

# Reinforce agile cross-functional capabilities with holistic customer insights



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## Key Takeaways

**Patient-centricity:** The final customer for all functions should be the patient.

**Insights over observations:** Focus on the "so what" to prioritize valuable information that drives action.

**Cross-functional collaboration:** Establish clear workflows for collecting, prioritizing, and disseminating insights.

**AI and technology:** Combine multiple data sources with AI analysis to identify unexpected customer journeys and decision-makers.

**Measure impact:** Track how insights drive strategic decisions and business outcomes.

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**How pharmaceutical companies are leveraging holistic customer insights to drive more effective cross-functional decision-making**

Patient insights create the most value when shared across organizational boundaries, but too often valuable information remains trapped within functional silos. Industry leaders are now championing integrated approaches that connect medical affairs, market access, and commercial teams to drive more patient-centric strategies.

**The Patient as the Ultimate Customer**

For effective cross-functional integration, organizations must recognize patients as their ultimate customers. "The final customer for all functions should be the patient," emphasized Michaela Pantaleoni, Chief Market Access Officer at Napo Therapeutics. "If it's clear for the team that the patient is our final customer, patient insights are not just part of research and market research—they become intelligence."

Pantaleoni outlined three essential ingredients



for better integration: aligning on patients as the end customer, creating a central repository for insights, and fostering cross-functional discussions about those insights.

**From Data Overload to Actionable Intelligence**

The challenge isn't just collecting insights but prioritizing them effectively. Clemens Muller, Senior Director at Takeda, highlighted their "INDIE" project designed to address this challenge. "We've created a seamless journey from collecting insights like a funnel, screening them through a triage with decision-making about clear actions, and having a dissemination plan," explained Muller. "It's essential to identify what challenges we're trying to solve and define a clear process to connect insights from different streams—medical, commercial, market access—at global, regional, and local levels."

Muller also emphasized the importance of distinguishing between observations and true insights: "We shouldn't compare observations with insights. It's always the 'so what'—if this is



included, then we're talking about insights. That helps in prioritization."

### Leveraging Technology to Uncover Hidden Patterns

Modern analytics platforms can accelerate cross-functional insights by identifying patterns that might otherwise be missed. Lance Hill, CEO of Within3, shared how a top pharmaceutical company leveraged technology when launching an acquired asset in an unfamiliar therapeutic area. "They assembled a medical and commercial team working tightly together to prepare for the launch," Hill explained. "We built a market landscape in a box by gathering GDPR-compliant data sets—scientific data, congress data, social listening data, claims and referral data—and layered AI models on top of that so they could inspect the data to ask questions."

This approach revealed unexpected insights that dramatically shifted their strategy. "A lot of the actual care decisions were being made by mental health professionals—patients were visiting them for depression and other ancillary issues related to their chronic



condition. These professionals were suggesting the new treatment, but they weren't a target audience. The company immediately pivoted to address this group," said Hill.

### The Transformative Power of Agile Cross-Functional Teams

In rare disease settings where patient numbers are limited, cross-functional approaches become even more critical. Pantaleoni shared an experience with an agile business development project where diverse functions collaborated without traditional hierarchy.

"We were from different functions and had never worked together," she recalled. "Nobody was in charge, and we were free to define the process. Our first rule was to start from the patient—where do patients have higher needs? This was the key because nobody tried to push their own objective."

The team instituted daily 15-minute meetings to share findings and solicit different perspectives, leading to rapid progress. "Every two weeks we had something new to present



to leadership. I understood things like the importance of surrogate biomarkers in rare disease from my colleagues' perspectives, which helped me better address payer concerns," Pantaleoni noted.

### Medical Affairs as Insight Generators

Medical teams increasingly play a central role in the insights ecosystem. Muller identified three evolving trends: maintaining appropriate firewalls with commercial while sharing outcomes transparently, leveraging engagement metrics, and incorporating third-party data sources. "Engagement metrics are probably the market research of the future," suggested Muller. "There are plenty of ways in the digital environment to track and measure engagements with customers, patients, and healthcare professionals."

### Making Insights Actionable Through Measurement

For insights to drive organizational change, their impact must be measurable. "If there's just a bunch of ad hoc insights going into a meeting where people talk and maybe something gets spun up, it's unclear what happened," observed Hill. "That disincentivizes the whole process, making it just a chore rather than something impactful."

When implementing a customer-centric insights approach, Hill advised connecting data across sources: "When you can tie broader market-level sources of information back down to the individual customer, you can understand really interesting things—like whether a vocal detractor on social media is actually influential in the scientific community or just making noise."



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