



Omnichannel Benchmarking: a new era of HCP engagement



As the landscape of healthcare changes, so too must the way that we interpret and measure performance and success. This is particularly evident in marketing.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, measuring engagement typically involved detailed follow-ups, contacting a pool of practitioners to gauge their awareness of a particular product and then extrapolating that information across the country. This estimation could then be used to determine audience engagement and interaction success rates.

The trouble is that in a digital-first or hybrid engagement model, this approach is unlikely to yield great success. Instead, companies are increasingly turning to omnichannel marketing to bridge gaps in communication created by the pandemic.

“By omnichannel, we’re really talking about a method of marketing where we try and talk to our customers in the way that they want to be spoken to,” explains CSL managing director Matt Beckett. “Effectively, you’re putting them at the centre of the strategy and giving them options to get your content in different ways.”

While this approach opens up new avenues for engagement, it also presents a significant challenge when it comes to analysing and understanding success.

Redefining HCP engagement monitoring

In previous years, pharma was largely in charge of the marketing experience, sending reps to meet with customers face-to-face. Through this approach, the interaction was initiated and run on the company’s terms, with a physical understanding and record of meetings and outcomes.

However, with the sudden shift to omnichannel engagement, this dynamic has been flipped on its head – with clients now determining how and when they choose to interact with reps and marketing content.

“Overnight, reps couldn’t talk to most of their customers effectively,” explains Matt. “You’d send out an email campaign and get a 27% open rate, 4% click-through, and you’d think: ‘Is that good? I don’t know’.”

As the pandemic progressed, it quickly became clear that identifying and measuring omnichannel marketing success would require companies to think outside of the box and develop solutions that effectively addressed the unique needs of modern marketing.

“If you’re in a horse race, but you can’t see any of the other horses. You’ve no idea where you’re in the race. All of a sudden, now you can see where everybody else is around you,” explains Matt. “Whether you’re ahead or behind or on the wrong track.”

For Matt and CSL commercial director Lee Ronan, this is where benchmarking can be a valuable asset. Using a syndicated and impartial benchmarking service, such as CSL’s Omni Benchmarking service for pharma, allows companies to evaluate their performance against an agreed set of omnichannel metrics.

“Whereas pharma has been used to having everything in their CRM when they had a sales-based model, a more rounded sales and marketing-based model, has been much trickier for them. Trying to work out what actually can they measure effectively was also part of that.”

Essentially, benchmarking helps companies to put their marketing performance into context, providing a clear understanding of how effective their strategies are performing in comparison to their competitors.

Addressing expectations across the industry

Of course, to create a benchmarking system that provides tangible benefits, you first have to understand what metrics are valued by both users and the industry. For CSL, this meant establishing a syndicate of companies to help determine which metrics would be of most use in measuring omnichannel marketing performance.

“One of the main reasons we came up with the product was to try and help people see what’s possible, because if you can see that one company’s managing to get to a certain level, then that’s got to be doable. It’s got to be worth investing and trying to get there or the opposite might be the case.”

“Traditionally, you might have done a DFU or contacted GPs and asked how many of them have heard of product X, product Y, or product Z in the last month or two, then extrapolate that across the country to get an idea of share a voice,” says Lee “The idea here is companies provide all of their data from all of their systems. You can then see that actually of the 15, 20 companies, this is how you stack up without there being any extrapolation.”

Using insight from key industry experts across the industry, CSL settled on seven core benchmarking metrics: activity by channel, channel coverage, web traffic, coverage consistency, email stats, activity by type, and consent rates.

“The criteria for us really were to make sure that we were collecting metrics that were going to be useful to everybody, but also that could be collected in a good enough quality,” explains Matt.

Creating this foundation of core omnichannel marketing metrics was only part of the process, as to truly provide actionable insight, companies must agree on how to interpret the data.

“If someone opened an email twice, you might count that as two in your business, but we are going to agree that for the purpose of this syndicate to benchmark, we’re going to count it as a one,” says Lee.

There are many advantages to improving performance visibility across the industry. Perhaps the most important is that benchmarking allows companies to better identify where to focus their efforts. Instead of applying arbitrary targets and hoping for success, companies have a detailed roadmap that can be used to develop content and marketing strategies that will achieve the best results.

“Now it’s a case of ‘what does good look like’,” says Lee. “If someone else is achieving two calls a day and you’re only achieving 0.4, maybe you can’t achieve two because maybe your product doesn’t facilitate that level of engagement.”

Common challenges of migration to Omnichannel

Traditionally, transforming a marketing strategy was a lengthy and detailed process, filled to the brim with strategic decisions over content, infrastructure and management. However, the sudden arrival of COVID-19 denied many companies the luxury of time when it came to navigating the migration to omnichannel engagement.

As there were few examples of omnichannel benchmarking available prior to the transition towards this engagement model, concerns around consent and data quickly emerged. For CSL, anonymity became a central feature of the system to address such concerns.

“One of the things we worked hard on at the start was trying to work out how we make it completely anonymous while still making it useful” explains Matt. “That was something we worked on with the group. We worked out what their comfort levels were and worked out a way of comparing them to each other in a way that meant that they were comfortable to do that.”

Identifying ways to engage with new contacts or getting spontaneous meetings has also been a notable challenge in omnichannel marketing. Whereas face-to-face interactions gave reps an opportunity to meet with clients in between meetings, for example, in a hospital corridor, with the addition of digital channels, reps had to develop new opportunities for introductory engagement.

“A lot of focus nowadays is on secondary care and seeing hospital specialists. For many of the promoted products, they are the key audience,” says Matt. “The reps didn’t tend to have appointments so often with these doctors. They would go to a hospital, they would hang around in the corridor at the time that they knew there was going to be a shift change, and they’d bump into the people and get those conversations in those ways. Without these opportunistic meetings, it became really difficult to make that connection. How do you make an appointment with somebody? How do you then contact them to get even a virtual call?”

Pharma is able to use the Omni Benchmark service to gauge whether they are being relatively successful at overcoming these challenges, or if further investment might be warranted.

The future of omnichannel engagement

While Omnichannel marketing has helped shape HCP engagement over the past two years, as we begin to look beyond the pandemic, it is unclear how marketing strategies will evolve as the role of the rep develops and changes.

What is clear is that both high-quality data and knowledge are invaluable assets for companies as they navigate the changing engagement environment. Benchmarking can play an important role here, giving companies a contextualised view of marketing performance against leading players in the industry.

Using this information, companies can make informed strategic decisions around engagement, ensuring that the content delivered to HCPs is of the highest value.

“Omnichannel is here to stay, and it’s only going to improve and increase in the number of channels,” explains Lee. “We’ll find newer and novel ways to engage with our customers, whether it’s advertising on their computers, social media, or whether it involves regulation and guidelines changing even further to understand this new weird world we live in.”

About the interviewees



Matt Beckett Matt Beckett is managing director at CSL. Matt has been working in the healthcare business intelligence industry for over 20 years, starting out in quantitative market research. He has been on the board of CSL since 2007 and became managing director in 2018. With a background in economics, Matthew has a particular interest in the statistical analysis of data, behavioural economics and finding practical applications for artificial intelligence in analytics. He believes in getting involved with the industry, and chairs the BHBA's Ethics and Compliance Committee as well as a forum for senior pharmaceutical analytics executives.



Lee Ronan Lee Ronan is commercial director at CSL. Lee has worked in healthcare business intelligence since 2002, beginning as an analyst and CRM admin before spending time in an SFE role as well as working on secondment as a medical rep. He has a passion for helping clients use data and visualisations to make informed decisions – Lee's experience in the field gives him a unique insight into the challenges and opportunities offered by the healthcare sector. Having previously served on the British Healthcare Business Intelligence Association (BHBA) board, Lee is now a member of the Best of Business Intelligence (BOBI) committee with a focus on organising the BHBA Analyst of the Year competition, as well as the Newcomer awards.

About CSL

CSL specialises in business intelligence and data management solutions for the healthcare sector. This includes Machine learning, Data warehousing, Sales performance management & Patient outcome analysis. CSL supports pharma companies to understand their marketplace and achieve their business goals by providing consultancy, expertise and software tools that strengthen effective business intelligence.

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