

A WHITE PAPER ON

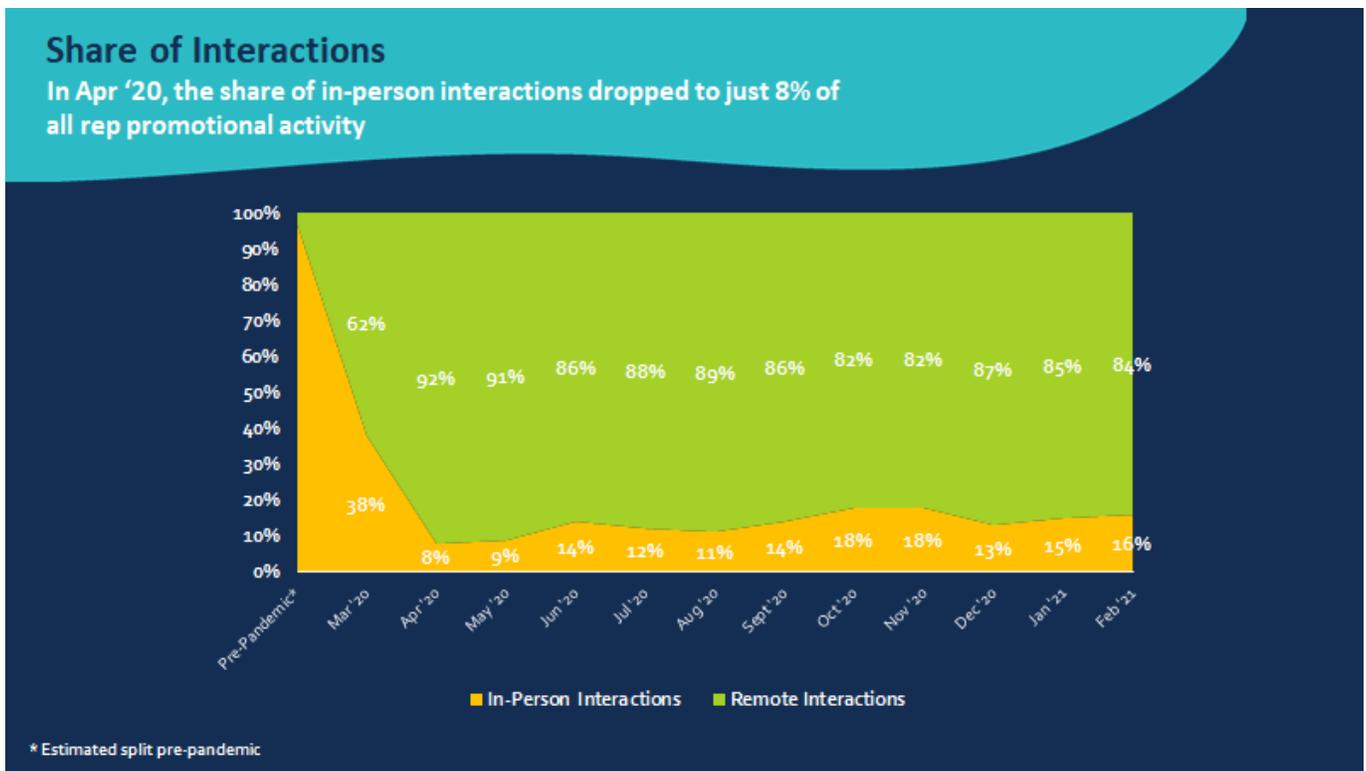
Covid - 19 Impact: The Future of In-Person and Omni-Channel Promotion

APRIL 1, 2021



One year after a dramatic and rapid expansion of remote outreach capabilities, it is increasingly unlikely that in-person sales rep-driven promotion within pharma will ever return to pre-pandemic levels. However despite a decline in volume, in-person promotion continues to prove highly effective and should play a key role in omni-channel customer engagement models moving forward.

Immediately following the declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic, pharmaceutical manufacturers were quick to respond to the challenges of a socially-distanced world. By Apr '20, more than 90% of sales rep interactions with US-based healthcare professionals (HCPs) were being conducted remotely. Driven by COVID-19-related restrictions on in-person activity, this shift to remote interactions was remarkably rapid for an industry that has been historically resistant to change.

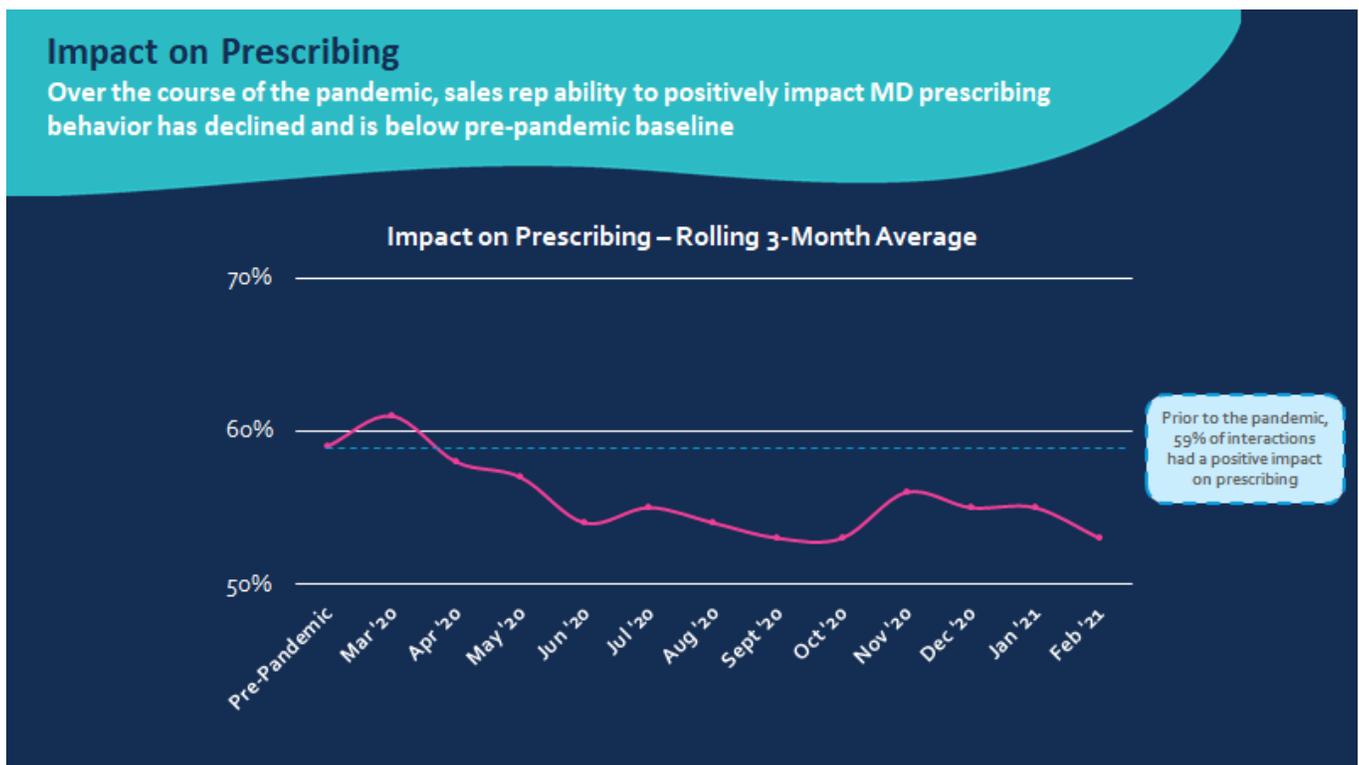


Though in-person activity has nearly doubled from its lowest point in April, the re-emergence of this once predominant form of HCP engagement has been gradual. The conservative pace of a return to in-person promotion reflects both continued caution from HCPs with regard to in-person contact and an enthusiastic embrace of the long-awaited *digital revolution* by the pharmaceutical industry.

This enthusiasm has been apparent in recent earnings calls, through which companies across the industry have signaled a commitment to expanding their digital infrastructure and permanently shifting to virtual-focused or hybrid customer engagement models. Omni-channel customer engagement is the new focus of pharma sales and marketing circles, promising to revolutionize the traditional pharma sales model, as it has in CPG and B2B sales.

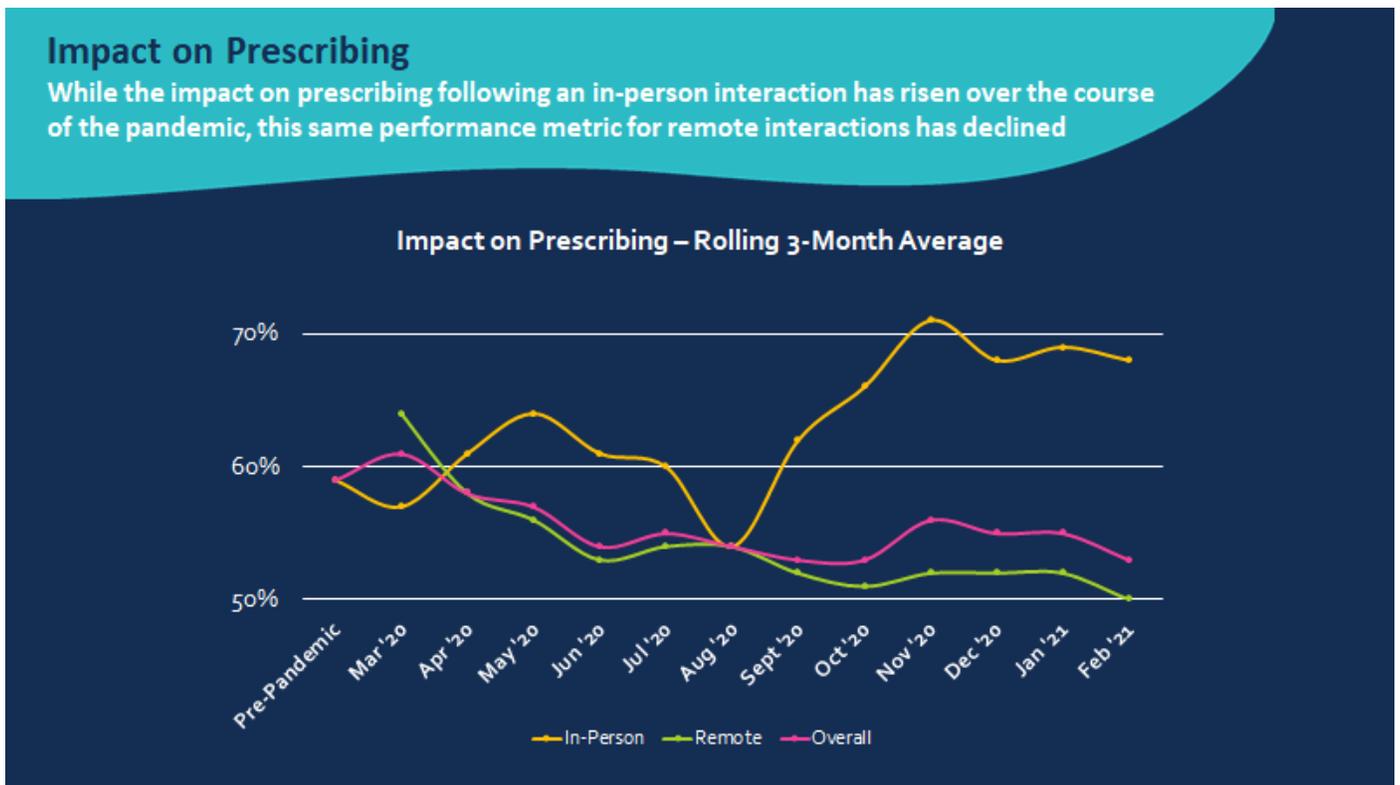
The pharma industry should be commended for its agility in responding to pandemic-driven restrictions. But as the industry looks ahead towards a post-COVID-19 world, to what extent should resources be shifted away from traditional in-person sales models long-term? ZoomRx has analyzed >20,000 in-person and remote (telephone or video conferencing) sales rep interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide insight into the impact of these rapidly changing sales models.

The average impact of sales rep interactions on physician prescribing has gradually declined over the course of the pandemic.



In the 12 months preceding the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States, HCPs reported that nearly 6 in 10 sales rep interactions resulted in a significant positive impact on prescribing of the detailed product. The average impact of an HCP-rep interaction decreased steadily in the early months of the pandemic and has remained consistently depressed thereafter — with Feb '21 marking a new low point.

While the impact of remote interactions (telephone or video conferencing) has steadily declined since the onset of the pandemic, in-person interactions have become increasingly impactful over time. In fact, from Nov '20 to Feb '21, in-person interactions were reported to be 17% more impactful than the pre-pandemic baseline.



There is an important lesson in these pandemic trends. Early post-outbreak, demand for remote interactions was high, and pharma responded accordingly to meet customer demand — resulting in highly impactful remote interactions.

Through the course of the pandemic, digital fatigue has been well documented. A recent ZoomRx survey (Mar '21) reported that, despite continued restrictions on face-to-face contact, 44% of HCPs indicated in-person interactions to be their most preferred option for pharma promotion (in second place, 24% of HCPs selected email promotions). While demand for remote interactions has declined, the outreach strategy from pharma sales teams has remained consistent, with ~80% of all rep interactions since Jun

'20 being conducted remotely. The result of these trends has been an oversupply of increasingly ineffective remote interactions.

As demand for in-person interactions has increased, access to HCPs has remained limited. Consequently, sales teams have been forced to make new distinctions between high-value interactions that require in-person engagement and lower-value touchpoints that can be handled remotely. It is likely that this selective and strategic deployment of in-person promotion, combined with increasing demand for face-to-face contact, has resulted in the recent soaring impact of in-person interactions.

How then should manufacturers think about their customer engagement in 2021 and beyond?

Though opportunities for in-person promotion are likely to become more widespread as vaccines are distributed and re-opening begins in earnest, they are unlikely to rebound entirely to pre-pandemic levels. The insights presented here suggest that continued use of in-person promotion in a more selective, targeted manner can maximize the impact of this promotional channel.

The same targeted approach can be extended beyond sales rep-based promotion to all outreach tools available to pharma sales and marketing teams. There is an increasing variety of customer engagement opportunities available via non-personal promotion (NPP), including traditional mass advertising campaigns, highly targeted digital campaigns, sponsorship of peer-to-peer networking programs, and many others. ZoomRx data shows that when well-coordinated, these NPP campaigns can both increase the reach of your customer engagement and enhance the impact of sales rep-driven promotion by 25% or more.

This active coordination of sales rep-based and NPP outreach strategies, across both in-person and virtual channels, is the ultimate goal of omni-channel customer engagement.

Guiding Principles for Omni-channel Engagement

A truly omni-channel engagement strategy requires a real-time understanding of the recent experiences and remaining needs for individual customers, such that the appropriate next step can be identified and executed by sales or marketing teams. This is no small task, and will require significant time and investment for most manufacturers. Though there is no single solution to fit every market and

organization, the following principles can act as a guiding light for teams committed to an omni-channel future.

Enable cross-functional data sharing

Customer engagement comes in many forms, and a full picture of past customer experience is a prerequisite to determining the optimal next step for a given customer. Establishing accessible systems for collecting, measuring, and sharing data on customer touchpoints across functions is critical to a unified, 360-degree view of your customer experience. Therefore, a truly omni-channel engagement strategy must begin by breaking down traditional barriers between sales, marketing, medical, and access teams.

Practice continuous experimentation

There is no single solution that will fit all markets, and the path to success is likely not a straight line. Frequent small-scale piloting of new technologies and engagement strategies is a valuable method to explore a wide range of tactics while minimizing risk. The best way to maintain momentum is to try new things often and build on what works.

Benchmark actively

Experimentation is effective only when it results in a clear understanding of success or failure. In an era of unprecedented diversity of engagement approaches across the pharmaceutical industry, the effectiveness of your promotional strategy must be continuously benchmarked against your present-day market and key competitors. Continuous benchmarking of your customer engagement tactics is necessary to understand whether incremental progress for your brand is cause for celebration within a stagnant market, or cause for concern in a market where competitors are implementing step-change improvements.

ZoomRx is continuing to track the impact of evolving models of customer engagement within the pharmaceutical industry and is committed to providing innovative customer engagement solutions in the post-COVID-19 world.

If you have any questions we can help answer or for more information please reach out to ZoomRx's Customer Engagement Center of Excellence at info@zoomrx.com.