



ACXIOM | HEALTHCARE DIVE

The Consumerization of Healthcare and its Impact on DTC Marketing

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Building Better Health Outcomes

The past few years have seen significant changes in consumer expectations across industries – and healthcare is no exception. In a 2023 Humanizing Brand Experience survey from Monigle, 33% of US consumers responding said they don't always trust their healthcare provider to make the right decision for them. That's up from 29% the year before.

The reason is straightforward: consumers want to be treated not just as patients but as people; to be seen as individuals with unique needs and values. However, if trust in healthcare continues to erode, it may lead to damaging societal results.

This new environment is creating opportunities for healthcare organizations to further embrace data-driven marketing and evolve how they connect with patients in ways that build trust while maintaining strict regulatory compliance – all to ultimately drive better health outcomes.

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A Reorientation Around People First

In an era where the term "patient care" can feel too clinical, individuals are gravitating towards healthcare experiences that respect their individuality and humanity. They're not passive recipients of care; they're active, informed participants seeking a more meaningful connection with their healthcare providers.

Says Susan Bohling, Acxiom client partner for healthcare and insurance: "What we're experiencing is a monumental shift in the pharmaceutical sector.

Consumerization is not about the future; it's happening now, reshaping healthcare experiences by tailoring patient journeys through a deep understanding of their health narratives. The use of anonymized claims data is revolutionizing patient engagement, to give just one example, which allows for much more accurate modeling."

Using de-identified claims data represents a significant advancement in how healthcare providers can reach out to healthcare audiences, including patients, caregivers and healthcare providers and complies with HIPAA standards. For example, analysts can now better predict someone's level of interest in learning about a particular medical treatment, such as new cardiology medications, without compromising the individual's privacy.





By refining the focus from a wide net to specific groups of people who are most likely to benefit from specific information, Acxiom ensures that healthcare messages are not only reaching the right audiences but are also contributing positively to the healthcare needs of each individual and the relationship between healthcare providers and patients.

“Data saves lives,” says Acxiom’s Brady Gadberry, head of data products. “There is measurable proof that when we help pharma companies communicate to the right audiences, those audiences then talk to their physicians – and statistics show that people who talk to their physician or health care provider about specific therapies are up to 20 times more likely to end up on that therapy. And of course, we know when people are actually treated for their issues and are more engaged, they are more compliant with their treatment, leading to better health outcomes.

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To me, that's the heart of the 'consumerization.' It's empowering people to educate themselves ahead of time because they have seen messaging for something personally relevant.

BRADY GADBERRY

Head Of Data Products, Acxiom



Getting Personal: Leveraging First-Party Data In Healthcare Marketing

First-party data is the lifeblood of personalized healthcare marketing. Says Bohling: “With Web site tracking cookies going away, organizations are more interested in getting help either with member engagement or marketing to prospects, in a manner that is still HIPAA compliant. We’re doing that today through our identity solution.”

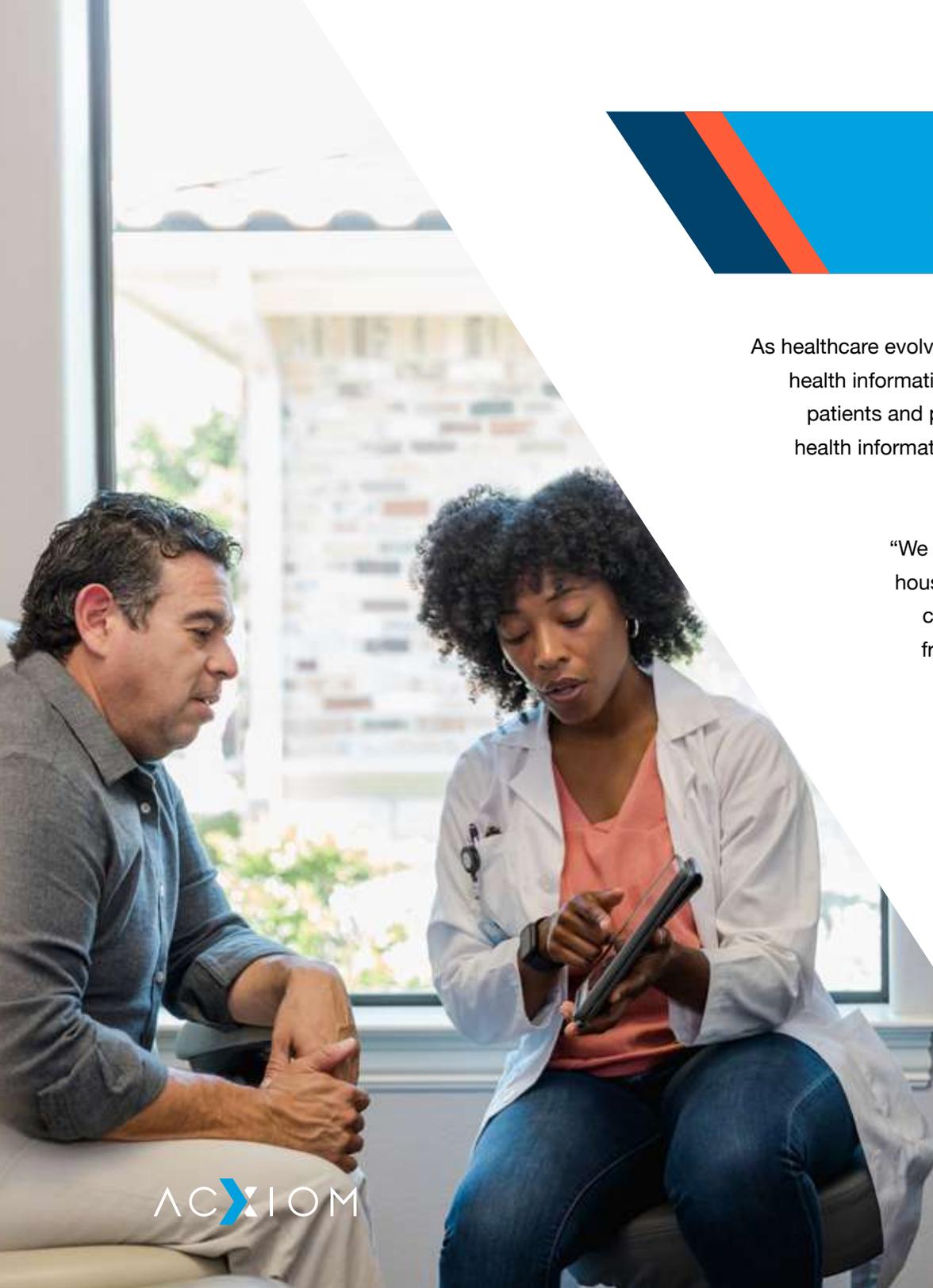
As Bohling explains, if people visit an insurance provider’s web site, Acxiom can create anonymized visitor insights and build personas based on their online behavior. This forms a more insightful picture of the customer journey, improving the overall brand experience.

“For healthcare companies like insurance providers, they want their members to feel like they’re a healthcare partner with them,” Bohling says. “They want member engagement to be positive, but they’re also trying to keep their claims costs down. This is preventative care after all, so it’s better to help and bring the best, most personally relevant information to the right people before a condition worsens.”

Personalized engagements are more relevant now than ever, especially given the healthcare industry's shift to more specialized drug treatments for rare or underserved conditions. Bohling recalled a recent project for a top 10 U.S. pharmaceutical company where Acxiom conducted outreach for a very specific drug to a relatively small audience.

"It was a rare form of cancer," she explains. "When we reviewed the first-party data and claims data for the last three years, we discovered there were only 4,000 patients in the whole country, which is too small a group for marketing campaigns to stay compliant with health regulations. But through our claims and other data sources we not only helped with messaging, but we created a lookalike audience to extend media reach with precision. We knew it was highly likely this campaign was relevant to people included within the larger audience, even those who have shown interest in competitive treatments."





The Democratization Of Health Information

As healthcare evolves into a more patient-centric industry, the democratization of health information can also be defined by another word: empowerment. Both patients and providers should have access to accurate and comprehensive health information from credible sources, but barriers – including geographic and socio-economic factors – remain.

“We have access to data that the providers probably don't have in-house,” says Bohling. “And we keep it updated so that our clients can really identify any potential barriers to patient care with the freshest data available.” By continually refreshing data sources, Acxiom ensures that providers have the best information at their disposal to improve their accuracy and overall marketing performance.

Acxiom also provides third-party consumer data tied to social determinants of health (SDoH) to deliver better patient experiences. Built from Acxiom's distinct data sources, this reference data provides a 360-degree view into the social and economic influences, healthcare access, and the environmental conditions which directly impact a person's health outcomes.



It all comes down to informed decision making. Acxiom has access to a decade's worth of longitudinal data allowing them to equip healthcare providers with consumer insights that allow for more nuanced understanding of people, especially underserved populations, and how best to communicate with them.

Acxiom's Intelligence Hub helps make this and other crucial data analysis possible. Says Todd Bennett, principal product manager for Acxiom Health: "We will allow pharmaceutical companies and providers to run their own analytics within this cloud-based analytics environment to try and find their own insights in a privacy-compliant manner."

This approach underscores the democratization trend, giving healthcare professionals the autonomy to explore and extract valuable information from a wealth of anonymized, de-identified data, which includes over 10 years of claims data as well as Acxiom's proprietary Social Determinants of Health to improve their ability to reach the right groups.

Ultimately, democratization isn't just about access – it's about action. It's about transforming raw numbers and facts into a narrative that providers and patients can understand and use to make decisions that enhance health outcomes, all within a framework that respects privacy and encourages engagement. This is where the true potential of healthcare marketing lies – in its ability to inform, empower, and inspire more people to seek better health through knowledge.

The Role Of Artificial Intelligence (AI) And Machine Learning

AI and machine learning are transforming the healthcare industry in many ways, particularly by enabling the analysis of data to help diagnose diseases and identifying hidden health trends.

In healthcare marketing, AI allows healthcare marketers to discern patterns and preferences in patient behavior, leading to more accurate and effective communication. At Acxiom, AI is used to sift through complex datasets, and to construct predictive and prescriptive models.





But while AI offers unprecedented advantages, it is not without its challenges. Algorithmic biases can skew the data, leading to a less inclusive and effective healthcare marketing strategy. This is why, among many reasons, Acxiom prioritizes human oversight to ensure that their predictive models are equitable and accurate.

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Everything is human verified. If there's anything that looks questionable, then the computer sends an alert essentially signaling a deeper investigation is needed by our internal experts.

TODD BENNETT

Principal Product Manager, Acxiom Health

This meticulous approach to data validation and bias correction ensures that personalization strategies are inclusive and considerate of the diverse needs of different patient groups – without compromising privacy or damaging trust.



A Commitment To Privacy And Transparency

Privacy is not just a regulatory checkbox. At Acxiom, it's privacy first, privacy always. Acxiom embeds privacy into every stage of the data management life cycle, ensuring that all new products, services, or data use meet stringent privacy standards from the ground up.

Privacy-by-Design is a proactive approach to privacy that integrates data protection from the onset of the design process for any system, service, or product that handles personal information. This concept becomes especially relevant in the healthcare sector, where the sensitivity of patient data mandates rigorous standards for privacy and security.

“Our legal and privacy teams are involved from the beginning,” says Jordan Abbott, Acxiom's Chief Privacy Officer. “We run everything through a privacy impact assessment and we're letting teams know ‘hey, if you're going to do this, then this is what you need to be concerned about.’ We are involved all the way through from development to commercialization.”

This vigilance extends to keeping abreast with the changing landscape of privacy laws. Abbott says Acxiom is immediately notified if developments happen in a specific area, for example when the Office of Civil Rights and Health and Human Services issues guidance.

Abbott's team is there not to put up roadblocks, however, but to provide guardrails to ensure that Acxiom's data solutions not only comply with legal statutes, but also uphold the ethos of patient privacy and ethical data management. There's often a delicate balance at play between the need to innovate but also align with strict privacy regulations.

The care with which Acxiom approaches data extends to contractual agreements with clients, ensuring data isn't used in ways that would classify it as sensitive under privacy laws. "We have the ability to conduct audits of our clients to review marketing campaigns, and then sometimes there's more restricted data that can only be used for certain purposes." says Abbott.

"We've been doing this for 50 years," Abbott adds, referring to Acxiom's legacy in highly regulated industries such as financial services. "This experience translates well to our work in healthcare, where we have operated for more than 20 years."



The Ultimate Goal Is Trust

A successful consumer marketing strategy isn't only about quality data and pinpoint outreach – ultimately, it all comes down to trust.

For pharmaceutical companies and providers, the judicious and ethical use of data fosters trust as well as maximizes marketing efficiency. "Everything we're doing with reaching desired audiences using ICD 10 codes is really groundbreaking," says Bohling. "We are allowing organizations to be HIPAA compliant and still make the most of their marketing dollars.

A trust-centric marketing strategy revolves around the belief that when patients and healthcare providers share a bond of trust, patient engagement and outcomes improve dramatically. But as with the democratization of healthcare, trust building is also a dynamic process that requires constant attention and improvement. It involves continuously honing the ways in which healthcare organizations communicate, safeguard patient data, and deliver on the promises they make.



“Everything we do involves privacy and protecting information,” says Bennett. “We run all of our data through an independent third party to validate HIPAA compliance. This includes the environment that the data is stored in; the processes that touch the data; and the users who have access to the data.”

By embracing the tenets of transparency, privacy, and personalized care, healthcare marketing can achieve its ultimate goal: building a trust that not only underpins commercial success but also contributes to the greater good of society.

“When patients trust the sources of their healthcare information and the motives behind the marketing messages they receive, they are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors, Gadberry says. “Together we can save lives.”

For more information, visit Acxiom at <https://www.acxiom.com/healthcare/>



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