

Aptar



digital health

Developing Successful Digital Health Solutions: Three Major Tips from Pharma Leaders



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Developing drugs is increasingly complex and expensive for pharmaceutical companies. Supporting existing drugs with a digital asset such as a patient app or a web portal is one strategy leveraged by pharmaceutical companies to secure the value of their drug assets, delivering differentiating treatment experiences, and improving treatment adherence of actual patients.

As digital innovations evolve rapidly, [Aptar Digital Health](#) organized a roundtable discussion with three seasoned Pharma executives who pioneered the space of digital health during the past decade:

- **Jim Parshall**, Executive Director – Delivery Device Electrical & Systems Engineering at Eli Lilly.
- **Rachel Sha**, former VP of Digital Strategy, Partnering and Governance at Sanofi.
- **Brad Van Orden**, former Director, Digital Medicine & Digital Therapeutics at Bristol-Myers Squibb.

During this roundtable, Jim, Rachel, and Brad shared their key learnings according to their practical experience which we summarized in the article below.

Tips 1: Internal team skillset is of utmost importance to leading digital health projects.

Pharma companies have skilled up on digital health for the last decade. With teams between tens to a few hundred members, pharma plays on diversity in background, age and expertise. It “takes a village” with system engineers, risk managers, quality staff, software development engineers, real-world evidence and data analysts, UI and UX designers, and more. Building a core team of a few highly technically competent specialists and project managers is perceived as a major key success factor. It is also a human resources challenge, as the turnover on these profiles is high compared to pharma standards. Keeping talents onboard requires a change of mindset regarding people development in a relatively shorter period.



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Tips 2: Partnering with digital health companies brings faster innovation capabilities, while pharma companies bring resources and therapeutic expertise.

Selecting the right digital health partner can be complicated and a few criteria must be analyzed before contracting, such as:

- Transparency is the main safety net for successful collaborations. The full capabilities of the partner must be assessed during due diligence in early discussions to reach a good vision of what can and cannot be done by each party. Quality Management System (QMS) is particularly important to audit and assess as it avoids having a different definition of “quality”.
- Building a collaborative model with clear-cut roles and responsibilities, especially as pharma and digital health companies have different paces of work and organizational structure.
- Expertise in the therapeutic area, the indication or the development of expected features is a must-have.
- Partnering goes beyond contracts. Be sure to keep the relationship after contracting through robust and transparent alliance management practices.

Tips 3: Building a solution needed by patients and healthcare professionals is seen as the best way to avoid missteps when reaching the market.

The adoption of digital health solutions by patients and providers is generally seen as a major post-commercialization challenge. End-users must embark very early in the development process. The digital health solution must target the “zero impact” on traditional patients’ or healthcare professionals’ workflows. Something as simple as too many log-in steps can be a showstopper. The adoption curve will also benefit from leveraging super users and Key Opinion Leaders who will help drive usage and build credibility around the solution with their peers.

«Adoption of digital health solutions is seen as a major post-commercialization challenge.»

To sum up, there are four elements to consider:

1. **AGILITY:** Input change in Software-as-a-Medical-Device along the way is not easy. The agile mindset needs to be reassessed in the drug/digital health context, moving to the “Wagile” (Waterfall + Agile) approach.

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- 2. GOVERNANCE:** Standardize the decision-making process between the parties to avoid delays.
- 3. MINDSET:** Do not underestimate the mindset change required to move pharma companies toward the Minimum Valuable Product/iteration model.
- 4. VISION:** Defining what success would look like is key, avoiding broad goals set that are hard to achieve.

The Aptar Digital Health team would like to thank Rachel, Jim and Brad for joining us!

To learn more about how Aptar Digital Health support its partner in their digital health initiatives, visit:

aptardigitalhealth.com

About Aptar Digital Health

Aptar Digital Health is a leader in integrated health solutions and services with a mission to [elevate patient experiences](#) at every stage of their treatment journey.

Our suite of end-to-end, patient-centric digital solutions leverages our unmatched expertise and diverse, industry-leading product portfolio to deliver differentiating experiences and more positive outcomes.

Aptar Digital Health is a division of [Aptar Pharma](#), which is part of AptarGroup, Inc., a global leader in drug and consumer product dosing, dispensing and protection technologies.

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