

# PHARMA CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

---

20 SECRETS TO  
10X YOUR CX AND  
BOOST PATIENT  
OUTCOMES

---



**SEAN McDADE, PhD**



**LIONCREST**  
PUBLISHING

COPYRIGHT © 2021 SEAN MCDADE, PHD

*All rights reserved.*

PHARMA CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

*20 Secrets to 10X Your CX & Boost Patient Outcomes*

ISBN 978-1-5445-2561-7 *Hardcover*

978-1-5445-2559-4 *Paperback*

978-1-5445-2560-0 *Ebook*

978-1-5445-2562-4 *Audiobook*

*The book is dedicated to the people who work in pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. They are now the heroes to the world as they help us get past the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, for decades they have helped people live better and long lives. Heroes now and always, thank you for everything you do!*

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....9

## **SECTION 1: PHARMA CX FUNDAMENTALS**

1. BE OBSESSED ..... 19  
2. NO, CX ISN'T JUST MARKET RESEARCH .....37  
3. THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY ..... 47

## **SECTION 2: PHARMA CX IN CLINICAL AND COMMERCIAL**

4. REAL-TIME, AT ALL TIMES ..... 63  
5. EVEN IN CLINICAL TRIALS .....73  
6. ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS ..... 79  
7. CREATE THE PERFECT PRODUCT LAUNCH ..... 91

## **SECTION 3: PHARMA CX SECRETS FOR PATIENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

8. THE BEST INVESTMENT YOU CAN MAKE..... 97  
9. GO DIGITAL.....103  
10. START SMALL ..... 109

11. THE PATIENT HIERARCHY OF NEEDS .....	117
12. ACCESS IS EVERYTHING .....	123
13. LOGISTICAL SUPPORT MATTERS.....	131
14. “HOW DO I TAKE THIS DRUG?”.....	137
15. LOVE YOUR CUSTOMER.....	145
16. CONFIDENCE CHANGES EVERYTHING.....	157
17. CLOSE THE LOOP .....	171

#### **SECTION 4: PHARMA CX IMPLEMENTATION SECRETS**

18. HAVE FEEDBACK YOUR WAY .....	179
19. DON'T GO IT ALONE.....	195
20. FIND THOUGHTFUL PARTNERS.....	201
21. WE'RE IN THE FIRST INNING .....	211

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	217
-----------------------	-----

ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	221
-----------------------	-----

# INTRODUCTION

More than once, pharma has literally saved the world. As I write this in July 2021, there have been three vaccines approved in the US for COVID-19, one by Pfizer, one by Moderna, and one by Johnson & Johnson.

Another COVID-19 vaccine, this one by AstraZeneca (and Oxford), has been approved in the UK. And there are several more vaccines on the horizon that will help the world get past this pandemic.

Each is doing their part to let us feel hopeful again. Hugging a parent? Going to a ball game with friends? Seeing your favorite band in concert? Yes, yes, and yes!

Pharma is making all of it possible. They should be heroes to the world! And yet, most people are indifferent at best. It's not that pharma companies are faceless brands that consumers can't connect with as they do with Apple, Spotify,

and Peloton. But according to The Harris poll, only 53% of consumers hold a positive view of pharma.

And a recent Gallup poll on consumer perceptions found pharma rated *below* electric utilities and oil and gas!

But why?

Because pharma does not emotionally connect with its ultimate customer, the patient, like great consumer brands do. Let me explain.

The best consumer brands are completely obsessed with the customer experience, and the entire company is focused on it. These companies first create each customer experience with intention. Nothing is left to chance. They meticulously map every aspect of the customer experience—from first engagement to first purchase to continued usage over time.

And everything in between.

*Everything.*

The great consumer brands emotionally connect with the customer. Over and over again.

And they do that by delivering experiences that customers value, remember, and share with others.

Pharma does not do this. At least not consistently.

But they can. And, more importantly, they must if they want to continue to thrive. Patients who have positive experiences with pharma are more likely to join clinical trials, successfully onboard to new medications, adhere over time, and enjoy positive medical outcomes.

And better experiences provide pharma with the opportunity to connect with underserved populations and help the people in those populations live longer, better quality lives. Put another way, a great patient experience means *all* people have a chance at better medical outcomes and better lives.

Why am I qualified to write about this topic?

The company I founded in 2001, PeopleMetrics, has been working with pharma companies since we started. We have helped pharma understand stakeholders' needs, wants, and experiences.

Up until 2015, most of this work was traditional market research type work, primarily with physicians and other Healthcare Professionals (HCPs)—sales force effectiveness, market landscape, segmentation, message testing, you name it.

And then in 2015, we got a call from a client who asked us



if we had measured the experience with “patient support services”? We asked, “What in the world are patient support services?”

We learned quickly. Patient support services, also known as “patient support programs (PSPs),” are game changers for patients. These services help patients with access to their medication, improve adherence, better manage their disease, reduce complications, provide financial assistance, and more.

Then in 2017, a client asked us if we could help them measure the patient experience in a global clinical trial. This was new and incredibly exciting territory. A better patient experience in clinical trials impacts the ability to recruit and retain patients (including those from underserved populations), informs design for future trials, and provides an indication to the effectiveness of different trial sites.

We started to understand that being patient-centric applied across commercial *and* clinical.

Hmmm.

At the same time, the customer experience (CX) space was exploding, with nearly every industry embracing the concept and investing heavily to better engage with their customers. There even appeared a new category of software

called “experience management,” which helps companies measure and manage the customer experience. Analysts like Forrester and Gartner cover this space regularly.

This got us thinking, how does customer experience, or CX as we call it, apply to pharma?

And “pharma CX” was born.

In 2018, I wrote a book entitled *Listen or Die: 40 Lessons that Turn Customer Feedback into Gold*. I wrote that book because customer feedback about their experiences is the foundation for emotional connection between companies and customers.

Indeed, customer experience remains the only true differentiator in most industries.

Yes, even in pharma. Especially in pharma.

This is easily the most important work my company has done or will do.

It is one thing helping a hotel measure and improve the checkout experience or helping a telecom company improve their customer support.

But it’s quite another to help a pharma company make it

easier for a new patient who has cancer to get the treatment they need to live a longer and higher-quality life. Or help a pharma company recruit and retain patients for a clinical trial that results in a new medicine that saves lives that can't be saved today.

So, we got to work.

This book is about mindset more than anything else. Specifically, it's about pharma changing its mindset from one focused on developing products to one focused on delivering experiences. I want to shift pharma's approach to model the companies that cultivate not just customers, but advocates and raving fans, over and over again.

I am writing this book to share twenty secrets that my company, PeopleMetrics, has learned in helping pharma companies focus on the customer and create exceptional experiences. Each secret falls within one of four sections.

The first section introduces three secrets that lay the foundation for pharma CX. The second offers four secrets that introduce how pharma CX applies to both clinical and commercial teams. The third section contains ten secrets around patient support services, the front-line for commercial pharma CX. The final section includes three secrets that are key to implementing a successful pharma CX program.

And at the end of the book, there is a bonus section, which takes a peek into the future.

Let's dig in.



# START SMALL

**The most effective pharma CX programs for patient support services start tiny, with either a relationship survey or a transactional survey around onboarding.**

Patients are also consumers. They have smartphones and smart watches. They shop on Amazon. Listen to Spotify. Stay at W Hotels. Watch Netflix. A patient who is onboarding onto a new medication has also had consumer experiences that influence their expectations.

Apple, Peloton, Hyatt—you name it, your patients have probably experienced it.

As we learned in Secret #3, a hallmark of a superior customer experience is one that is consistent, no matter the channel or touchpoint. All the companies listed above work

tirelessly to create and deliver an exceptional customer experience.

*This rings true for patient support services as well.*

Once a customer journey map has been completed with all patient touchpoints included (see Secret #3), moments of truth identified, and experiences created with intention, it's time to measure in real-time. Patient and HCP feedback is critical if you want to know whether the experience you created resulted in the patient experience you expected.

*But be careful*—it's tempting to try to measure everything all at once. Don't do that. That's how you get overwhelmed. It's important to start with something that you can handle. Get started with what I call “tiny measurements.”

There are two tiny measurements you should consider: a relationship survey with all your customers and a transactional survey that focuses on a single moment of truth.

### **RELATIONSHIP SURVEY (POINT IN TIME)**

A relationship survey is a strategic snapshot of the effectiveness of your patient support services program. This is often a good option to begin with—especially if you have not measured the patient and HCP experience with support services previously.

This approach is simple. You reach out to all your current patients (and ideally HCPs), no matter what stage of the treatment journey they are on, and ask them questions about their experiences to date. You get a broader sense of the patient and HCP experience with patient support services, including the high and low points. You also get a baseline to gauge future progress against.

Please note, you will need a separate relationship survey for your patients and their HCP(s). The patient relationship survey should focus on their overall experience with patient support services offered, including specific touchpoints that they have experienced over the past year.

The HCP relationship survey is also about their overall experience but is more focused on the clarity of the communication and literature provided by your patient support team. You can also ask competitors questions about other patient support services offerings they have experienced to get an indicator of relative performance. Asking about how the sales team introduced the available patient support services is another solid line of inquiry.

Relationship surveys are usually longer than other surveys (up to fifteen minutes) and because of this, may require an honorarium, especially for physicians who are used to being compensated for survey feedback. The benefit of the longer survey is that your respondents can provide deeper

and more thoughtful feedback. For example, we have had patients say they want digital wallets with their medical information, available nurses with whom to discuss conditions, travel reimbursement for treatment-related travel, and patient events. Hearing recommendations from patients is invaluable to our clients because it gives them the evidence they need to advocate for program changes internally.

Please note, a relationship survey will result in a large volume of responses quickly, so right away you'll have a lot to work with! Results from these surveys guide your future ongoing transactional survey design, as you use this feedback to decide what specific touchpoints and questions should be prioritized.

Whether or not you start with a relationship survey, it's a good idea to conduct one at least once a year to understand the progress you have made with the overall customer experience and identify any emerging issues. It's also a way to make sure you are touching all your patients and HCPs at least once a year.

### **TRANSACTIONAL (ONGOING)**

A second option is to start with a transactional survey on a key touchpoint or moment of truth.

We have found that the *onboarding* touchpoint is often a



moment of truth and the best place to start a pharma CX program in patient support services. It's a great starting point because this moment is often where patients need the most guidance from your support services. They're navigating a recent diagnosis, prescription, and insurance coverage. So, feedback at this point gives you an overview of how well you're serving their needs.

Be prepared, you will likely find something unexpected in your onboarding feedback. One PeopleMetrics client was concerned that patient welcome calls were too long. The patient onboarding process was split into multiple calls that usually took an hour and a half, and they expected patients to indicate that the calls were too long and contained too much information.

Instead, they found that 96% of patients said that the calls were an appropriate length. Patients commented that summary notes from their discussions would be valuable material for them to review ahead of subsequent calls. Prior to fielding the survey, our client was considering reducing the call length and the amount of information covered during the welcome calls, but patients actually wanted *more* detailed information to supplement their call. This kind of insight is only possible through asking patients directly.

This is another important reminder that even when you create experiences with intention, you may not get them

right the first time. You do your best to feel what the patient feels when you are creating the experiences. However, only by measuring the actual experience in real-time do you know whether what you created is optimal.

When you implement a transactional survey, make sure you keep them to five minutes or less. Since they are shorter, they won't require an honorarium, but you should expect the volume to be lower than relationship surveys.

The benefit of the transactional approach is that by reaching out to patients and HCPs at a key delivery milestone, the real-time feedback is timely and actionable. You can then immediately follow up with patient concerns at critical moments and “close the loop” on any outstanding issues (see Secret #17). It's tactical and has a strong ROI.

Transactional surveys also allow you to gather targeted feedback that can be used for individual coaching and recognition of case managers. This is the pharma CX feedback loop in action. First, you create a high-touch experience using case managers. Then, you measure patients' actual experiences. Using that information, you proactively manage the patient experience by improving case manager performance. This is essentially creating a new experience for patients that you then measure again to assess the impact of your efforts.

After getting your transactional program started, you can expand it in any number of ways. You can collect customer feedback on everything from case managers, patient liaisons/certified nurse educators (CNEs), specialty pharmacies, digital offerings (websites, apps), HCPs and office managers, first infusion, and key intervals after onboarding.

But first, start with tiny measurements—either a relationship survey or the onboarding “moment of truth” touchpoint survey. You will be glad you did.

In the next secret, I will introduce a model that identifies the key patient needs that your patient support services must fulfill, including specific questions to ask when onboarding a new patient onto a new medication.

	<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Transactional</b>
<b>Timing</b>	Once a Year	Ongoing
<b>Follow Up</b>	Rarely	Yes
<b>Length</b>	10–15 Minutes	Under 5 Minutes
<b>Honoraria</b>	Sometimes	Never
<b>Competitor Questions</b>	Often	Never
<b># of Touchpoints Covered</b>	All	Usually one
<b>Volume of Responses</b>	Large	Smaller
<b>Primary Objective</b>	Strategic	Tactical
<b>Org. Access to Results</b>	Limited	Extensive



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not have been possible without my talented colleagues at PeopleMetrics. In particular, Kirk Lohbauer made immense contributions to this book: including client stories, clarifying technical language, and adding context that made the book so much better! Kirk, you know pharma CX at least as well as I do, probably better. You are a pioneer in pharma CX, and I am so glad you are on my team!

The entire customer experience team at PeopleMetrics helped in this effort, including Audrey Squaresky, Courtney Prunchak, and Jean Burns. Audrey, thank you for reading many drafts of the manuscript, always doing a great job, and never complaining! Courtney, your detailed comments on an early draft were so awesome; thank you! And Jean, the patient and HCP quotes you pulled were amazing; thank you, and we miss you.

Speaking of missing people: Madeline Good, thank you for the great early cover design, reading carefully through many early drafts, and your always on-point comments. And Alexandra Quintero, for picking up where Madeline left off and making sure we did not miss a beat in getting this book to market. You both are awesome!

Gary White, thank you for the detailed review of an early version of this book. Your ideas on underserved patient populations and how it relates to CX was brilliant! This book is so much better because of your thoughtful and detailed feedback. Thank you so much!

Jeff Kohl, when you commented that you were expecting a story to grab you in Chapter 1, it hit me that this was a major gap in the book. You were right, and it changed Chapter 1 completely (for the better). Thank you for this insight among many you provided!

I am so grateful to Trancelerate for allowing us to include the Study Participant Feedback Questionnaire (the “SPFQ”) in this book. It made the clinical trial section of the book so much better! The Study Participate Feedback Questionnaire is copyrighted with Trancelerate BioPharma Inc. and is used with permission.

I also want to thank PeopleMetrics’s pharmaceutical and biotechnology clients who made the content in the book

possible and provided feedback on an early draft. It's an honor to work with all of you and be a small part of helping you break the mold and truly become customer-centric. In all the conversations I had with you based on an early draft of this book, you all pointed out the regulatory constraints pharma is under and that it was important to acknowledge this early in the book. You were all 100 percent correct, and the final version reflects that. Thank you so much!

Finally, I would like to thank my two sons, Ben and Henry, who watched me work on this book for over a year and listened to me talk about it endlessly. Everything I do, I do for you. I love you both.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**SEAN MCDADE** has been helping companies optimize customer experiences for over twenty years. He is the founder, CEO, and visionary of PeopleMetrics, a leading provider of experience management software and advisory services. Sean has worked with leading pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies such as AstraZeneca, Sanofi, and Novartis. He has created PeopleMetrics pharma CX solutions, including the Patient Hierarchy of Needs framework for patient support services that is featured in this book. Sean's first book, *Listen or Die: 40 Lessons that Turn Customer Feedback into Gold*, was an Amazon bestseller. He holds a PhD in Business Administration and Marketing Science from Temple University and has published eight articles in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. A recipient of Philadelphia Business Journal's 40 Under 40 award, Sean is also an active angel investor in the Philadelphia region. Sean resides in Philadelphia and spends as much time as possible in Brigantine, NJ, during the summer with his two sons, Ben and Henry.