
Stronger CMO-CIO Collaboration Needed



Consumerism is a growing trend in healthcare. Today, consumers are directly paying for more of their healthcare costs, both for the care itself and insurance coverage. In particular, only 48 percent of healthcare payer customers get their insurance from their employer. This means more consumers are covered by federal programmes (e.g., Medicare) or their own insurance.

As the employer-sponsored model gives way to direct purchasing by consumers, both payers and providers must shift from a B2B to a B2C orientation. "Health organisations, used to vying for the long-term loyalty of large organisations, must not only shift marketing dollars to focus on individuals, but also rethink the ways in which they gather, analyse and use information," Nick Vennaro, executive vice president at Capto Consulting, writes in a commentary published online by [Health Data Management](#).

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Other industries have gone through similar shifts that have forced tighter alignment between marketing and IT, Vennaro notes. Healthcare leadership can derive "useful lessons" from the telecommunications, media and entertainment (TME) industry, which is still working its way through the turmoil of a major disruption.

Like healthcare, TME was somewhat complacent after a long period in which competition was relatively mild, demand inelastic and regulation supportive of the status quo, Vennaro explains. As technology changed and other industries set new standards for customer care, the operational and customer service shortcomings of the TME industry made them vulnerable to services like Netflix and Hulu that threatened to not only disintermediate them, but to expose their lack of compelling consumer experience and innovation.

That made TME companies realise that leveraging a marketing-technology collaboration at the CMO- [CIO level](#) for new technology-driven, consumer-focused applications was essential to their ability to survive and thrive.

Healthcare is now facing massive technology disruptions and tectonic customer shifts that upend stability and threaten their competitive positions. "New technologies like insurance exchanges, EMRs, patient portals, smartphones and big data analytics are fundamentally changing the way we understand risk, care quality, patient engagement and consumer experience in healthcare," according to Vennaro.

He continues: "Facing similar disruptions, TME CIOs focused on supporting data-driven marketing, becoming expert in combining and analysing data from diverse sources (set-top boxes, billing, credit scores, etc.) to engage and retain consumers with relevant content and renewal offers."

The strategic and tactical fusion of the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) and the CIO is key to solving these new challenges arising from evolving consumer trends and technology-driven disruptions. To attract and retain customers, healthcare organisations need the CMO to develop a better understanding of the consumer and what moves them. To use technology to increase customer service, satisfaction and loyalty, they need smart CIOs who are willing to innovate and cast aside old models.

"CMOs understand changing customer needs and the opportunity that creates to boost sales, but the CIO is the only one who can bring those new solutions and modes of commerce and customer interaction to market for the company," Vennaro adds.

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