



### **3 Things Health Care & Life science firms can learn from Amazon**

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In the recent months, there has been a lot of speculation about Amazon's entry into the pharmaceutical sector. Given Amazon's track record of disrupting and displacing established players in every sector they compete, it is not surprising that incumbents in the sector are nervous. The health care sector is nothing like retail, it is far more complex and highly regulated. Whether Amazon will be successful in this sector remains to be seen.

However, this is a perfect opportunity for the health care sector to learn from Amazon and perhaps disrupt itself before an outsider can displace them. Among the many things that define Amazon's approach, three out: Customer Centricity, Omni Channel & Data Centricity.

#### **1. Customer Centricity:**

Amazon is obsessed with customer experience and customer satisfaction. Everything they do is geared towards customer centricity. This includes seemingly extreme steps like, allowing competitors to sell alongside them on their portal to hosting Netflix (a competition to Amazon Prime) on Amazon cloud, there is perhaps no other company is willing to go to such lengths to be customer centric. It is no wonder that Amazon has grown by leaps and bounds.

Now consider a customer in the health care sector. In the US, it is nothing short of mission impossible to hunt for an affordable health plan, let alone transfer patient information between different providers. In recent years, the out of pocket expense, deductibles and co pay expenses for patients has increased without a corresponding increase in transparency in the pricing or outcomes.

However, all this changing. The star rating program in the US is bringing in a certain amount of transparency to the sector. The ratings are a combination of factors including aspects such as customer feedback & complains, proactive tests and screening of the population etc.

Driven both by government legislation and self-regulation; Pharma companies, Medical device manufacturers, Payers and Providers are finally coming together to deliver the best outcomes to the patient.

We are seeing a similar trend in our engagements with leading healthcare companies, they are stepping beyond their comfort zone to experiment with technology and outcome based business models, in an effort to become more customer centric.



## 2. Omni Channel

Channel strategy and customer experience are closely related. The ability to seamlessly engage potential customers at various touch points goes a long way in improving their experience. Here again Amazon provides valuable lessons. Amazon offers a seamless experience, be it on a mobile, tablet or a PC. A customer can browse items on a laptop and save them in the basket. He can then continue the rest of the buying journey on a mobile device.

Amazon integrates itself so thoroughly into your online world that products of interest, pop up as adverts on your Facebook feed. The ability to follow the user at every online touch point and offer them relevant information is an excellent example of an integrated omni channel experience. Some might argue that being an 'online' retailer Amazon has one missing piece in its omni channel experience, the physical store. Amazon has filled that gap with its recent acquisition of Whole Foods, a brick and mortar operation with over 450 stores.

The Health care & life sciences (HLS) sector has much to learn & emulate from Amazon. The ability to engage with all buyer personas, be it doctors, health care professionals or payers; on all channels, be it online ones like webinars, emails, social media, KOL webinars or offline channels like rep or MSL visits will be key. Furthermore, the ability to offer a seamless engagement experience between the online and offline model will be important.

Consider the case of a Rep meeting the doctor in his office, a very traditional face to face engagement. But during the meeting, in response to an off-label usage query the rep loops in his MSL via an online channel. The conversation between the doctor and the MSL continues online. Following this conversation, the pharma company pushes relevant information to the doctor's tablet app.

The pharma sector is highly regulated and implementing an Omni channel experience for Health care practitioners is far more complicated compared to a similar exercise in the B2C world of Amazon.

We have first-hand experience in solving these problems for Pharma clients. In such a regulated industry the threat of FDA imposing huge penalties associated with overstated claims or misleading marketing messages is a big challenge. Now, factor in the various stakeholders involved; payers, doctors, medical reps, medical science liaisons etc and what you have is a huge challenge. A challenge that regular CRM and marketing systems used in the B2C or even in the B2B sectors cannot address. Which is why a bespoke Omni Presence platform in partnership between Microsoft and Indegene will make more sense. Unlike the commercial execution tools of the sales force-dominated era, this platform is aimed at bringing greater value to internal as well as external customers in the modern environment, with intelligent workflows and functions for sales, MSLs, KAMs, and ultimately their customers.



Omni Channel design for Pharma may be a challenge, but Pharma customers (Doctors & HCPs ) are used to the Amazon model in their everyday lives. And they are demanding similar experiences from Pharma companies. A recently survey of doctors and health care professionals by Indegene sheds more light on this interesting trend.

### **3. Data Oriented**

In a recent article titled, “Amazon knows what you want to buy before you but it” Lance Ulanoff, editor in chief of Mashable says, “ Anticipatory shipping may be closest that retail can come to a crystal ball. Amazon, which now has a patent for the algorithm-based system, could conceivably use the system to ship products before you even place an order.”

Shipping a product even before you place you place an order? Now that sounds spooky. However, in the Heath Care domain such insights may not always be unwelcome.

Anticipating patient illness and recommending preventive care or anticipating the information needs of doctors / heath care professionals and delivering appropriate content at the right time through the right channels, helping pharma companies measure the outcomes associated with their drugs, helping payers analyse population health or even helping patients with better adherence regime may be just the thing the industry needs.

Artificial intelligence and Machine learning are industry buzz words, but deploying these new age technologies in the healthcare sector is challenging to say the least.

We are familiar with the frustrations of his Pharma clients. Every other day, we come across frustrated Pharma clients who have tried to implement generic AI solutions, only to realise that a specialised sector like Healthcare and life sciences requires more than a just great AI machine. The secret sauce is always the domain medical expertise needed to train the AI machine. The challenge is to find someone who is a medical professional but has a deep understanding of technology.

While the HLS sector has much to learn from Amazon, the complexities of this sector mean that the approach taken to achieve these goals of customer centricity, Omni channel and data centricity will be very different from the ones used in the retail world. If Amazon were ever to enter this space, they will probably have to reinvent their approach and tailor them to the health care and life sciences sector.