

PHARMA CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

20 SECRETS TO
10X YOUR CX AND
BOOST PATIENT
OUTCOMES



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20 Secrets to 10X Your CX & Boost Patient Outcomes

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The book is dedicated to the people who work in pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. They are now the heroes to the world as they help us get past the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, for decades they have helped people live better and long lives. Heroes now and always, thank you for everything you do!

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INTRODUCTION

More than once, pharma has literally saved the world. As I write this in July 2021, there have been three vaccines approved in the US for COVID-19, one by Pfizer, one by Moderna, and one by Johnson & Johnson.

Another COVID-19 vaccine, this one by AstraZeneca (and Oxford), has been approved in the UK. And there are several more vaccines on the horizon that will help the world get past this pandemic.

Each is doing their part to let us feel hopeful again. Hugging a parent? Going to a ball game with friends? Seeing your favorite band in concert? Yes, yes, and yes!

Pharma is making all of it possible. They should be heroes to the world! And yet, most people are indifferent at best. It's not that pharma companies are faceless brands that consumers can't connect with as they do with Apple, Spotify,

and Peloton. But according to The Harris poll, only 53% of consumers hold a positive view of pharma.

And a recent Gallup poll on consumer perceptions found pharma rated *below* electric utilities and oil and gas!

But why?

Because pharma does not emotionally connect with its ultimate customer, the patient, like great consumer brands do. Let me explain.

The best consumer brands are completely obsessed with the customer experience, and the entire company is focused on it. These companies first create each customer experience with intention. Nothing is left to chance. They meticulously map every aspect of the customer experience—from first engagement to first purchase to continued usage over time.

And everything in between.

Everything.

The great consumer brands emotionally connect with the customer. Over and over again.

And they do that by delivering experiences that customers value, remember, and share with others.

Pharma does not do this. At least not consistently.

But they can. And, more importantly, they must if they want to continue to thrive. Patients who have positive experiences with pharma are more likely to join clinical trials, successfully onboard to new medications, adhere over time, and enjoy positive medical outcomes.

And better experiences provide pharma with the opportunity to connect with underserved populations and help the people in those populations live longer, better quality lives. Put another way, a great patient experience means *all* people have a chance at better medical outcomes and better lives.

Why am I qualified to write about this topic?

The company I founded in 2001, PeopleMetrics, has been working with pharma companies since we started. We have helped pharma understand stakeholders' needs, wants, and experiences.

Up until 2015, most of this work was traditional market research type work, primarily with physicians and other Healthcare Professionals (HCPs)—sales force effectiveness, market landscape, segmentation, message testing, you name it.

And then in 2015, we got a call from a client who asked us

if we had measured the experience with “patient support services”? We asked, “What in the world are patient support services?”

We learned quickly. Patient support services, also known as “patient support programs (PSPs),” are game changers for patients. These services help patients with access to their medication, improve adherence, better manage their disease, reduce complications, provide financial assistance, and more.

Then in 2017, a client asked us if we could help them measure the patient experience in a global clinical trial. This was new and incredibly exciting territory. A better patient experience in clinical trials impacts the ability to recruit and retain patients (including those from underserved populations), informs design for future trials, and provides an indication to the effectiveness of different trial sites.

We started to understand that being patient-centric applied across commercial *and* clinical.

Hmmm.

At the same time, the customer experience (CX) space was exploding, with nearly every industry embracing the concept and investing heavily to better engage with their customers. There even appeared a new category of software

called “experience management,” which helps companies measure and manage the customer experience. Analysts like Forrester and Gartner cover this space regularly.

This got us thinking, how does customer experience, or CX as we call it, apply to pharma?

And “pharma CX” was born.

In 2018, I wrote a book entitled *Listen or Die: 40 Lessons that Turn Customer Feedback into Gold*. I wrote that book because customer feedback about their experiences is the foundation for emotional connection between companies and customers.

Indeed, customer experience remains the only true differentiator in most industries.

Yes, even in pharma. Especially in pharma.

This is easily the most important work my company has done or will do.

It is one thing helping a hotel measure and improve the checkout experience or helping a telecom company improve their customer support.

But it’s quite another to help a pharma company make it

easier for a new patient who has cancer to get the treatment they need to live a longer and higher-quality life. Or help a pharma company recruit and retain patients for a clinical trial that results in a new medicine that saves lives that can't be saved today.

So, we got to work.

This book is about mindset more than anything else. Specifically, it's about pharma changing its mindset from one focused on developing products to one focused on delivering experiences. I want to shift pharma's approach to model the companies that cultivate not just customers, but advocates and raving fans, over and over again.

I am writing this book to share twenty secrets that my company, PeopleMetrics, has learned in helping pharma companies focus on the customer and create exceptional experiences. Each secret falls within one of four sections.

The first section introduces three secrets that lay the foundation for pharma CX. The second offers four secrets that introduce how pharma CX applies to both clinical and commercial teams. The third section contains ten secrets around patient support services, the front-line for commercial pharma CX. The final section includes three secrets that are key to implementing a successful pharma CX program.

And at the end of the book, there is a bonus section, which takes a peek into the future.

Let's dig in.



EVEN IN CLINICAL TRIALS

Pharma CX is a game changer for clinical trials...and the FDA is watching!

Even after reading Secret #4, you may still ask yourself—does pharma CX really apply to clinical trials?

The answer is a resounding “yes!”

Pharma CX is key to driving patient recruitment, improving retention, increasing adherence, and reducing patient burden in clinical trials. Moreover, if there are multiple trial sites, delivering a patient experience that is consistent across all of them is a pillar of CX (see Secret #3).

Even more, recent events have made pharma CX in clinical trials even more relevant. Fueled by COVID-19 and the social justice movement, many pharma companies are

focusing on diversity in clinical trial recruitment. For example, according to a recent FDA report, African Americans make up about 13% of the US population but less than 3% of participants in oncology or cardiovascular disease studies.

The pharma industry is committed to changing the way clinical trials are organized and in turn the experience of all patients in these trials. For example, Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS) recently committed \$300 million in funding to efforts to increase diversity in their clinical trial recruiting. BMS is using these funds to raise disease awareness and education, increase healthcare access, and improve health outcomes for medically underserved populations. They are also building trial sites in underserved communities both urban and rural and training a racially and ethnically diverse group of 250 investigators.

While it is commendable that pharma is seeking to create more inclusive clinical trial populations, they must do more. These underrepresented groups need to have a great experience in the clinical trial after being recruited. It would not be surprising to find that the expectations, needs, and experiences of a disadvantaged population aren't necessarily the same as those of other patients. Pharma can adjust the experience they deliver based on the feedback of these underserved populations, increasing the likelihood that these patients are retained throughout the trial. The good news is that pharma companies have begun to systemati-

cally create patient experiences in clinical trials. Clinical teams are evolving from “What we subjected patients to” and “What we occasionally got patient input on” to “What we co-created with patients” and “How the patient’s voice is vital to better clinical trial outcomes.”

The evolution is expanding beyond pharma companies as well. The FDA’s PFDD is a systematic approach to help ensure that patient experiences are incorporated into drug development and evaluation.

A key part of this is obtaining patient feedback to facilitate enrollment and retention and minimize the burden of participation in clinical trials.

What can pharma do to take the lead in including the patient’s voice in clinical trials?

First, ensure the *research nurse* at the trial site is the face of patient experience. The feedback they give should be part of your pharma CX program. There are a lot of entities involved in a clinical trial—study sponsor, contract research organization (CRO), country manager, site manager, investigator, study coordinator, etc. But the research nurse (coordinator) is often the point person for a patient—this person serves as the face of the trial, represents the sponsor, and translates the patient experience that the protocol is designed to create.

To drive patient retention and improve patient experience, pharma should focus on educating research nurses about how to deliver an excellent patient experience. Plus, recruiting a diverse range of research nurses will go a long way to enable pharma to understand and deliver a better experience to underserved populations. In turn, including research nurse feedback as part of a comprehensive pharma CX program in clinical trials is best practice. Managing that feedback by making suggestions on how the research nurse could better serve patients is also key.

It's important to remember that caregivers' feedback matters too! Patients don't suffer diseases alone. Caregivers are often the unsung heroes in a patient's clinical trial journey—they are the shuttle to and from the site of care, and they are the ones who support the patient during enrollment; they encourage patients to continue and sit with patients during treatment.

As such, they can be a proxy for patient feedback or provide their own perspective on the clinical trial. A large global pharma client of ours weighed this decision recently in relation to a global clinical trial they were launching. They decided that because feedback was required to improve the trial protocol, then patients were the focus. However, beyond that, caregivers were also included, and all feedback was considered to improve the experience of all trial stakeholders.

Keep in mind that caregivers are an important part of the retention equation—their feedback should be a key part of a comprehensive pharma CX program.

Finally, remember that pharma CX clinical measurements need to be patient-friendly. After making the decision to collect feedback from research nurses, caregivers, and patients, it is important to consider how and when this feedback should be collected. Surveys are effective, but only if they are respondent-friendly. For example, a client of ours had patients in a clinical trial who were sight impaired and required the font size of the survey to be increased. Little things like this are big things to patients. In Secret #6, I will go through specific questions to ask patients and caregivers in a clinical trial.

TRACKING SUCCESS

Often, study sponsors ask us, “What is the value of collecting patient feedback in real-time throughout the trial if we can’t really act on the feedback? Once the protocol is set, it is very hard to change.”

Asking a patient or caregiver for feedback throughout the trial is a way for pharma to understand whether the experiences they created are working. It is pharma CX in action. Yes, some feedback might not be immediately actionable, but feedback on some matters *is*: satisfaction with trial site,

perceptions of trial visit, feeling respected through the process, and more. And over time, patient experience feedback can be linked to metrics like trial retention. Plus, learnings from the patient experience in one clinical trial can be used to inform protocols for future trials.

Measuring the patient and caregiver experience in clinical trials is fast becoming best practice. Knowing site performance on controllable attributes and taking corrective action might make all the difference to patient experience and retention, in this trial or a future one.

Next, let's focus on what questions to ask in your clinical trial pharma CX program.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SEAN MCDADE has been helping companies optimize customer experiences for over twenty years. He is the founder, CEO, and visionary of PeopleMetrics, a leading provider of experience management software and advisory services. Sean has worked with leading pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies such as AstraZeneca, Sanofi, and Novartis. He has created PeopleMetrics pharma CX solutions, including the Patient Hierarchy of Needs framework for patient support services that is featured in this book. Sean's first book, *Listen or Die: 40 Lessons that Turn Customer Feedback into Gold*, was an Amazon bestseller. He holds a PhD in Business Administration and Marketing Science from Temple University and has published eight articles in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. A recipient of Philadelphia Business Journal's 40 Under 40 award, Sean is also an active angel investor in the Philadelphia region. Sean resides in Philadelphia and spends as much time as possible in Brigantine, NJ, during the summer with his two sons, Ben and Henry.