

# How to Enhance Provider and Patient Engagement in Tech-Savvy Healthcare

**P**harmaceutical representatives have always been a welcomed resource and consistent office visitor for healthcare providers (HCPs). Today, in a world operating largely virtually, pharma reps are re-strategizing HCP engagement in the same way providers are rethinking patient outreach.

For physicians, telehealth has intercepted in-person appointments, and contact tracing has become a priority, limiting office visits. Even post-COVID-19, telehealth will remain preferential for some patients, and HCPs will have to adapt their schedules and patient appointment flow. Even though telemedicine creates opportunities for additional check-ins, ongoing monitoring and more systemized support of patients, providers will have to determine how, where and when they will spend time with sales reps.

In-person sales calls have been an industry standard and best practice for HCP engagement, but pharma reps are now navigating virtual communication platforms and continually seeking improvements in providing HCPs with critical healthcare information. Even in a virtual world, providers are still interested in having face-to-face, value-driven conversations with sales reps. Reuters reported that almost 70% of HCPs prefer live remote or phone detailing to webinars, e-meetings, email, website browsing, bots and online journals — yet more than 72% of HCPs say in-person access to providers will remain limited post-COVID-19.

In this shifting virtual health landscape, EVERSANA, a leading provider of global commercial services to the life sciences industry, is working with pharma reps to take on hybrid capabilities in digital technologies and effective in-person communication. Without evolving to a hybrid rep model, pharmaceutical companies could miss these key opportunities for growth.

## Developing Agile HCP Engagement

Relationships built and fostered by pharma reps before the pandemic were the foundation for sales growth and market receptivity. With these in-person relationships, providers trusted

and relied upon new treatment information from their local sales reps. And reps were able to tailor the messaging and the experience for each HCP. During office visits, reps had a chance to educate staff, provide samples and co-pay cards, answer questions specific to HCPs and their patients, and gather anecdotal data on treatment efficacy and patient access.

Today, reps must utilize an array of virtual tools to grab providers' attention, manage provider preferences and improve virtual physician-to-patient interactions. From Zoom to emails to text messaging, reps need to efficiently and compliantly transfer in-person communication experiences to digital platforms. In further educating HCPs, reps must also assist providers in learning new tools and strategies to virtually educate patients as well. While reps and providers work to improve telehealth strategies, they need to remain agile enough to pivot back to future in-person visits.

The overall flexibility of the hybrid rep model allows for a more personalized experience for HCPs and increases growth opportunities for pharma companies. With virtual platforms, the same number of reps can now see a larger number of HCPs than the traditional, in-person model, therefore reducing costs. Through digital technologies, reps can accommodate providers nationwide who prefer virtual communication while catering to the in-person needs of local providers and patients — ultimately expanding opportunities for product educational reach.

## Optimizing Resources with Digital Technologies

The loss of in-person rep visits during COVID-19 has also created information gaps for pharma companies. Through consistent provider visits, reps were able to capture insights about drug prescription utilization and patient access issues. Now reps are limited in not only whom they can talk to from HCP offices, but also when and how.

For this reason, applying digital communication methods to marketing strategies isn't enough. Pharma companies need to implement real-time data into marketing resources



**Peter Marchesini**  
President, Field Solutions  
EVERSANA

and sales rep support and training. With data-driven, actionable goals, marketing and sales teams can work together to find new opportunities for growth and close gaps in HCP engagement and patient access.

With tools like ACTICS by EVERSANA, pharma companies can use artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies to strategically deliver the right level of engagement and synchronize brand management strategies with HCP deliverables, therefore maximizing resources and tracking ROI. By understanding the challenges HCPs and patients are facing to provide appropriate patient treatment, brand management teams can guide sales reps toward targeted HCP outreach while monitoring which rep activities — whether virtual or in-person — are the most effective.

With real-world feedback at their fingertips, marketing teams can leverage ACTICS to develop sales force sizing models against the current market and product landscape to optimize sales rep strategies, improving the management of essential HCP needs and, most importantly, optimizing patient communications and outcomes.

## Adapting to the Changed World of Pharma

As pharma companies and their reps rushed into a virtual world in 2020, they'll have an

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advantage in customizing and improving HCP engagement in 2021 and years to come. To be successful, pharma reps must continue to evolve into communication experts for a tech-savvy healthcare industry. Learning how to efficiently use digital tools is crucial, as HCPs and patients have access to more communication channels than ever before.

In addition to adopting digital communication platforms and strategies, reps may have to step into new roles. As physicians seek clinically based conversations steeped in real-world data and scientific facts, reps will have to begin thinking on a more clinical level, acting as a medical liaison, a marketing manager and a market researcher all at once. Reps will need to provide more value than ever before in order to earn time in the provider's schedule. Moving forward, it will be essential for reps to perform exceptionally, and they need to be armed with valuable information to once again solidify their role and value within busy HCP offices.

The need for agile sales reps increases as other in-person communication resources for HCPs remain virtual or disappear. Without annual medical meetings and conferences, pharma reps will be at the forefront of educating HCPs on new patient care options and cutting-edge treatments. By adopting virtual health and digital communication strategies, reps can ensure they're still providing face-to-face support and insights for HCPs as they continue to navigate patient telehealth as well.

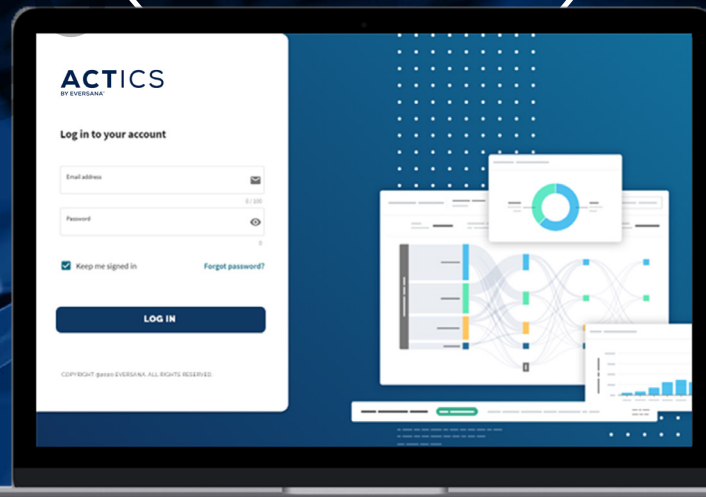
The COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed the future of pharma by inciting mass digital innovation. Virtual health will remain an integral method for HCP and patient communications, and pharma companies and reps need to efficiently adopt this evolved "hybrid" model. By arming themselves with reps who are trained for a multichannel world, pharma companies will pave the way for enhanced HCP engagement and patient care while achieving greater access, in-person or virtually, with even the busiest healthcare providers. <sup>PV</sup>

*EVERSANA is the leading provider of global commercial services to the life-sciences industry, with integrated solutions rooted in the patient experience that span all stages of the product life cycle to deliver long-term, sustainable value for patients, prescribers, channel partners, and payers.*

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