access to content as well as the ability to easily recall it for the future. Medical Information and field-based medical groups have stepped up with the introduction of digital solutions to meet these needs and improve customer experience.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on the vital role that functions such as Medical Information play within an organization at a time of crisis.

## Defining positive customer experience in Medical Affairs

A literature review revealed that customer experience is multifaceted with a wide range of definitions. The consensus of those interviewed for the white paper was that there is no single definition as it depends on the individual needs of the customer, their expectations, and the channel being employed. True customer centricity puts individuals at the center. It is created for individual customers, not markets or segments.

Instead of a single definition, this paper sets out 3 core criteria for delivering good customer experience and interactions in Medical Affairs. These criteria were identified by the interviewees for this white paper and agreed upon by the members of the Medical Affairs Digital Strategy Council.

# 3 core criteria for delivering good customer experience and interactions in Medical Affairs



## Human-centered design

- Inspired and co-developed by the ultimate users
- User experience is intuitive and effortless
- Joined up and seamless experience and systems (omnichannel)
- Aligned with the user's workflow with easy and quick access in real time

## Individualization

- Optimizes customer experience for each person
- Uses a rich data set to adapt and adjust the experience for each person
- Responsive to the needs of each individual, ensuring geographical and cultural sensitivity and environmental and generational relevance

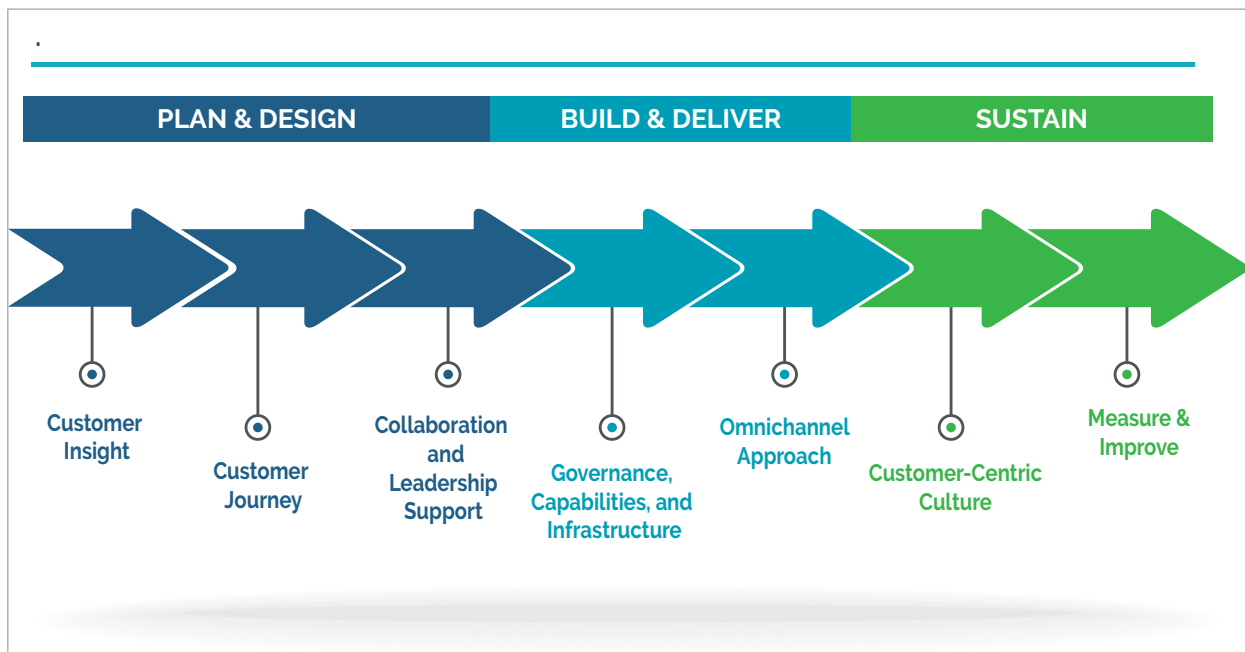
## Trust

- Credible, accurate, and evidence-based content across all channels
- Transparency in how data are obtained and utilized
- Reliability of service and speed of response

“There is a growing debate between personalization and individualization, and this is highly relevant for our interactions with HCPs. There is a level of personalization that most people are comfortable with and almost expect- for example, seeing their first name when they login to a company website. However, when this becomes highly individualized, reflecting past behavior and preferences, then it may start to feel intrusive or ‘creepy.’ It comes down to trust and earning that trust is essential to ensuring the individualized customer experience is value added.”

**Dave Tang, Allergan**

# Delivering good customer experience—critical imperatives for success



## Plan and Design

A critical first step in the planning process is gathering customer insights through research and data to understand “Who is the customer? What defines them? What job are they trying to get done.” According to DT Consulting, “Across all the activities related to customer experience management, many firms start leaking CX value by not taking customer preferences into account when they are planning their activities.”<sup>1</sup>

These data then inform the customer journey to understand the customer

experience as customers actually experience it—a complete journey that cuts across multiple functions and channels.

While it can be argued that customer journeys are often more complex for the pharmaceutical industry than other sectors, Mary Alice Dwyer, Chair, Medical Affairs Digital Strategy Council, stresses the importance of developing and applying journey strategies similar to those of other industries when transforming customer experiences. “Similar to any other service providers, we need to create a detailed road map for each journey, one that describes the process from start to finish.”

Collaboration is critical. By building effective cross-functional partnerships and breaking down traditional functional silos, it will enable Medical Affairs to be more impactful, for example:

- Working with marketing and market research to have greater access to customer insights
- Partnering with legal and compliance to ensure clear and consistent guidelines on how to manage traditional areas of risk
- Working with IT teams to create an infrastructure that fosters collaborative working, for example, shared Customer Relationship Management platforms
- Collaborating externally with a wide range of stakeholders with a common purpose to improve customer experience.

Similar to any change management program, endorsement from senior leadership is key to success and fostering a culture of experimentation and exploration of ideas. "It needs to be okay to fail, and this can only come from leadership," added Mary Alice.

## Build & Deliver

Alongside experimentation, there needs to be effective governance and respect for the guardrails that are essential in a regulated industry. Competencies can be addressed by blending teams of traditional medical-scientific backgrounds with emerging skillsets in technology and data.

In addition to capabilities, investing in infrastructure is key. Only focusing on the front-end experience without changing the back-end operations that support it is unlikely to be sustainable.

Core to delivery is a customer-centered omnichannel approach, which involves delivering a data-driven, customer-centric experience that flows seamlessly across channels and devices. As Medical Affairs embraces digital transformation, it is important to learn from other industries that have already launched large-scale omnichannel transformations, for example, banking, where the widespread adoption of digital service channels and telecommunications has resulted in 44% of all consumer requests now being handled through digital channels.<sup>3</sup>

**"Large, complex organizations tend to be saddled with functions and departments that operate in silos. Developing a better customer experience increasingly requires modular, more flexible architecture that can support seamless handoffs from one channel to another, as well as integrate different data sources to assemble a single view of the customer."**<sup>2</sup>

**Bain & Company**

## Sustain

To create and sustain a customer-centric culture, Bill Strickland, Allergan, urges everyone in Medical Affairs to, "Put yourself in the shoes of your customer and experience the service or content offering as they would."

Bill Strickland also emphasized that, "A company must embed digital in its operations

and ways of working, rather than 'bolting' it on as a separate project or through a separate team. Embedding is the only way to change behavior in the organization."

Establishing and reporting on metrics is of paramount importance for digital to be fully entrenched within an organization. There are various measurement models available that can be used as a reference point, for example, CXQ (Customer Experience Quotient),<sup>5</sup> CXV (Customer Experience Value),<sup>6</sup> and ROX (Return on Experience).<sup>7</sup>

"The key to satisfying customers is not just to measure what happens but also to use the data to drive action throughout the organization."<sup>4</sup>

**McKinsey & Company**

An innovative and user-friendly approach to measure the HCP experience is the "Stupid, Dumb, Smart, Genius" framework, which is a very simple assessment of whether the interaction enables the HCP to "get the job done."<sup>8</sup>

**Stupid**

does not get the job done or uses data in the wrong way.

**Dumb**

gets the job done but does not adapt to the data. On certain occasions is a fine solution but is a one-size-fits-all approach.

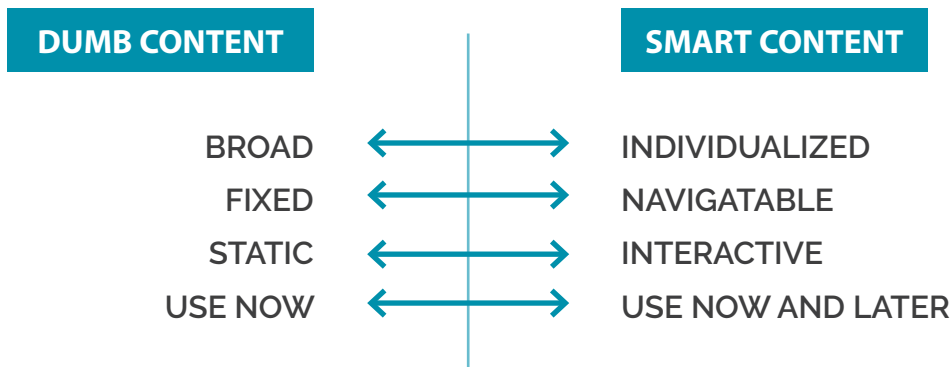
**Smart**

uses data to get the job done better, faster or multiple jobs done once; creates an individualized experience.

**Genius**

uses data and digital context to anticipate what the customer needs.

**Stupid, Dumb, Smart, Genius framework**



Source: <https://gostonemantel.com/>. 2020. Accessed May 20, 2020.

## Key challenges

Interviewees identified the following key challenges when trying to embed a customer-centric mindset.

### Regulatory environment

Regulatory constraints were cited as the main barrier restricting the uptake of digital solutions. The following positive steps were recommended to evolve the regulatory environment by:

- Establishing the trust that is essential among the regulatory authorities, customers, and the public
- Having a united voice as "one industry" when negotiating with regulatory authorities
- Creating internal awareness and understanding of how regulations have progressed and challenging traditional interpretations that are not factually based
- Having the courage to do things differently and take the calculated risk
- Evolving our positioning among regulators as a "provider of products" to a "provider of services"

"We have been talking about this for years. We need to stop using the regulations as an excuse and move on to working in partnership

with regulatory authorities to find solutions to deliver a better experience for customers and ensure patient safety." Andrew Fariello, AstraZeneca.

### Short-term goals vs long-term vision

Some companies fail to capture the full benefits of their improvement efforts because they concentrate on optimizing individual touchpoints rather than tackling customer experience in its entirety.

It is also important to balance the need for human emotional connection alongside the availability of digital solutions that may appear more exciting and on trend. This is especially relevant in Medical Affairs where relationships and one-on-one interaction based on trust and scientific credibility are key and continue to be of long-term strategic importance. "There is a need for investment around human behavior training and dynamics that enables emotional connection in the digital space. Relationships are core to our business and need to be augmented, not replaced by digital tools." Dominick Albano, Pfizer.

"You have to invest time; it's not just something that you buy, plug in, and boom you see the results. Adopting a tool does not guarantee its effectiveness. The tool must be used in the right way and focus on what you are trying to solve or improve. We need to ask ourselves

before we come up with the solution, what is the issue we are trying to solve." Bill Strickland, urges everyone in Medical Affairs.

## New entrants from the technology industry

With other organizations offering healthcare information and solutions, there is a risk that Medical Affairs will be sidelined as customers go to other sources for information, which may be inaccurate or even dangerous. "Customers don't call a company's call center when they have a question. The first thing they do is Google. We need to ensure we are the first place they go to, and this requires advocating for greater regulatory flexibility regarding the digital exchange of information." Dave Tang.

"With the increasing number of digital influencers in healthcare, the risk of misinformation is a rising threat to patient safety. We have a moral obligation to take action to ensure that accurate information about our medicines is available for patients," he added.

## Breaking down internal silos

Internal collaboration is hindered in large complex organizations where there can be a

lack of clarity around accountabilities across different divisions resulting in a silo mentality. Perceptions can also exist around functional "ownership" of HCP and key opinion leader relationships and the fear of losing these relationships through cross-functional collaboration. This is further hindered by the barriers between commercial, R&D, and medical, which can be restrictive.

"We have to figure out a way to tear down the walls between medical and commercial and integrate in a way that works for the customer. When healthcare professionals contact a pharmaceutical company looking for information, they want a fast and meaningful response." Jennifer Riggins, Lilly.

## Scalability

Managing scalability when expanding initiatives from regional to global or bite size to enterprise and the inherent timing and resourcing implications was considered to be a significant challenge.

"Scalability issues are compounded in a pharmaceutical environment where multiple functions are involved and there are heightened compliance and regulatory sensitivities." Andrew Fariello.

## CALL TO ACTION

Delegates called for everyone in Medical Affairs to take action now to embrace the 3 steps outlined below.

 <p><b>Change</b> mindset to put the customer first</p>	 <p><b>Champion</b> technological changes that are needed</p>	 <p><b>Challenge</b> and evolve the regulations that don't make sense for customers</p>
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## AN EXCITING FUTURE AHEAD

More and more customers expect service providers to provide a highly personalized and individualized approach. Pharmaceutical companies are no exception to this and must rise to the challenge before external entrants take this space. Medical Affairs is in a strong strategic position to lead and drive customer centricity and embed digital as a key enabler.

Now is the time for everyone working in Medical Affairs to think outside the box and find meaningful solutions for customers

and ultimately patients. The COVID-19 crisis has shown how Medical Affairs can rise to the challenge and take a leadership role in ensuring fast, efficient, and meaningful responses to all stakeholders at a time of intense pressure.

This is a marathon, not a sprint, requiring long-term investment and commitment from leadership. The time is right to move from aspiration to action and drive the change that needs to happen to put the customer first and foremost.



# “Working backwards” to transform how you work<sup>9,10</sup>

## Overview

Usually it starts with a plan and ends with a press release. But like many things, Amazon does it differently.

Amazon's approach is referred to as “working backwards.” It starts by working backwards from the customer as opposed to starting with the product or service and then trying to work out who is the customer and how they might benefit.

## Approach

- Start by writing an internal press release announcing the finished product or service. The target audience for the press release is the customer who will use the new/updated product or service
- Focus on the customer problem, their needs, and why existing services or products are not meeting these needs
- Identify how the new product or service can solve this—what are the benefits that really make this solution unique and attractive for the user
- Keep it simple and keep rewriting the press release until the benefits are genuinely unique and attractive
- Once the project moves into development, the press release can be used as a

checkpoint—are you building what is in the press release? This ensures you stay focused on achieving the customer benefits and not creating additional “nice to haves” that were not considered important enough to be included in the press release

## Conclusion

- By working backwards, you get the chance to work on your idea and flesh it out. But you're also forced to put it to the test
- When you decide to move forward, your press release will help you to stay focused, to continue to see things through the eyes of your customer, and to communicate in a way they'll easily understand
- After writing and rewriting, refining and reiterating, it will become clear if the idea is really worth pursuing. That clarity often helps you to let go of mediocre ideas so you can concentrate on great ones

## Acknowledgments

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- **Andrew Fariello**  
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*\*At the time of writing this white paper, these members were employees at Allergan, which is now AbbVie.*

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The Medical Affairs Digital Strategy Council was set up by Indegene with the vision to help Medical Affairs organizations embrace technology and innovation through a digital and data-driven model to further unlock growth and maximize impact across internal and external engagements. It serves to bring together leaders from the industry to evaluate practical applications of modern technology for increasing the efficiency of the organization, enhancing communication, and improving compliance.

**DISCLAIMER** - The views, thoughts, and opinions expressed in this white paper belong solely to the authors, and not to their respective employers or any other organizations.

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