

# Bayer AG and Boehringer Ingelheim: HCP Engagement In the Moment of Need

Healthcare professionals (HCPs) put a premium on interactions with field teams who get them what they need quickly and reliably. However, according to data from the Digital Health Coalition, only 27% of HCPs say that biopharmas communicate with them in a relevant and personalized way. Empowering field teams with the right content, engagement opportunities, and channels builds strong customer relationships that create lasting value for HCPs and patients.

While nothing can replace in-person interactions, adding an inbound engagement channel enables an HCP to raise their hand at the point of care. With on-demand channels, biopharmas can increase HCP engagement, deepen connections, and collaborate more effectively.

Bayer AG and Boehringer Ingelheim implemented on-demand engagement in their customer journeys and successfully use inbound channels in specific markets today. During a recent conversation with Alexander Alex, head of CRM and engagement channels at Bayer AG, and Saskia Richter, global capability owner for customer-facing relationship management at Boehringer Ingelheim, they shared key considerations for deploying inbound engagement.

# The definition and importance of on-demand HCP engagement

Data and behaviors indicate a noticeable shift in HCP engagement. Biopharmas face challenges connecting with customers, and convenience has become core to providing a superior experience. There is an increasing need for HCPs to optimize daily tasks, and biopharmas that swiftly resolve issues and offer simple and convenient solutions can rise above competitors.

*“When you strive for great customer experience, you need to offer a certain level of convenience to your customers, and I think that’s for me somehow the core word of that definition.”*

**Alexander Alex**  
Head of CRM and Engagement Channels, Bayer AG

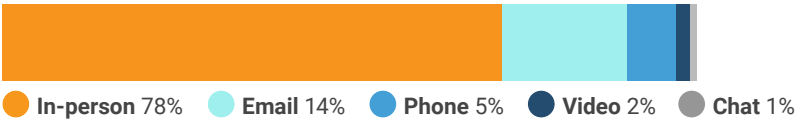
This concept applies universally to various types of customers, HCPs or everyday consumers. Much like receiving tailored content on Netflix, HCPs and patients could navigate a health insurance website for the latest yoga treatments or utilize a chatbot to resolve inquiries quickly. On-demand engagement simplifies and enhances life in the digital sphere – granting access to digital resources anytime and anywhere.

*“HCPs want quick information. They can’t wait for the next rep’s visit, phone call, or email.”*

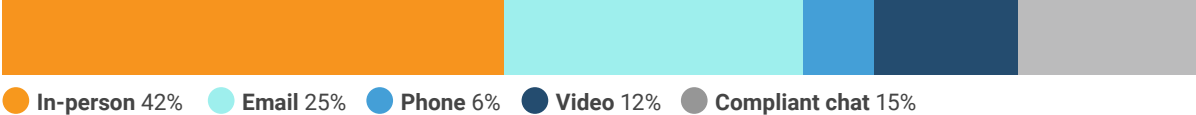
**Saskia Richter**  
Global Capability Owner for Customer Facing Relationship Management, Boehringer Ingelheim

## HCP engagement industry trends: on-demand HCP engagement is service-focused

Traditional Engagement Model



Service-focused Engagement Model



Source: [Veeva Pulse Field Trends Report](#)

A service-focused engagement model combines meaningful in-person touchpoints with responsive, real-time interactions between meetings and in the moment of need.

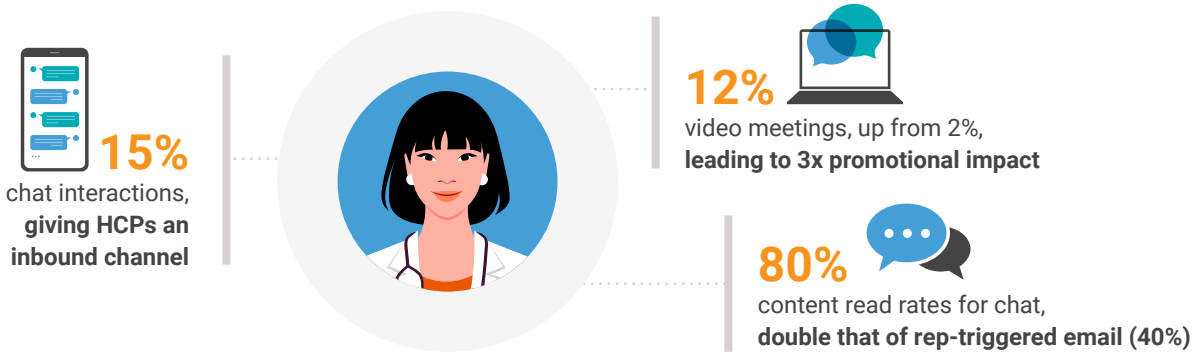
By opening up on-demand channels in the new service-focused model, the volume of engagement through all digital channels significantly increases.

Compliant chat makes up  
15% of the channel mix

Video meetings increase  
from 2% to 12%

This approach gives HCPs immediate access to valuable resources without waiting for in-person meetings while keeping the volume of in-person interactions the same or better.

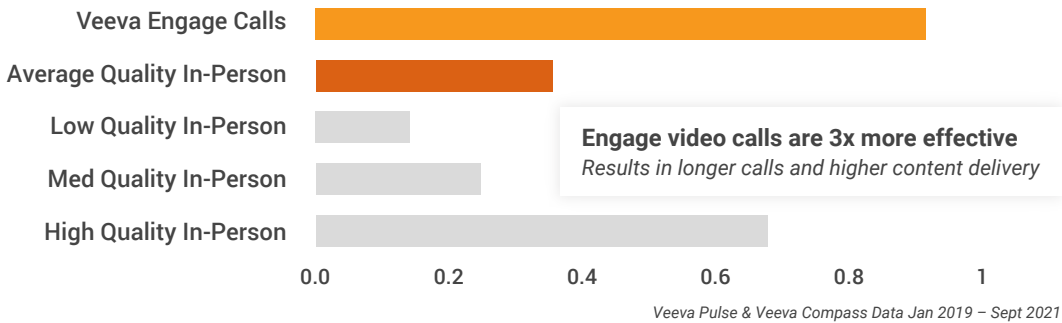
**HCP engagement industry trends:  
service-focused engagement improves interactions**



Source: [Veeva Pulse Field Trends Report](#)

Delivering on HCPs’ needs in real-time significantly strengthens the HCP relationship and improves access and efficiency. Reps in this new engagement model see:

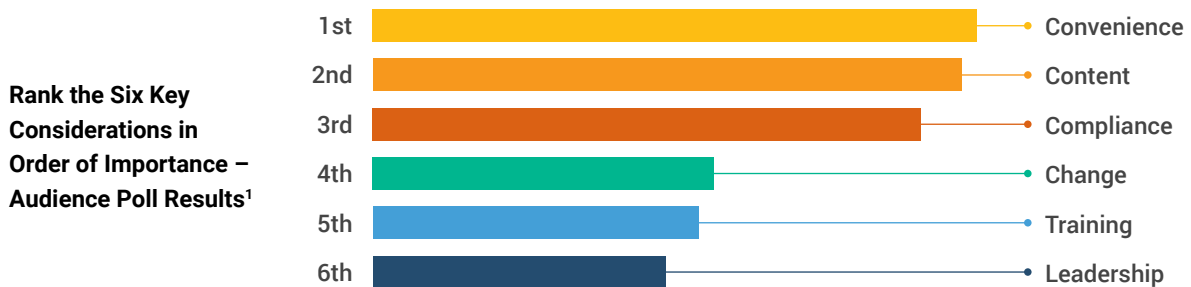
- Chat interactions constitute 15% of all interactions. The content read rates in this channel stand at 80%, which is twice as high as those of rep-triggered emails
- HCPs respond positively to chat and pull channels. Field teams provide them with the content they need at the time they need it
- An increase in video meetings can lead to a promotional impact that is three times greater than in-person meetings alone



Source: [Veeva Pulse Field Trends Report 2022](#)

Increased quality engagements and relevant content provide convenient, on-demand access for HCPs and better customer service.

## Six key considerations for pull channels to become a reality



### Convenience

A vast array of digital engagement solutions is available on the market, but you have to consider where your customers are and respect market differences.

*“The decision is not always easy because it is determined by our customers. In every market, we have a different dominant tool for instant messaging. Most importantly, and that’s again for convenience, we need to be where the customer is. From the field teams’ perspective: not every rep is ready for that, the same way as not every customer is waiting for it.”*

**Alexander Alex**

### Content

Veeva Pulse data shows that field teams that use content the most outpace lagging companies at a rate of 4:1, a significant competitive advantage. Regarding instant messaging, biopharma companies can examine their content creation and ensure that appropriate and compliant content is available for use.

Different types of content in a chat dialogue can pull customers into deeper conversation. It creates a trigger, but organizations need to tailor them for the channel. Examples could include bite-sized modular content, videos, GIFs, and even stickers in certain markets.

*“You cannot just share a link to an e-detailer via instant messaging because that’s just inappropriate for that channel. We need to change the mindset and to think about bite-sized, small pieces of content, and we need a lot of that because the channel is rapid. And once an HCP has adopted it, he’s requesting more and more, and on a speed, which we haven’t seen before.”*

**Alexander Alex**

<sup>1</sup> Veeva Commercial Summit Europe 2023, engagement customer panel

## Compliance

In the biopharma industry, strict regulatory requirements relating to record-keeping govern how field teams interact with HCPs. Even instant messages must adhere to current data privacy regulations and ethical rules.

For Boehringer Ingelheim, the key to overcoming the compliance barrier was consistent communication between different parts of the business and local and global functions.

*"We launched Veeva CRM Engage Connect in a European country for eight reps and one MSL (Medical Science Liaison), and I was very happy to have a GDPR country giving Engage Connect a try. I was also quite confident because the country has been using Veeva for ages, which means they are collecting consent for everything. They use approved content from Veeva Vault PromoMats and even implemented Veeva CRM Approved Notes on short notice. That ticks the box on the compliance part."*

**Saskia Richter**

## Change management and leadership

An effective change management program, along with training, drives excitement amongst field teams and customers about on-demand engagement. This shows increased efficiency and a positive impact on their overall relationship-building efforts.

For Bayer AG, the success of their change management efforts came down to positioning. They implemented a strategy to introduce a new chat channel via WhatsApp for its top customers only in a specific country. This involved sending approved emails with QR codes and granting HCPs direct access to their sales representatives. They positioned this tool as a VIP experience, and their customers felt highly valued.

*"The most important is managing change on various stakeholder levels."*

**Alexander Alex**

Leadership plays an important role in supporting capability development and avoiding the return of old behaviors.

*"First and foremost, you need leadership commitment: ensure that senior leadership is committed to the digital transformation. Their support is crucial for driving cultural and operational change."*

**Saskia Richter**

## Training

Data shows that **75% of HCPs** want to keep or increase digital interactions, and that the nature of those interactions is changing. The Veeva Pulse Field Trends Report also highlights the nature of this change and shows that not all field teams are to benefit equally. As digital engagement increases its share of the channel mix, field teams must develop new behaviors to remain relevant. The role of the field rep has changed in the eyes of many HCPs: top-performing field teams are comfortable leveraging multiple channels so that, in effect, reps never leave the room.

Here are **five tips** to acclimate field teams to a mix of new engagement tools like Engage Connect.

- 1** Communicate a clear value proposition to the learner – answering ‘*What’s in it for me?*’, ‘*Why now?*’ and ensure the leadership team is supportive.
- 2** Don’t just focus on tools and tactics. Soft skills are equally important (if not more).
- 3** Deploy diverse ways of learning. Variation leads to motivation and suits different learning styles.
- 4** Make training a journey where achievements are celebrated and shared in the community.
- 5** Ensure change is measurable to show the value of the program over time.

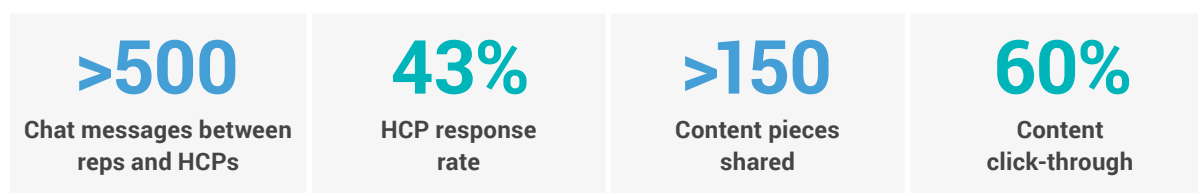
*“Don’t cut it short on training, even when it means that your sales reps are out of the field for two days.”*

**Saskia Richter**

## KPIs prove that the chat channel is an effective supporting tool in HCP engagement

Boehringer Ingelheim:

key KPIs for Engage Connect chat pilot, October 2023 – February 2024



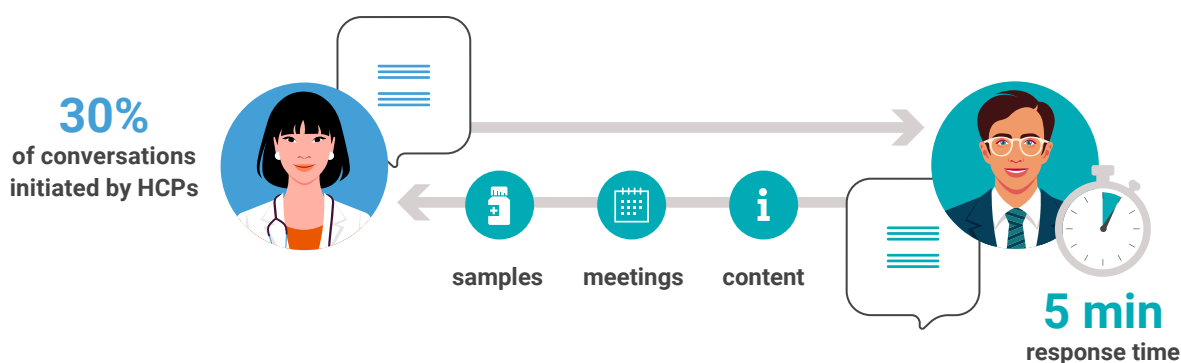
Boehringer Ingelheim has also set up soft KPIs to monitor field activity:

1. Reps must sign into Engage Connect at least once during the first two weeks of the pilot project
2. Reps must establish at least three connections in the first month
3. Reps must participate in 10 chats during the first two months
4. Reps must share at least eight contents during the first three months

*"We use incentive games for the reps: For example, who reached the first five customers. It becomes a game, and it boosts adoption."*

Alexander Alex

## Veeva Pulse metrics for inbound channels: field teams respond in real-time

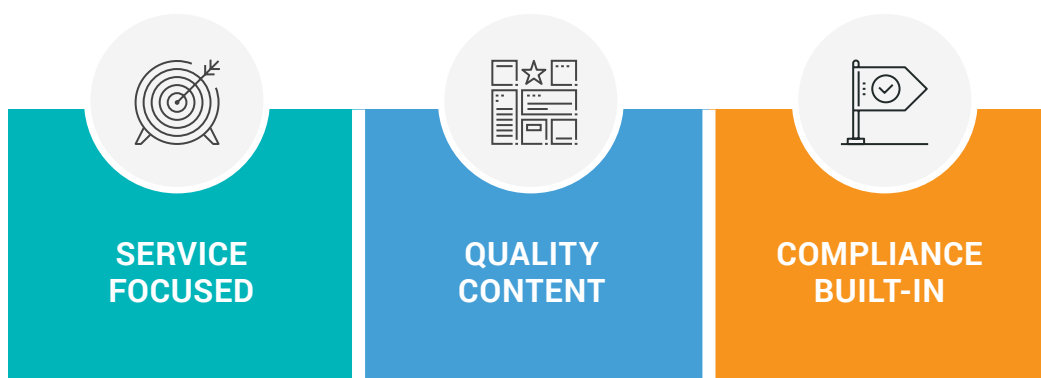


According to **Veeva Pulse** data, when given an inbound channel, 30% of chats are initiated by HCPs, who proactively bring their needs to their rep. The data also shows strong responses from field teams: over 90% of reps respond within five minutes, a near real-time response. They're responding by delivering meaningful value to those HCPs, whether sending them samples or setting up meetings. And, in a service-focused engagement model, even when digital touchpoints increase, in-person touchpoints remain at the same volume – or increase.

## Conclusion

On-demand HCP engagement comes in many forms, but they all have three things in common.

1. **On-demand HCP engagement is service-focused:** it addresses questions and removes treatment barriers in real-time. It also allows HCPs to initiate the discussion on what they need and when they need it.
2. **On-demand HCP engagement relies on quality content:** it uses content types that are appropriate for the pull channel and ensures that there is a fine-tuned content supply chain and operating model.
3. **On-demand HCP engagement has compliance built-in:** it ensures that the instant messaging tools used meet regulatory, security, and data privacy requirements, as well as the organization's specific needs.



Behavioral change and capability building take time, so the time is now to start this journey or to reinvigorate and accelerate the approach. Organizations that enable on-demand HCP engagement will build a competitive advantage through better-quality customer engagement.

Talk to your Veeva account partner about how **CRM Engage** can help your field teams provide the services that HCPs want





**Alexander Alex**

Head of CRM and Engagement Channels  
Bayer AG

Alexander was an opening keynote and CRM keynote speaker for Veeva Commercial Summit Europe 2023, talking about Bayer being among the first top 20 biopharma companies to move to **Veeva Vault CRM** worldwide, while also standardizing global customer data with **Veeva OpenData**.

As Bayer moves to Vault CRM, the next generation of CRM for life sciences, it is harmonizing customer reference data for greater efficiency and continued innovation into the future. By unifying its global master data, Bayer will be poised to leverage AI-driven engagement across channels and geographies.

For the past three years, Alexander has been leading customer engagement and the transformation of customer engagement for Bayer.



**Saskia Richter**

Global Capability Owner for Customer Facing Relationship Management  
Boehringer Ingelheim

Saskia has been the global system owner for Veeva CRM and has focused on customer-facing excellence in execution for the past two years.

She rolled out the **Veeva CRM Engage** meeting capability back in 2019 before COVID-19.

She enabled Boehringer Ingelheim to replace face-to-face interactions during the pandemic, but most importantly, she already made sure that the virtual meetings would become a sustainable channel and part of the strategy of the organization.

Saskia was also a Veeva hero in 2019.

## Authors



**Sebastien Noel**

Director  
Commercial Strategy Europe  
Veeva



**Annie Geraghty**

Principal  
Business Consulting Europe  
Veeva

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