EVENT TECHNOLOGY FOR THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

Overview from international 'Lunch and Learn' meetings

April 2017

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Background

Throughout March 2017 Concise sponsored a series of four **MedComms Networking** 'lunch and learn' events to discuss the use of technology to optimise audience engagement within the pharma industry. Lunches were held in Oxford, New York, Macclesfield and San Francisco.

The results do indicate regional differences, which could be driven by the geographies participants predominantly work in, although many are likely to be involved in international events. It could also be attributed to the types of events that delegates have most heavily been involved with; for the purposes of this document they are reported by the locations of the 'lunch and learns'.

Key findings

The general feedback was very positive about the experience of adopting technology to augment participant engagement and gain insight within pharma events. However, it was also felt that there is significant opportunity to grow this adoption with the right approach to overcoming some of the challenges faced by the industry.

The most revealing finding was how consistent the challenges faced by medcomms professionals are in both countries.

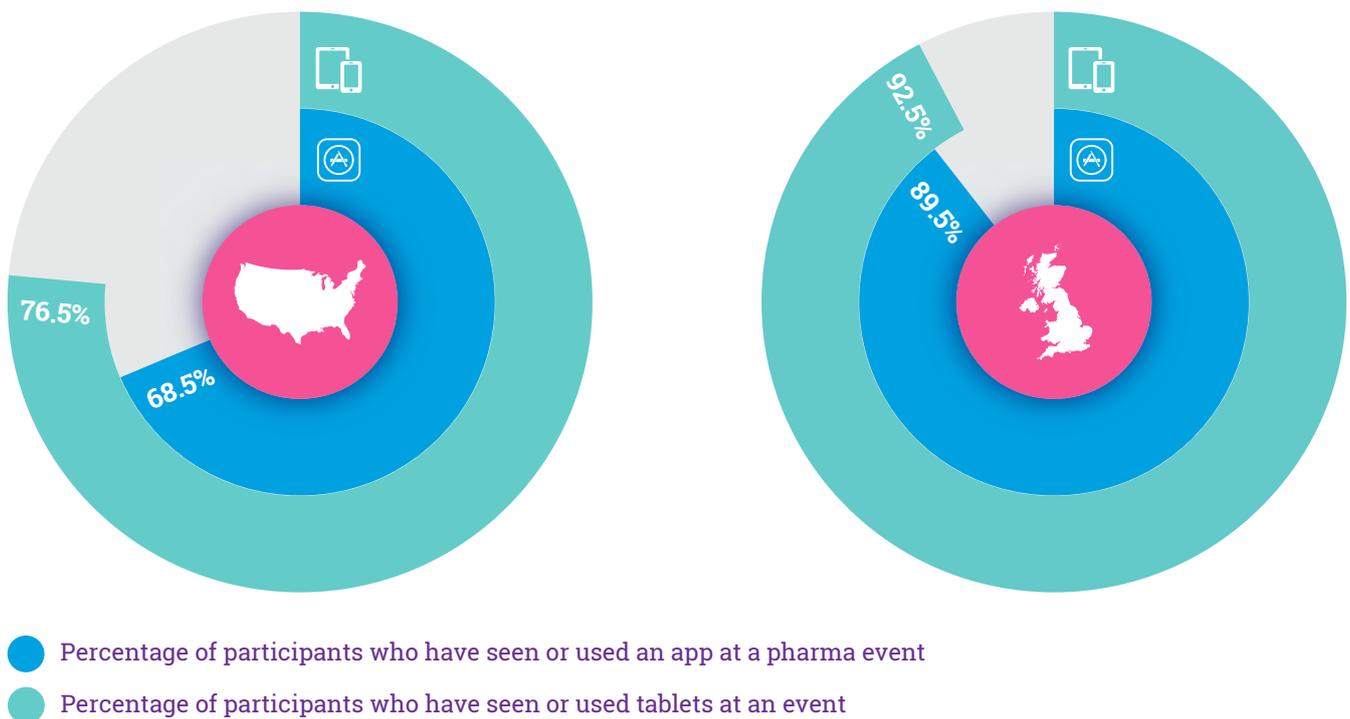In all four meetings similar topics came up:

- Legal compliance and data security concerns constrain the types of interaction, presentation and discussion at events

- Maintaining communication with and between delegates after an event

- Technologies shouldn't be used for the sake of it. Any technology should add value to the event. 'Novelty value' is not enough, clients need demonstrable ROI.

Regional differences

One significant difference highlighted between the USA and UK feedback was that at both UK events delegates commented that budgets rarely match client ambitions for the event. This was seen as less of an issue in New York and San Francisco.

When reviewing the types of technology adopted at pharma events, 68.5% of USA attendees said they had used or seen an app at an event, in the UK the figure was significantly higher at 89.5%.

USA VS UK: PERCENTAGES OF APP AND TABLET USED AT PHARMA EVENTS AND GENERAL EVENTS

76.5%
68.5%

92.5%
89.5%

● Percentage of participants who have seen or used an app at a pharma event

● Percentage of participants who have seen or used tablets at an event

This trend continued when asked if they had used or seen tablets at an event, 76.5% of USA attendees responded yes, in the UK the figure was again higher at 92.5%.

When it came to voting systems, adoption in the UK was again above that reported by the US participants. In the UK 96.5% of respondents had seen or used such systems, whilst in the US it was 81%. In both instances this technology had been more widely adopted than event apps and tablets; however it was commented upon in all meetings that these tools were likely to gain broader adoption as clients and participants sought differentiated experiences.

Attendees' comments on client reluctance to adopt 'new' technologies or those where it's difficult to measure ROI seem to be evident in the uptake of other technologies.

Use of augmented reality was similar in the USA and UK at 37.5% and 35.5% respectively. Virtual reality application usage was reported at 45.5% in the UK and a much lower 17.5% in the USA.

Use of gamification techniques to drive audience engagement was similar in the USA and UK at 41% and 47% respectively.

What can we learn from these figures?

The poll results from this sample seem to suggest that adoption of new event technologies at pharma events is faster in the UK than in the USA. This would support Concise's experience as we see demand growing in the US, as medcomms agencies continually look at ways to add value to events.

In both markets voting systems have achieved the highest market penetration, however tablets and event apps are now seen as mature, 'proven' products and are continuing to experience growing adoption rates.

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> ## EVENT APPS ARE NOW SEEN AS MATURE, 'PROVEN' PRODUCTS
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Participants commented that while simple voting systems have been effective there is an opportunity and indeed need for a richer experience, especially with provision of document resources and more specific engagement.

The usage figures for augmented reality and virtual reality, taken in conjunction with comments made during the sessions suggests these will remain niche products used in exhibition and experiential settings. There is no expectation that they will see adoption rate increases similar to those of event apps.

Gamification has seen some use as a mechanism to drive engagement at events, however there is still confusion on what the term means and how gamification works in practice. This may change over time as the number of case studies grows and its effectiveness quantified.

How can the challenges to adoption be approached and overcome?

As referenced above there are three common areas where pharma comms agencies face challenges:

Legal compliance

This adds significant time to content development and in some cases even restricts the type of functionality which can be used at an event. One example cited was concern at pushing presentation slides to iPads in case a competitor in the audience photographed them and found some incorrect information.

Approach

The time for legal approval can be managed quite effectively by reversing the way a development agency would normally work and build the app 'content first'. The 'bare bones' app can then go into the legal review process while the functionality and interface design continue being developed.

Protecting against delegates photographing content is almost impossible to achieve, but it can be mitigated against by selecting a modular app for your event, whereby functionality can be turned on and off, even mid-event, based on the audience and type of event you're running.

Concise has developed functionality to watermark documents which discourages images being taken and can individually tag participants to documents.

Data protection

This is a significant challenge in the financial sector and a growing challenge in pharma, with the number and sophistication of security controls required increasing year on year.

Approach

Provided the event app partner takes data security seriously and puts all the recommended controls in place, there is no reason why data protection need be a barrier to use of technology. You may find that the client's IT team want to be more involved in assessing your app provider and possibly conducting their own product testing, however this can be done in parallel to development and shouldn't necessarily impact on time or cost.

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Return on investment

Measuring return on investment has always been a grail for events professionals and this is an area where technology can really add value.

Approach

Engaging key stakeholders or sponsors early in understanding the 'art of the possible' when using an event app and how it gains real insight from the audience, often helps adoption.

They see the value of capturing all the activity taking place, from how popular each session was to how many times a PDF was read, which content was the most requested and how many messages, votes and questions were submitted per delegate.

This gives you a powerful mechanism not only to demonstrate ROI for your event, but also to help shape planning for your next meeting.

How can technology help at your future events?

One way we're adding value to future events is by extending the lifespan of the event app. By making it available before, during and after the event it can extend and enhance the value of the event from inception to completion.

By providing relevant content and functionality in each of these three phases you can maintain engagement with your audience, give them more information and crucially gain insight into their thoughts, behaviours and preferences.
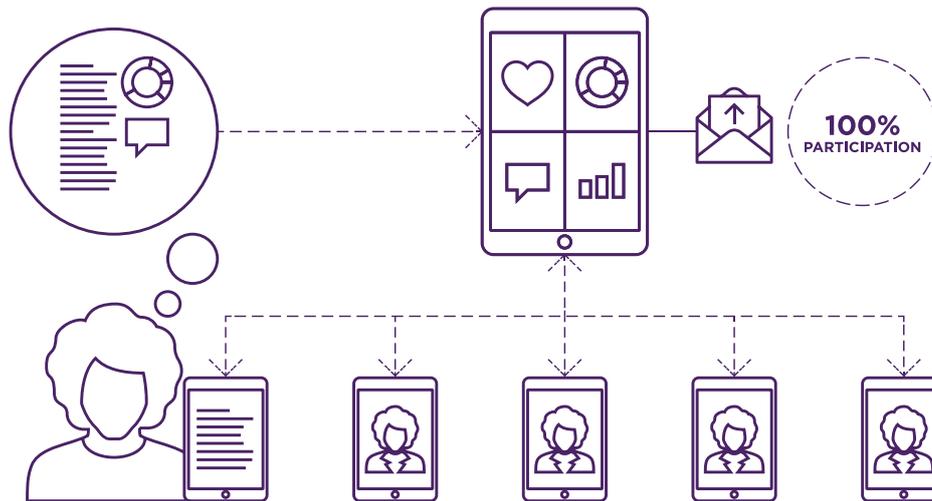
Through features such as live chat, networking tools and discussion forums you can encourage organic delegate conversations to continue well after the event has ended.

Personalised content and the ability for delegates to self-select the sessions they attend adds value to their experience.

AN EFFECTIVE MEASURE OF ROI

Detailed reports at the end of the event providing you with data on delegate interactions gives you an effective measure of ROI and can be used to help shape future events.

Concise supports hundreds of events globally each year; we have great insight from our pharmaceutical experience but also from other industries. We are always happy to discuss the possibilities that technologies open for improving the outcomes of events.

If you'd like to discuss how these technologies could help at your next event contact the people below or vist our website at **www.concisegroup.com**.

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