

2021 Medical Device Virtual Engagement Field Guide



How forward-thinking medtech leaders will rethink their engagement strategies and position their teams to **win in 2021.**

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Medtech wasn't immune from sweeping changes in 2020. Here are the top trends that will shape how your medical device team uses virtual engagement to navigate the year ahead, including our recommendations for building competitive advantage.



As the 2020 global health crisis unfolded, the medical device industry experienced severe disruption, ever-changing priorities, and challenges that will continue to impact your team into 2021 and beyond. But the crisis also presented opportunities for innovation as trends already in motion were accelerated, including increasing adoption of virtual engagement strategies.

Forward-thinking medtech team leaders will rethink their strategies in this new environment, and those who take steps to innovate now will be positioned ahead of the pack. Let's discuss some of the crisis-driven trends that will endure as medtech companies take a new approach to training reps, engaging KOLs and patients, and designing and conducting clinical trials.

TRAINING AND INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

In 2020, lockdown and social distancing protocols drastically changed how most of us worked (and...everything else) on a day-to-day basis. For some teams, this presented an immediate challenge in terms of business continuity – overall, only about 20% of industries were fully ready for the sudden onset of the work-from home era. Other medical device groups were better-positioned to navigate the change because they were already using virtual technology for training initiatives and internal meetings.

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– HR Daily Advisor, May 2020

As medical device companies look to 2021 and beyond, many will continue to embrace remote work capabilities and may even reduce their physical footprints, driving the demand for more virtual interaction among colleagues. Virtual training for reps and clinicians will also persist as people await vaccination or continue to comply with regional or national travel advisories and ongoing lockdown or distancing recommendations.

To do this successfully, we recommend that teams standardize virtual training plans and their approach to internal engagement. As you move beyond catch-all solutions like email, stand-alone web conferencing, and group chat, these online initiatives will become strategic rather than ad-hoc. A single customizable platform across teams, regions, and therapeutic lines of business creates efficiency gains and cost savings that resonate at the enterprise level.

ENGAGEMENT FOR KOLS AND PATIENTS

Even during a crisis, conversations with key decision-makers and other experts are essential for the success of your team. Likewise, a growing focus on patient engagement means that medtech is increasingly including patients in all stages of the product life cycle. These interactions were already difficult to manage – busy schedules, varied availability or ability to travel, long planning timelines – but global virus containment measures removed the option for in-person meetings entirely.

Nearly 40% of business travel might never return.

– Wall Street Journal,
December 2020

It's true that the ability to travel will ramp up as the year progresses, but the engagement landscape is forever changed. Post-crisis, nearly 40% of business travel might never return, and in 2020 many HCPs found they preferred some meetings and events, such as medical congresses, to be virtual. (In one case, active session participation was 10x that of previous in-person events.)

ENGAGEMENT FOR KOLS AND PATIENTS (cont.)

Teams that made productivity gains or shortened timelines through virtual interaction – hello, one-minute commute – will be more selective about how often they choose face-to-face meetings in the future.

There are several trends around patient engagement that will create a growing need for virtual patient interaction in the years ahead. More medical device manufacturers are ramping up direct-to-consumer advertising for medtech, including new campaigns to urge consumers to resume regular medical visits and screenings. Patients are also more accustomed to remote device programming and monitoring, and crisis-induced regulatory changes have allowed even more flexibility on this front. Many in the medical device industry expect remote solutions to become a permanent fixture.

Across hundreds of sessions, we've learned that organizations that embrace virtual engagement for all stakeholders and in all stages of the product life cycle can capture a remarkable competitive advantage. Building patient and KOL relationships through efficient and frequent outreach is most effective through a virtual platform with built-in features designed for gathering higher quality, more actionable insights.

CLINICAL TRIAL DESIGN AND EXECUTION

By late 2020, COVID-19 had already disrupted more than 1,000 clinical trials. Because medical device manufacturers rely heavily on healthcare facilities for clinical trial data collection, these disruptions were inevitable. As medtech teams looked for innovative solutions to reduce the impact on corporate goals, budgets, and trial data, virtual engagement emerged as a solution that will become a strategic pillar going forward.

With many trials already going remote due to the ability to monitor patients without personal interaction post-procedure, this is a trend that's definitely here to stay. Opportunities include device monitoring, but also the ability for patients to check-in via smartwatches, smartphones, or tablets. To match this level of digital transformation, companies are considering whether other trial aspects – including site selection, patient activation, and recruitment – that could be improved with virtual engagement.

CLINICAL TRIAL DESIGN AND EXECUTION (cont.)

How can medical device teams get the most value from clinical trial virtual engagement? Our advice is don't go it alone – establish a consultative relationship with an experienced vendor that offers highly customizable solutions with the most flexibility and the shortest path to value. Virtual engagement can be used for investigator or patient engagement, but also for creating resource centers for data dissemination, online communities, protocol design, and more. Uniting global teams and ensuring a high degree of integrity around trial data are key to ongoing trial success and improving speed to market.

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– MedTechDive.com, October 2020

IN THE REAL WORLD: MEDICAL DEVICE COMMERCIAL TEAM CASE STUDY

A commercial team within a leading medical device organization needed to engage a group of 19 global physicians to gather insight on a method of monitoring patients under anesthesia. With travel out of the question and participating physicians based throughout Europe, the team opted for a multi-day, over-time meeting on the Within3 online engagement platform.

In an over-time meeting, participants log in to the Within3 platform at their convenience rather than attending one gathering at a scheduled time. Designing how the participants would interact was critical for this meeting. With nearly 20 advisors who spoke a variety of languages, it was important to keep the session on-track and keep communication roadblocks to a minimum. Within3's client success team worked with the client to reduce the number of questions by suggesting a variety of formats to obtain qualitative and quantitative feedback, and recommended rolling questions out over several days to allow the advisors to focus. In-platform translation was enabled so physicians could communicate in their preferred language.

By reducing the number of questions by 50% and repurposing other questions as follow-up inquiries posed by moderators, the team was able to maintain a high level of engagement with the advisors and obtain more holistic feedback. Advisors were also able to upload attachments with their answers to share articles and research with peers.



ABOUT WITHIN 3

Within3 invented a better way for life sciences companies to have conversations with the people who matter most—from doctors to patients to payers, and more. Our virtual engagement platform gives stakeholders the freedom to collaborate anytime, anywhere, on any device. With practical tools to foster meaningful discussions, co-create and edit documentation, and enable faster and more accurate decision-making, all Within3 projects include a dedicated client success team and most achieve 100% stakeholder participation. To learn more and request a needs assessment and demo, visit www.within3.com.