Go-to-market strategies for patient-facing digital health solutions

Executive summary

Pharma companies have made huge strides with companion apps and other digital health products that accompany their drugs in recent years, but there's a long way to go before the promise of digital as an integral part of the patient experience is met. For both the healthcare provider and patient audiences, the adoption and scaling of digital health remains a significant challenge.

Having the right digital solution to solve patient or provider pain points is only the beginning. For the true value of digital to be realized, it must be made available to, and utilized by, as many target users as possible.

In this white paper, we'll offer a range of tested and trusted go-to-market strategies that can boost the likelihood of adoption and scaling of companion digital health products. We've broken up the strategies into three core audience areas: patients, healthcare providers and commercial activation teams.

Success in your go-to-market plan doesn't rely on employing each and every strategy we outline in this white paper, but rather focusing on the few that are the most relevant to your drug type, your audience and your goals. Then incorporate these strategies and tactics into your broader marketing plan for the drug, rather than developing a separate GTM plan for your digital products.

Finally, it's important to target the right metrics and change them over time. The KPIs for a MVP will be different from those for a more mature digital product. Understanding and communicating the right KPIs to internal stakeholders should be part of your GTM success plan.

Patient adoption and engagement

Awareness is the necessary precursor to engagement. Patients in your target audience must first know that the digital solution exists and then must be educated on the benefits of using it. And even before that, the product must be designed to meet their needs.

Clearly define patient value propositions

It's of the utmost importance to answer the patient question, "What's in it for me?" Take the time to fully determine how your solution meets patients' specific needs—it must go beyond the vague benefits of having yet another app. Your digital solution must improve disease or treatment management in meaningful ways. It must improve quality of life and be an enjoyable experience that makes patients want to keep using it.

Invite patients and advocates to join the design process

Rather than designing your digital solution in a vacuum, invite patients and advocates to help. By bringing key opinion leaders in on the ground floor, you ensure patient needs are incorporated from the very beginning. It also establishes a foundational relationship between your brand and the patient community that will be invaluable once your solution launches. We've seen patient advocates be crucial voices for feature prioritization in app development—their experience is priceless.

Design to meet specific patient needs—known and unknown

During the design process, take a patient-centric approach, crafting an experience that meets the needs of your specific patient population. Also, acknowledge that upfront user research doesn't catch everything and that real-world use of the solution will uncover new patient needs and pain points. Build in a way that captures the invaluable patient data that can inform future product improvements.

Always consider accessibility and usability

When designing, keep in mind the specific challenges of your patient population. Are they older with potentially lower digital literacy? Do they have vision impairment or neurological challenges? Simply put, don't assume smartphone fluency and keep the user interface as simple and straightforward as possible.

Make onboarding easy

Patients won't adopt your digital solution if they can't easily find it, understand it and start using it. Think about the current patient journey and how the solution can best help the patient progress and connect the different stakeholders with a clear value proposition and call to action. Strategies to ensure seamless onboarding include patient-facing landing pages, QR codes posted in pharmacies and doctors' offices and availability on consumer app stores. Keep the actual onboarding process simple, with no more than two to three steps. Offer comprehensive FAQs and customer support.

Engage with patient advocacy groups

Plug into foundations, charities and caregiver networks associated with the condition your drug treats. Spread the word when your solution launches, then maintain open lines of communication to gather ongoing feedback. This strategy is particularly valuable in chronic or rare diseases, where patients and their caregivers have a high disease management burden and are highly motivated to seek out solutions that ease it.

Activate direct-to-patient marketing

If your goal is to popularize a patient-facing app, leverage your patient marketing team's expertise and borrow tactics from the consumer tech world. Consider a multi-channel approach, including promotional websites, SEO optimization, keyword targeted ads, PR buzz, social media and more. When planning your marketing strategy, remember that it's not one size fits all. Strive to reach your specific patient population where they are, while ensuring compliance to local market regulations and compliance frameworks.

How BrightInsight can help

Our Market Research, Product Strategy and Marketing teams can help you design and conduct effective user research and user testing in pursuit of a patient-centric, optimized design. Once you're ready for launch, we can create a customized go-to-market strategy and implementation plan, including liaising with patient advocacy groups and working with marketing agencies.

Healthcare provider engagement

While patients are typically the end user for digital health solutions, healthcare providers (HCPs) play an important role in connecting patients with your technology and encouraging ongoing use. In many cases, the HCP is the person the patient trusts the most, so their endorsement of your digital health solution is invaluable.

It's important to note that your ideal HCP engagement will vary based on the depth and breadth of clinical features your digital solution offers. For example, if your solution includes symptom tracking, adherence tracking or a comprehensive provider dashboard, your HCP audience will be more invested in its success.

Define the HCP value proposition

Nothing increases adoption more than the recommendation of a trusted healthcare provider. To earn that recommendation, design a solution that solves HCP pain points. Just as you would for a patient population, it's important to take the time to really think through what's in it for the healthcare provider audience. Does your solution save them time? Enhance patient/provider conversations with real-world data? Improve clinical outcomes? Some combination of both? At the very least, your solution shouldn't increase their administrative burden.

Determine what will garner HCP endorsement

As a baseline, HCPs need to know that the digital product exists. Beyond that, they need to have an understanding of what benefits the solution provides their patients, as well as any ancillary benefits to the healthcare provider. Formal evidence of the product's benefits, like case studies or data points, can increase your odds of garnering an endorsement. You'll also want to provide ample information about clinical safety, data security and technical support.

Create education-focused marketing campaigns

Craft campaigns that include both product education and tools to equip HCPs to share information about your digital solution with patients. Include details about any clinical support resources, such as tailored educational materials and nurse support.

Plug into key opinion leaders

The more clinically complex your digital product, the more important advocacy and word of mouth is within the clinician community. Engaging key opinion leaders as early as the design stage is paramount to success. Consider reaching out to academic medical centers, foundations and partner institutions.

Deploy field communications

Sending out field sales or medical affairs teams can be a powerful tool, especially for more clinically complex digital health products or those with a robust HCP-facing interface. These face-to-face conversations allow for in-depth conversations about product education, clinical benefits, evidence and EMR integrations.

How BrightInsight can help

We can leverage our partner ecosystem to ensure that your digital health products reach the right healthcare providers. Our partners include provider networks, with access to 15 health systems through General Catalyst; over 50 EMR integrations through Rhapsody connecting to more than 1,700 healthcare organizations across 60 countries; and access to digital health formularies and aggregators with 500+ hospitals through Xealth. We can also help you negotiate and secure customer partnerships for your specific use case.

Commercial team activation

Think of marketing efforts and commercial team activation as opposite ends of a sliding scale. For less clinical solutions, like patient education apps, self-management tools and telehealth functionality, marketing campaigns may be all you need to move the needle on patient engagement. But for more clinical digital solutions, or those that are being rapidly deployed at scale, commercial team activations can be worth the time and money.

Educate field teams on the value of the digital product

While field sales, medical and market access team members may be well equipped to talk about the merits of the drug itself, they may be less familiar with the benefits of the companion digital solution. It's important to train your team with the basic value proposition from your product. Preparing talking points, training materials and collateral for field teams is worthwhile. They are a powerful resource and should also be able to answer basic FAQs with different stakeholders as needed.

Formalize commercial team commitment

At the end of the day, the field team will talk about the digital health solution if they truly understand the positive impact it can have. But there are logistical considerations too. Give your commercial team clear guidance on when they should talk about digital health solutions, and how much time it should take. Arm them with well organized and compelling talking points. Bottom line: if digital is important to leadership, it will be important to the commercial team.

Create a solid feedback loop

Whether they like it or not, your commercial team will end up fielding a wide range of questions and troubleshooting requests from patients and HCPs. Give them the backup they need by making sure a solid customer support team is in place. Commercial teams should be able to hand off complaints, tech issues and other challenges to skilled customer service representatives, freeing them up to focus on the task at hand.

> *How BrightInsight can help*
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> We can support you by drafting a sales playbook to train your commercial field team, as well as deliver train-the-trainer sessions with your team.

Plan for post-launch activities

Ensure that you capture patient and provider feedback once the solution is launched to support ongoing engagement and retention efforts. Make sure you include key stakeholders, including brand, digital and real-world evidence teams, to make sure you are adjusting your KPIs to capture the right metrics over time—those goals should evolve. Communicate those KPIs internally to ensure your digital product continues to receive funding and investment.

> *How BrightInsight can help*
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> We can help you get the most value from your digital initiatives by working with you to set narrowly focused metrics that measure what you need to know to assess and improve. For example, capturing and synthesizing real-world data might be your first goal, then you can move on to improving user metrics like adoption and retention rates—with an eye to moving the needle on outcomes as a long-term metric.

Want more digital health strategy guidance? Our team can help you accelerate your journey, from concept to launch, for your regulated digital health solutions.

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Alex is a Product Strategist and Growth Lead at BrightInsight, working closely with life science customers to define high-value digital solutions to be built using BrightInsight's Platform, as well as bringing customer feedback into broader BrightInsight strategy. Throughout her career, Alex has worked on a variety of technologies, from companion apps to remote patient monitoring, and has extensive expertise in digital health products and go-to-market strategy in US and Europe.