

2025 Year End Trends

DHC Group Member Perspectives



December 2025

INTRODUCTION

The pharmaceutical marketing ecosystem runs on partnership. From agencies and data companies to media properties and technology platforms, success depends on how well diverse partners understand each other's perspectives, challenges, and opportunities.

DHC Group brings together leaders across this ecosystem—agency executives, technology innovators, data specialists, and media experts—to share how they're thinking about the year ahead. These aren't theoretical predictions. They're informed by daily work with pharmaceutical brands, real-time observation of what's working, and practical experience navigating regulatory complexity, technological change, and evolving patient expectations.

For pharmaceutical marketers, hearing directly from partners across the value chain offers something no single perspective can provide: a comprehensive view of where the industry is heading and which investments are likely to deliver results. When your agency, your data provider, and your media partners all identify similar trends, it's worth paying attention. When they disagree, those tensions often signal important strategic choices ahead.

What follows captures both the consensus and the divergence across four key questions. The value isn't just in the predictions themselves, but in understanding how different parts of your ecosystem are preparing for 2026.

SECTION ONE

What Changed in 2025



SECTION TWO

What's Exciting in 2026



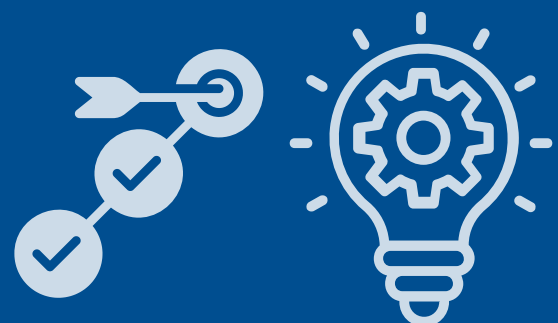
SECTION THREE

What's Concerning in 2026



SECTION FOUR

Growth & Innovation in 2026



MEET THE EXPERTS



Lisa Bookwalter
CRO, Throtle



Andrew Burkus
Sr. Director, Thought
Leadership at IQVIA
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Amy Campion
SVP of Business
Development and
Strategy, Timely by
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Lauren Lawhon
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Bari Maniff
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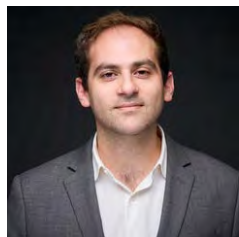
David Ormesher
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Michael Palladino
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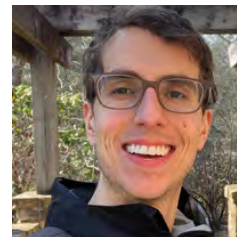
Susan Perlbachs,
Chief Creative
Officer, EVERSANA
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Mike Ramadei
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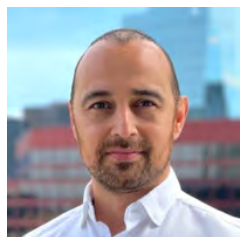
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Year End Trends Section One

WHAT CHANGED MOST IN 2025

WE ASKED: What Changed Most About Pharmaceutical Digital Marketing in 2025?



The defining shift of 2025 was AI's movement from experimentation to operational reality—becoming an everyday engine rather than a pilot project. Across agencies and brands, AI became embedded in workflows for content creation, audience targeting, personalization, and performance optimization. The change was particularly visible in visual expression and video production, where small teams could suddenly articulate ideas faster and more clearly, with hybrid production combining live action and AI-generated elements becoming standard practice.

But 2025's transformation went deeper than technology adoption. As one expert framed it: the industry "stopped trying to forecast the future and instead learned to adapt to it in real time." Fixed annual plans gave way to fluid, agile models driven by three converging pressures—regulatory instability, rapid AI advancement, and channel fragmentation. Omnichannel stopped being a buzzword and became a necessity. Digital transformation moved from talking stage to operational reality.

The media landscape shifted dramatically. For the first time, streaming video viewership surpassed combined cable and broadcast, accelerating the "gravity shift" from linear to CTV. This fragmentation drove reliance on precision targeting tools and made unified video measurement non-negotiable. The traditional search funnel began its decline as zero-click searches and AI-generated summaries fundamentally altered discovery patterns, with "authenticity over algorithm" emerging as the year's defining pivot.

Perhaps most significantly, 2025 continued the shift towards a more rigorous review of data quality. Marketers stopped taking data at face value and faced accountability around targeting assumptions and what campaigns actually influence. More pharma companies launched DTP programs, moving the model from early adopters to mainstream strategy. And compliance became urgent—particularly around social and DTC—as regulators made clear they were watching closely. This year pharma continued to move beyond merely talking about change and increasingly operationalized it.

What Changed Most in 2025...



Bari Maniff, Group SVP, Engagement Strategy, CMI Media Group

For better or worse, 2025 was a wild one! It marked the year the pharmaceutical industry stopped trying to forecast the future and instead learned to adapt to it in real time. Adaptability became a central part of the marketing process. Campaigns were continuously tuned, recalibrated against policy chaos, new technologies, and higher expectations from patients and HCPs. Fixed annual plans gave way to fluid, agile models built to respond to real-world needs in real time.

This shift was driven by 3 converging pressures: regulatory instability, the rapid rise of AI, and growing fragmentation across channels. Policy and regulatory uncertainty forced marketers to adopt modular content systems and dynamic risk approaches rather than rigid campaigns. AI promised efficiency and personalization, but success depended less on adoption and more on responsible use and the pairing technological power with human judgment, governance, and trust. At the same time, as media and expectations splintered, we saw strategic clarity become a competitive advantage and lastly, omnichannel moved from aspiration to discipline, and impact was measured by behavior change and experience, not reach alone.



Matthew Walsh, General Manager of Biopharma iXlayer

After the initial early adopters of DTP, we saw many more Pharmas launch their own programs in 2025. These programs allow patients to pay cash for drugs at discounted rates and get them fulfilled at Pharma-owned pharmacies.



Rebecca Colegrove, Sr. Manager, B2B Marketing and Events, Healthline Media

In 2025, the biggest shift in pharmaceutical digital marketing has been how AI and data strategy have become operational engines, not just experimental tools. AI became embedded in everyday marketing workflows, powering audience targeting, personalization, and performance optimization across

channels. Another major change was the industry's pivot toward data quality over data volume, driven by privacy regulations and the decline of third-party identifiers. Direct-to-consumer digital engagement has also expanded, with brands investing in educational hubs, telehealth integrations, and interactive tools. Overall, 2025 marked a move toward more integrated, personalized, and trust-focused digital strategies.



Amy Campion, Senior Vice President of Business Development and Strategy, Timely by DrFirst

I've seen three big shifts. First, more pharma companies now appreciate the precision that digital marketing can provide, rather than using it like a megaphone to reach a broad audience in hopes that it reaches enough patients. This shift helps companies reach the right prescriber or patient with content that actually matters to them, right when they need it. Second, the format of content has been evolving toward more use of short videos, quick infographics, and

interactive tools. This strategy makes sense because people learn differently, so using a mix of approaches is more likely to get your messages across. Third, we've seen more investment in building patient communities, especially for conditions where people may feel isolated. For mental health medications or weight management therapies, sometimes connecting patients with each other is just as powerful as connecting them with clinical information. This is exciting because, when paired with technology that captures adherence data, it gives pharma marketers the real-world evidence they need to prove the value to providers and payers.



What Changed Most in 2025...



Susan Perlbachs, Chief Creative Officer, EVERSANA INTOUCH

What shifted most in 2025 wasn't whether AI entered pharma marketing. It was where it meaningfully showed up. The biggest change was in visual expression. Brands still moved step by step, with humans firmly in the loop, but suddenly small teams could articulate ideas—particularly in video form—faster, more clearly, and with better results than ever before.

AI-enabled tools dramatically improved character continuity, tone, and consistency in longer-form video, making digital storytelling more viable beyond short bursts. At the same time, the industry began to move away from rigid production silos. Traditional TV and CTV approaches didn't disappear, but hybrid production—combining live action, AI-generated elements, and post-production augmentation—became increasingly normal.

Looking ahead to 2026, video will become less about a single “spot” and more about presence: modular, adaptive, and designed to show up coherently across moments, markets, and mindsets. Signature, bespoke craft will continue to play a critical role, alongside more flexible visual techniques that allow ideas to travel further and faster. The brands that win will be the ones with a visual language strong enough to hold across all of it—crafted when it needs to be, efficient when it can be, and always clear, human, and engaging.



Scott Ronay, GM, Advertising, PurpleLab

In 2025, the biggest shift was that pharma marketers stopped taking their data at face value. There was a real reckoning around whether targeting and measurement strategies were built on facts or assumptions. For a long time, the industry relied on signals that worked well in other categories, but pharma doesn't follow a linear path. When it comes to treatment, “you can't just go and try it.” There's a clinical process, time, and privacy considerations that fundamentally change how marketing works.

At the same time, it became clear that claims are always historical, which pushed marketers to look beyond thin or outdated models. The focus moved toward de-identified, clinically grounded data that reflects how patients actually move through diagnosis, treatment initiation, and care.

This shift isn't just about staying compliant, it's about accountability. Clean, validated healthcare data that enables marketers to better understand what their campaigns are truly influencing.



Mike Ramadei, VP Crossix Strategy, Veeva

In 2025, for the first time, streaming video viewership surpassed the total combined viewership of cable and broadcast. This is driving an increase in the use of Connected TV (CTV), streaming, and online video platforms for reaching target patients. This shift across platforms has spurred two changes in how digital marketers target and measure video performance.

One is that in this fragmented video environment, pharma brands are relying more on precision tools like health audience segments to maximize their digital TV and video investments. Custom-built segments help advertisers reach key audiences in a privacy-safe, HIPAA-compliant way. By utilizing these segments across streaming, online video, and data-driven TV partners, marketers can ensure their direct-to-consumer TV advertisements are engaging the right audience regardless of platform.

This other change is the rapid adoption of unified video measurement. Having a simple, consistent view of performance across linear TV, streaming, and online video has become non-negotiable. This visibility is essential for marketers to optimize their investments by comparing metrics across channels, understanding the incrementality of their campaigns, and accessing faster insights.

What Changed Most in 2025...



Lauren Lawhon, President, Health Union

In 2025, we witnessed the beginning of the end for the traditional search funnel as the primary gateway for patient and HCP discovery. The escalating impacts of AI, and specifically, the rise of zero-click searches and AI-generated summaries are fundamentally changing consumer behavior and challenging established digital media norms that rely on organic and paid search. We are already seeing the vulnerability of media giants in health who primarily relied on

search for scale, and the impact on programmatic inventory is likely to follow in the coming year.

AI disruption, however, is leading to an essential, positive pivot: the rising importance of peer connection and community online. We are seeing platforms that foster meaningful interactions between real people starting to replace traditional endemic publisher-focused strategies. Ultimately, it's authenticity over algorithm that is the defining shift of the year.



David Ormesher, CEO CG Life

2025 felt like the year pharma stopped just talking about digital transformation and started actually operationalizing it. AI moved into day-to-day work, especially in content creation, adaptation, and expectations for speed-to-market, but with much tighter oversight. It became democratized through the agency. This shift became more practical: fewer splashy pilots, more modular content, and a focus on orchestration across channels.

At the same time, we had to become more disciplined, and with budgets tightening and attention harder to earn, agencies had to prove that every channel and tactic was pulling its weight. Omnichannel stopped being a buzzword and became a necessity.

Lastly, we witnessed a wake-up call on compliance in 2025, particularly in social and DTC. Regulators and platforms made it clear they were watching closely, which forced brand teams to rethink not just how they promoted, but how fast misinformation can spread when they're not part of the conversation.



Year End Trends Section Two

WHAT'S MOST EXCITING IN 2026

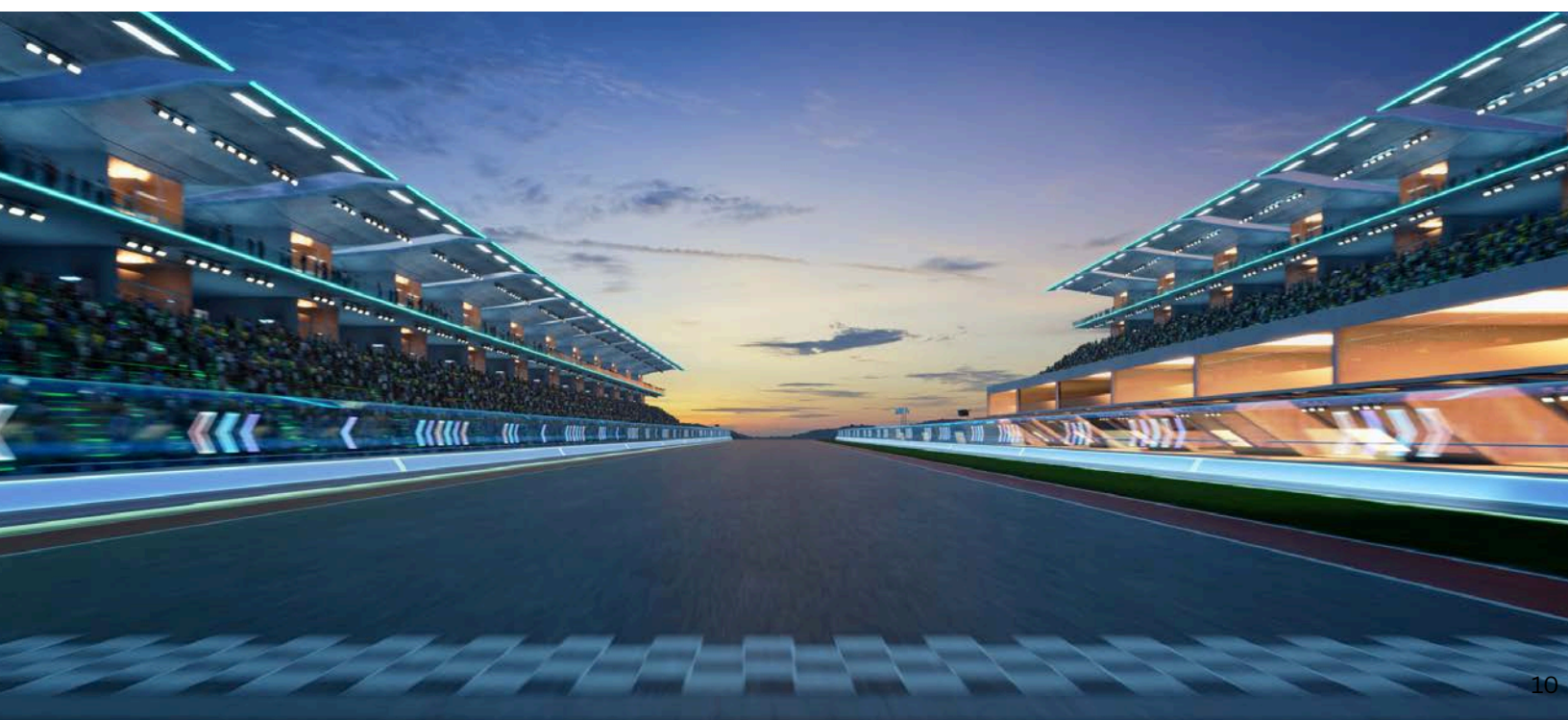
WE ASKED: What Are You Most Excited About Heading Into 2026?

What energizes this group is fundamentally aspirational: the belief that sophisticated technology can finally enable the authentic, human-centered marketing pharma has long aspired to deliver. The optimism centers on a paradox—AI and automation freeing teams to focus on empathy, relevance, and genuine patient connection. Multiple experts celebrate the potential to move beyond polished, aspirational narratives toward storytelling that embraces messiness, uncertainty, and the non-linear reality of living with chronic conditions.

There's palpable excitement about the infrastructure finally catching up to the vision. Unified identity standards strengthening both compliance and performance. Marketing, data, and clinical teams achieving real alignment around data quality and shared outcomes. Most ambitiously, the possibility of synchronized HCP-DTC ecosystems where coordinated, real-time communication empowers patients to advocate for themselves while equipping providers with relevant resources—transforming the quality of clinical interactions themselves.

The community perspective generates particular enthusiasm: the recognition that communities are no longer niche but "the new power players" in an AI-dominated landscape, creating authentic human connections at scale. Point of care emerges as a strategic safe harbor where patient-physician trust endures despite broader uncertainty. The shift from "campaign thinking to connection thinking" captures the moment—moving from big moments to continuous presence through "lots of littles."

What emerges is less about specific technologies and more about mindset: an industry ready to use sophisticated tools to deliver marketing that feels fundamentally more human, honest, and helpful to the people it serves.



What's Most Exciting Headed Into 2026...



Michael Palladino, PharmD - SVP, Client Strategy & Engagement, OptimizeRx

Heading into 2026, I'm most excited about finally aligning HCP and DTC marketing into a unified, data-driven ecosystem—one that looks beyond script lift and focuses on shared decision-making that leads to earlier, optimized care. Marketing has historically operated in silos: same brand, same goals, completely different worlds. But advances in AI, real-time analytics, and omnichannel orchestration bring us to a point where marketing can be synchronized to improve both clinical and commercial outcomes.

The data and technology are here; now it's about rethinking internal organizational structures and roles to overcome silos and fragmentation. Companies that stitch these workflows together—ethically, compliantly, and intelligently—will unlock a step change in marketing efficiency, brand impact, and the patient and physician experience.

Imagine coordinated, real-time, situation-specific HCP and DTC communication that empowers patients with the information and confidence to advocate for themselves, and equips providers with timely, relevant resources around treatment options, referral pathways, access, and more. When marketing enables this level of synchronized preparation, it doesn't just drive brand impact—it improves the quality of clinical interaction and leads to better health outcomes.



Daniel J. Gandor, EVP, Head of Omnichannel & Digital Transformation, EVERSANA INTOUCH

I'm most excited about the opportunity to make pharma marketing feel more human again, at scale. The irony is that AI and automation, when used well, actually free teams to focus on empathy, relevance, and clarity rather than production and coordination.

2026 feels like a moment where the industry can finally connect the dots. Content, data, technology, and experience no longer need to live in silos. We have the tools to orchestrate meaningful journeys that respect time, context, and intent.

I'm also excited about the emergence of new operating models. For instance, EVERSANA's AI Agency platform launched this year, not as a collection of tools, but as an end-to-end platform that reimagines how agencies work. From strategy and content creation through orchestration, optimization, and measurement, this platform collapses handoffs, accelerates learning, and aligns partners more directly to outcomes. It fundamentally changes the agency-client relationship and 2026 will be the year delivering revolutionary results.

Most of all, I'm optimistic. Pharma has always cared deeply about impact. As we enter 2026, we are better equipped than ever to deliver it in ways that are relevant, responsible, and genuinely valuable to the people we serve.



Linda Ruschau, Chief Commercial Officer, PatientPoint

In times of uncertainty, the safety of your brand becomes paramount. When there's so much in flux, marketers are looking for the safest possible place to invest their next dollar, and the channel to position brands in a safe light to weary, and leery consumers. No matter how the market shifts, people will continue to go to the doctor, and the trust between patient and physician will endure. Given everything happening right now, we believe point of care is positioned for even greater attention, trust, and growth in the year ahead. It's a truth we've championed for over 30 years, and today, the path forward is increasingly leading brands from pharma to CPG to point of care as a safe, strategic, and smart investment.

What's Most Exciting Headed Into 2026...



Lisa Bookwalter, CRO, Throtle

I'm most excited about the industry's shift toward unified identity standards that strengthen both compliance and performance. As more brands embrace privacy-safe identifiers and transparent data practices, it unlocks clearer patient and HCP insights across the entire ecosystem. This momentum positions 2026 as a year where advanced identity resolution finally becomes the backbone enabling smarter targeting, more reliable measurement, and better healthcare outcomes.



Scott Ronay, GM, Advertising, PurpleLab

What's most exciting heading into 2026 is how aligned marketing, data, and clinical teams have become. There's a shared understanding now that you're only as strong as your data, and that quality and usability matter just as much as scale.

The conversation has shifted from collecting more data to making it usable — focusing on quantity, quality, and liquidity, and getting trusted data into the hands of people doing meaningful work with it. That's changing how campaigns are designed and how success is measured.

There's also a much healthier perspective on AI. Instead of chasing hype, the industry is recognizing that even the smartest tools are ineffective without the right foundation. The opportunity isn't about building everything in-house — it's about responsibly connecting data, partners, and technology to support better decisions and, most importantly, improve patient outcomes.



Lauren Lawhon, President, Health Union

Heading into 2026, I am most energized by the re-emergence of the human element in pharma marketing. With the dual pressures of AI disruption and a new regulatory landscape, we are finally moving past the 'optimization era' to focus on high-trust, community-led engagement. This convergence is forcing a long-talked about evolution of brand strategy that puts people at the center.

What truly excites me is the growing recognition that community-based platforms can create authentic human connections at large scale. Communities are no longer 'niche'; in the age of AI, they are the new power players in digital media. Brands have an incredible opportunity to evolve their media mix to think of community as an essential channel in their strategy, rather than just a 'box to check' within an endemic or social buy. By leveraging the power of community, advertisers can lean into content and activation synergies that seamlessly connect the patient and HCP experience, ensuring marketing works better for what patients and professionals truly need - and drive measurable performance and lasting brand loyalty.



Bari Maniff, Group SVP, Engagement Strategy, CMI Media Group

What excites me most is the evolution of storytelling and how technology, and audience engagement are evolving together. I hope we continue moving beyond polished "quality of life" moments that focus solely on aspirational outcomes. Real life is messy...pain, uncertainty, side effects, and non-linear progress all deserve space alongside hope. The strongest campaigns will embrace that messiness, creating honest, human narratives that build real trust with people living with chronic conditions.

At the same time, audience engagement and platform usage have shifted. Social now functions as a real-time search engine and peer-support space, while traditional search platforms are redefining what's possible. To stay effective, brands must test, learn, and adapt in real time, meeting audiences where they are and leveraging emerging channels and AI tools. By meeting audiences where they are and experimenting with emerging channels, we can expand reach, engage earlier, and deliver messaging that truly resonates.

Year End Trends Section Three

WHAT'S MOST CONCERNING IN 2026



WE ASKED: What Are You Most Concerned About Heading Into 2026?

The same technology driving growth creates the deepest anxieties. Multiple experts warn about AI implementation risks: over-automation without proper guardrails, loss of human judgment and craft, and the risk that speed will trump thoughtfulness. The concern isn't about AI adoption itself, but about pharmaceutical companies deploying tools without rethinking workflows or maintaining the expertise that makes campaigns effective. This represents a shared fear that the industry might sacrifice long-term strategic capability for short-term efficiency gains.

Privacy and trust emerge as parallel concerns, with a widening gap between evolving regulations and the industry's ability to maintain compliant, consistent identity infrastructure. One expert captures the trust crisis starkly: "FDA approval, peer-reviewed studies, and expert consensus no longer close the conversation. They start it." This reflects a fundamental shift—influence has moved from institutions to individuals, forcing brands to orchestrate trust through voices people already follow rather than relying on traditional authority.

Regulatory volatility runs through multiple responses: mixed legislative signals around DTP programs, policy shifts creating access barriers, evolving social media rules that change faster than brand teams can react. A contrarian concern surfaces about outcomes measurement itself—that poorly implemented frameworks could drive ill-advised strategic shifts, making the solution worse than the problem. Measurement challenges compound as targeting and attribution become harder in a post-cookie environment.



What's Most Concerning Headed Into 2026...



David Ormesher, CEO CG Life

One of the biggest challenges going into 2026 is volatility. Regulatory uncertainty, platform changes, and AI activation are all hitting at once. The rules out of Washington continue to evolve quickly, especially around social media and DTC, and interpretations of those rules can change faster than pharma brand teams can react. Legal and regulatory teams will need to continue to balance compliance and reputational awareness with speed to market.

Measurement is another focus. Even with delays in cookie deprecation, the direction is clear: targeting and attribution are getting harder, not easier. Pharma teams that still rely on overly simplistic metrics will struggle to understand what's actually driving impact.

And then there's trust. In high-visibility categories like pricing, GLP-1s or telehealth, one misstep, real or perceived, can turn into a reputational issue overnight. Compliance, credibility, and clarity aren't just legal concerns anymore; they're brand concerns.



Andrew Burkus Sr. Director, Thought Leadership at IQVIA Digital

Heading into 2026, my greatest concern- and perhaps the industry's greatest opportunity- lies in the challenge of sustaining trust, relevance, and responsible innovation amid an increasingly complex healthcare landscape. The rapid adoption of AI and digital technologies has opened new frontiers for personalized engagement, enabling brands to anticipate and address patient and provider needs with unprecedented precision. However, this progress brings with it critical questions around data privacy, governance, and ethical stewardship.

As patients demand greater personalization and tailored care, pharmaceutical companies must ensure their strategies are not only technologically advanced but also compliant with evolving regulatory standards. The proliferation of data and digital touchpoints increases the risk of fragmentation, misinformation, and erosion of trust if not managed with rigor and integrity.

Ultimately, the industry must strike a careful balance between innovation and responsibility- investing in AI and analytics that drive better outcomes, while safeguarding the principles of trust, equity, and patient-centricity. Those organizations that prioritize robust governance and a genuine commitment to transparency will be best positioned to navigate the challenges ahead.



Susan Perlbachs, Chief Creative Officer, EVERSANA INTOUCH

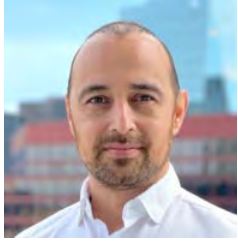
The Global Trust Crisis. For decades, healthcare marketing benefited from institutional trust it did not have to earn. Physicians, regulators, and science provided scaffolding that allowed brands to speak with authority. That scaffolding is gone. FDA approval, peer-reviewed studies, and expert consensus no longer close the conversation. They start it.

Brands are no longer automatically trusted narrators of truth. They must now orchestrate trust through voices people already follow and believe. Increasingly, that means online creators and social influencers. These individuals may not have formal degrees or credentials, but they are perceived as having something more valuable in today's environment: authenticity.

To succeed, brands must intentionally engage and enable these new gatekeepers. This does not mean defaulting to celebrity. Micro- and nano-influencers often drive deeper engagement because they are embedded in real communities. Influence comes from familiarity and relevance, not fame.

Individual voices now matter more than institutions. The role of the brand is to coordinate trusted voices and deliver information through the messenger that resonates with each person. The result is a fragmented, highly personalized landscape where both message and delivery are tailored to the individual.

What's Most Concerning Headed Into 2026...



Pouria Sanae, CEO and co-founder, iXlayer

My concern is that the industry will continue to invest in isolated point solutions that don't solve the access barriers patients face. Without infrastructure connecting awareness to care, we're just widening the access gap. Policy shifts like TrumpRx also introduce new expectations that pharma has to navigate: what happens when a patient can suddenly see the lowest price but still can't get a prescription because no one has given them a bridge to diagnosis? The future belongs to pharma companies that invest in that bridge.



Bari Maniff, Group SVP, Engagement Strategy, CMI Media Group

The biggest watch out for the year ahead is how intentionally we use AI. At its best, AI amplifies everything it touches, boosting speed, creativity, and precision. However, as regulations grow more complex, the drive to move faster cannot come at the expense of compliance, credibility, patient trust, or talent. Over-automation without proper guardrails risks flattening both the art and science of impactful media strategy and execution, while undervaluing the expertise and judgment of the teams driving the work. Campaigns that reach patients must lead with an authentic human connection with empathy at the core. Success in 2026 will come from harnessing AI with purpose; leveraging it to elevate our teams, enhance decision-making, and expand what's possible. Achieving innovation at scale while protecting integrity, credibility, and the human judgment that truly moves our industry forward is paramount.



Ted Sweetser, VP of Strategy PurpleLab

If 2025 is the year of "outcomes" as people keep saying, 2026 must of necessity be the year of reckoning with the impacts of those outcomes. Not all channels and tactics will be proven effective. I do fear poorly implemented outcomes measures will lead to ill advised shifts in strategy and negative results.



Rebecca Colegrove, Sr. Manager, B2B Marketing and Events, Healthline Media

The biggest concern heading into 2026 is balancing the demand of increased personalization with privacy and trust. As AI becomes more deeply embedded in pharma marketing, the risk of over-personalization or insensitive messaging increases without strong human oversight. Regulatory pressure around data use continues to grow, making governance and compliance more complex. If pharma brands fail to engage transparently and responsibly, they risk maintaining consumer trust. Success in 2026 will depend on using technology thoughtfully while keeping patient well-being at the center.



Matthew Walsh, General Manager of Biopharma, iXlayer

The current legislative environment has sent mixed signals around its support for DTP programs. On the one hand it has encouraged affordability programs, but on the other it has threatened to tighten consumer promotion tactics, which can be a key driver of awareness of these programs. So far there has been more to encourage DTP than discourage it, but that can seemingly change very quickly in today's climate.

Year End Trends Section Four

BIGGEST GROWTH AND INNOVATION IN 2026

WE ASKED: What Do You Predict Will Be The Biggest Area of Growth or Innovation in 2026?

The experts are aligned: AI-driven transformation will dominate growth in 2026, but disagree on where that transformation will have the greatest commercial impact. The majority view AI's operational role as the catalyst—industry-specific agents orchestrating commercial workflows with built-in compliance, agentic systems enabling real-time omnichannel execution, and automated tools creating efficiency at scale. A notable tension exists between optimism about AI-native challengers built from the ground up versus concerns about established players racing to retrofit legacy systems. The key question isn't whether AI will drive growth, but which business models will capture it.

Infrastructure investments represent the second major growth vector, particularly identity harmonization across fragmented systems and tying marketing performance directly to clinical outcomes through integrated data. The most data-backed prediction? Direct-to-patient programs, with survey evidence showing 50% of pharma executives agreeing this represents the biggest opportunity. Affordability programs with surrounding healthcare services are already creating new market dynamics as adoption accelerates beyond early movers.

What unifies these predictions is a fundamental shift: from planning to execution, from pilots to production, from disconnected touchpoints to orchestrated patient journeys. Growth in 2026 will belong to those who can operationalize at scale.



Predicting Growth and Innovation for 2026...

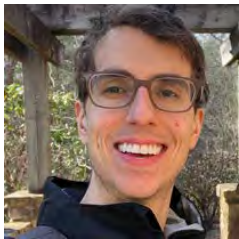


Matt Farrell, President, Commercial Cloud, Veeva

Industry-specific AI will orchestrate commercial connections in 2026. Industry-specific AI — embedded in compliant and connected platforms and applications — will prove to be the critical component that unlocks coordination across sales, marketing, and medical activities. AI agents that have direct and secure access to data, content, and business processes will surface insights and connect workflows across teams with seamless omnichannel orchestration.

AI agents will keep the entire commercial team informed for more meaningful relationships with healthcare professionals (HCPs). For example, a field representative will record voice notes with ease as an AI agent checks them for compliance. Another AI agent will automatically surface this information to the right field team members at the right time for better relationship management. AI can then be used to identify critical commercial themes and insights from the complete set of voice notes — a new and highly valuable dataset — to inform brand and go-to-market strategy.

These agentic AI capabilities will work together to support commercial teams in increasing productivity and delivering more effective customer engagement.



Mike Rousselle - SVP, Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning, OptimizeRx

I think 2026 will mark the start of a major reconciliation between AI-driven healthcare marketing and the traditional strategies that have long shaped the industry. Healthcare marketing is full of processes AI can already perform at or above human quality, so every company — manufacturers, agencies, and vendors — will be racing to find where AI can unlock revenue, cut costs, or scale efficiently.

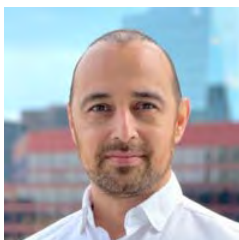
At the same time, a new wave of AI-native challengers will emerge. Built from the ground up with automated workflows and no legacy constraints, they'll bring speed and invention but lack the trust and institutional knowledge of established players. Because relationships still drive healthcare marketing, these AI-first firms will likely try to recruit trusted commercial leaders from incumbents to gain instant credibility and help customers overcome the AI trust gap.

2026 will be the year AI innovation and industry tradition collide — and reshape pharma marketing.



Rebecca Colegrove, Sr. Manager, B2B Marketing and Events, Healthline Media

In 2026, the biggest area of growth will likely be integrated digital ecosystems that connect patients, providers, and pharma brands. New platforms will combine education, telehealth access, medication support, and community resources into seamless, patient-centered experiences. AI will enhance these ecosystems by delivering real-time, personalized guidance, helping patients make informed decisions and adhere to treatment plans. Additionally, innovation in data-driven insights will allow pharma to anticipate patient needs and optimize outreach while maintaining privacy compliance. Together, these advancements will transform how patients interact with healthcare information and services, making digital engagement both more actionable and more meaningful.



Pouria Sanae, CEO and co-founder, ixlayer

The biggest growth area will be direct-to-patient programs. And 50% of pharma executives agree with me according to our survey from September of this year. Pharma will accelerate investment in compliant, patient-centric infrastructure that enables earlier evaluation, faster clinical decisions, and more efficient routes to appropriate care. Diagnostics, virtual care, and pharmacy fulfillment will converge into unified entry points. The companies that invest in these pathways will set the new standard for how patients move from awareness to care.

Predicting Growth and Innovation for 2026...



Scott Ronay, GM, Advertising, PurpleLab

In 2026, the biggest growth will come from tying marketing performance to real clinical outcomes. Brands are moving past impressions and clicks and asking for proof that campaigns influence patient behavior. That means connecting media exposure with claims, EHR, and lab data, because no single dataset can tell the full patient story.

There's also growing recognition that one data set on its own is great, but if you can combine it with others, you're not just doubling the value — you're multiplying it. That's driving innovation through partnerships and shared infrastructure rather than siloed solutions.

Just as important, insight is becoming faster. With access to signals that point to future encounters and treatment starts, marketers won't have to wait until a campaign ends to understand performance. Success will be defined by verified outcomes, not modeled proxies.



Lisa Bookwalter, CRO, Throttle

In 2026, one of the biggest areas of growth in pharma will be identity harmonization, specifically, the push to create consistent, high-fidelity identity and data connections across fragmented systems, platforms, and datasets. As brands operate across CRM, media, analytics, clean rooms, and point solutions, the ability to normalize and align data without introducing signal loss or inaccuracies will be critical. Innovation will center on streamlined, privacy-first frameworks that connect these environments efficiently while preserving accuracy, compliance, and measurement integrity end to end.



Daniel J. Gandor, EVP, Head of Omnichannel & Digital Transformation, EVERSANA INTOUCH

In addition to continued growth of AI in pharma marketing, I believe omnichannel will undergo a renaissance, shifting from omnichannel planning to iterative omnichannel execution at scale. The real innovation will be the ability to operationalize personalization across brands, markets, and moments without exponentially increasing cost or complexity.

This will be driven by three forces. First, AI-accelerated modular content systems that allow teams to design once and deploy many variations with confidence. Second, agentic AI that supports strategy and creative development, decision-making, orchestration, and optimization in near real time. Third, tighter integration between commercial, medical, and experience teams, enabling more coherent journeys rather than disconnected touchpoints.

The winners will not be the companies with the most tools, but those with the clearest operating model. Simplicity, speed, and scalability will define the next wave of advantage.



Andrew Burkus Sr. Director, Thought Leadership at IQVIA Digital

In 2026, a defining area of growth and innovation in the pharmaceutical industry will be the continued elevation of advanced practitioners- nurse practitioners (NPs) and physician associates (PAs)- as pivotal decision-makers in patient care. Despite lingering misconceptions in some corners of the industry, the influence of these members of the clinical care team now extends well beyond primary care, encompassing specialized therapeutic areas and reflecting a broader shift toward team-based models, particularly as physician shortages persist. NPs

and PAs are increasingly responsible for prescribing, care coordination, and patient education, making it essential for pharmaceutical marketing strategies to engage these professionals with the same precision and relevance that had been historically reserved for physicians.

The integration of AI and machine learning will empower brands to uncover and act upon nuanced behavioral insights, revealing the unique needs, preferences, and information gaps of NPs and PAs. By leveraging real-time data and dynamic feedback mechanisms, organizations can continuously optimize their engagement strategies, ensuring that every interaction is both meaningful and impactful.

Ultimately, companies that recognize and invest in the growing influence of advanced practitioners- and harness data-driven personalization to support them- will be best positioned to lead innovation and drive sustainable growth as care teams continue to diversify.

About the DHC Group

The DHC Group is known for cutting edge research, expert strategy, and analytics-driven insights.

Building on the leadership team's combined 50+ years of industry experience working with innovative companies, brands, and a wide range of pharmaceutical, biotech, and medical device companies, the DHC Group provides industry thought leaders and innovative organizations a selective opportunity to define the future of digital health and pharmaceutical marketing.

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Add Your Voice: Complete the 2026 Industry Trends Survey

Join Us at Pharma Forward, A DHCG x Google Summit, April 16, 2026

