

How are the European pharma and biotech sectors addressing strategic communications?

Stakeholder expectations are high and, with all eyes on healthcare at the moment, it is essential for companies to go beyond generic commitments.



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Consumers are driving and accelerating change when it comes to healthcare, demanding better, faster and more accessible services.

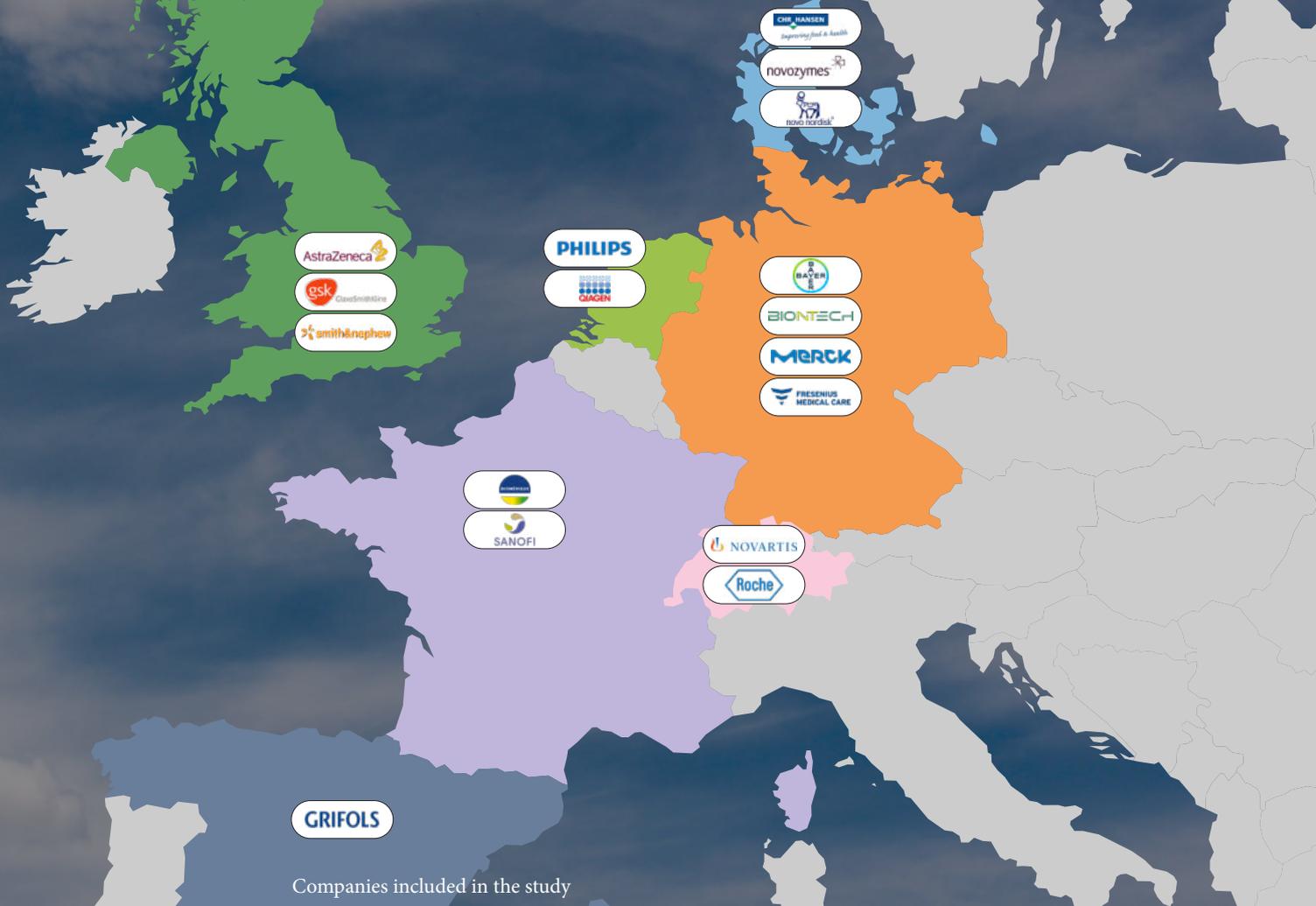
The COVID-19 pandemic has further altered the dynamics for this sector and leading players are showing the importance of collaboration, partnership and new forms of innovation in protecting public health globally.

With all eyes on healthcare at the moment, Lundquist conducted a deep dive analysis on Europe's leading pharmaceutical and biotech companies in order to assess and map how companies are using strategic narratives to engage authentically, meet expectations and generate trust amongst their stakeholders. The best companies show rather than

tell, giving stakeholders clear insights into how they are navigating this new scenario.

About the research

The benchmarking survey is based on 17 firms from seven countries and explores five main themes that are of utmost importance when it comes to communicating in 2021: strategic sector partnerships, digitisation and innovation, access to medicine, leadership, and efforts shown during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research measures the credibility and efficacy of corporate communications, providing a guide for companies to effectively narrate their messages.



The in-depth analysis focuses on two fundamental macro-areas that are key to a well-balanced and trustworthy communication on strategy and corporate vision: **Substance** and **Distinctiveness**. In this article, we will investigate three of the main themes addressed in the research: partnerships, digitisation and access to medicine.

Adding pharma and biotech value through strategic partnerships

Strategic sector partnerships are revealed to be one of the most significant ways in which companies can add value to their businesses, from digitisation

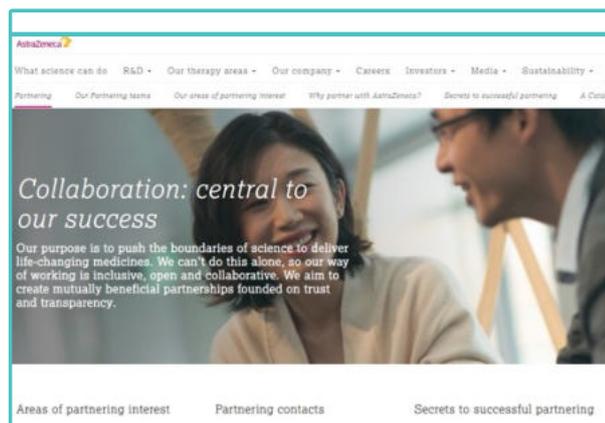
in diagnostics to innovation and accessibility.

It is therefore crucial that companies' communications strategies align with their collaborations.

Indeed, all companies analysed in the study addressed the importance of partnerships in some form, mainly as a tool for accelerating innovation and responding to patient demand, but what separates the best from the rest is those companies that have connected their partnerships to a strategic view of their commitments to innovation and sustainability, as well as for the overall pursuit of their purpose.

Currently, 59% of the key players were able to communicate this successfully.

How are healthcare providers using partnerships to communicate strategy and generate trust among stakeholders?

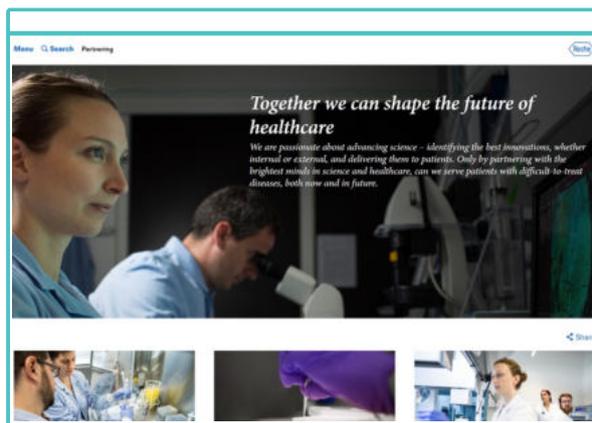


www.astrazeneca.com

When it comes to messaging, **AstraZeneca** proves to be among the leaders, boldly stating that their “purpose is to push the boundaries of science to deliver life-changing medicines”, a task which they acknowledge would be impossible to undertake alone and without collaboration.

Another leader emerging from our research is Swiss pharma company **Novartis** which, beyond placing partnerships at the core of their corporate identity, has leveraged its position as a partner in helping to combat COVID-19 through their support of vaccine production facilities around the world.

Roche, which performs well throughout the analysis by scoring highly both in terms of distinctiveness and substance, offers an extensive partnerships section with a series of articles called *Perspectives* in which specific areas such as neuroscience, cancer immunotherapy and gene therapy are addressed.



www.roche.com

Companies should be using partnerships as a tool to integrate industry topics more broadly across communication platforms and as a strategic element of companies' innovation and identity. Not doing so is a missed opportunity in providing credibility and concreteness to the messages being communicated.

When it comes to communicating about partnerships for the benefit of corporate social responsibility, other companies to watch are **Bayer**, **Sanofi** and **GlaxoSmithKline**. BioNTech and Novo Nordisk are the ones to watch when looking at partnerships for breakthrough in innovation.

Digitisation and artificial intelligence

Using both visual and textual narratives is crucial to engaging with stakeholders, especially when it comes to complex areas such as artificial intelligence (AI) and digitisation where users may be more apprehensive. Pharmaceutical and biotech companies have historically lagged when it comes to technological solutions, however, the past few years have witnessed a shift, driven by demand and accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Across the industry, digitisation means innovation and it is becoming increasingly difficult to separate the two.

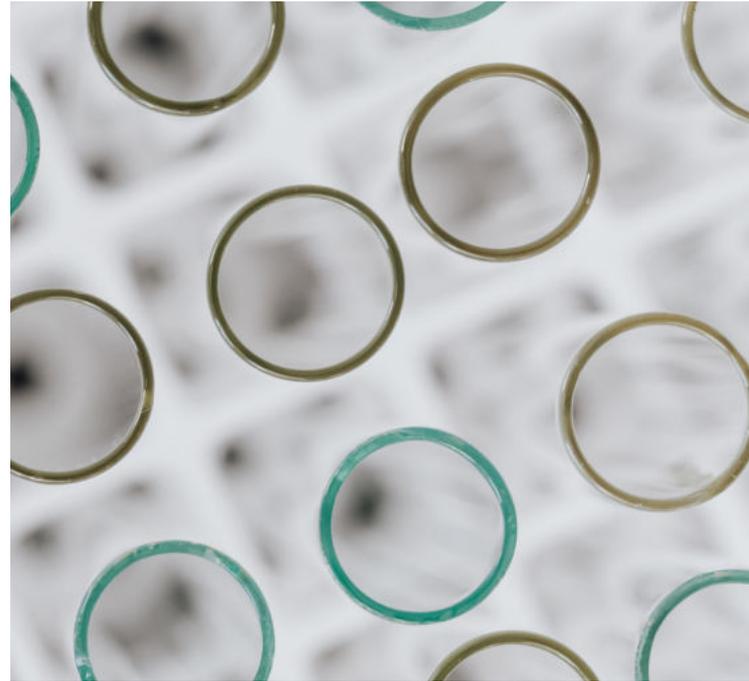
Telemedicine, smart diagnostic systems, blockchain electronic health records and AI-enabled medical devices are just a few digital innovations that are reshaping the industry, reducing human error, increasing efficiency and making healthcare more accessible and sustainable. Big data can help forecast care, avoid medication prescription errors and help shift to preventative rather than responsive care.

Staying engaged and aligning strategic communications with sustainability

As companies rise to meet stakeholder expectations it remains surprising to see that only half of the companies analysed strategically and extensively discuss digitisation, using persistent and engaging narratives throughout their communication ecosystem.

With digitisation playing such a crucial role in the healthcare sector, relegating the topic to subsections of a company's digital platform under partnerships or innovation means divesting trust and credibility amongst stakeholders.

Qiagen is one of the companies that includes digitisation as a mainstay of the company, including it in the first level of the About Us menu pages and clearly connecting digitisation with business mission "to make improvements in life possible". By using decisive and consistent statements, Qiagen successfully demonstrates their commitment to finding digital solutions in healthcare.



Artificial intelligence in healthcare

AI is another area that is generating a significant amount of coverage and will be pivotal in helping healthcare companies find 21st Century solutions, from increasing efficiency and accuracy in diagnosis to discovering new drugs and treatment protocols.

Yet just a handful of companies distinguish themselves through engaging messaging and dynamic presentations about AI within the overarching theme of digitisation.

Novartis demonstrates leadership and communicate the intricacies of AI through an hour-long video interview between their CDO Bertrand Bodson and Microsoft's corporate VP of research and incubation, Peter Lee who discuss why healthcare's digital moment is now.

AI can be a daunting subject so providing examples and case studies is key to generating trust among users.

AI can be a daunting subject so providing examples and case studies is key to generating trust among users. **Roche** does well to engage users through a detailed blog-style post in which readers are explained how AI can help diagnose diabetic macular oedema, a complication of diabetes that causes a thickening of the retina that can lead to blindness.

The article explains concepts of deep learning and diagnostics in order to facilitate understanding and conjure confidence in their digital innovations.

Philips also communicates their innovative digital solutions via blog-style articles, explaining with detail the ways in which digitisation can help improve patient care and emergency diagnostics such as MRI scans in a straightforward and digestible style.

Stakeholder expectations are high and with all eyes on the healthcare industry at the moment it is essential for big players to go beyond generic commitments and distinguish themselves by clearly communicating measures taken and concrete achievements. Ample space should be given to digital innovation and woven into all communication platforms.

Access to medicine

According to the WHO, less than half of the global population is covered by essential health services and 100 million people are pushed into extreme poverty because of health expenses, forcing them to live on \$1.90 or less a day. Furthermore, it is estimated that in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic put around 71 million people back into extreme poverty, reversing decades of progress and setting the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) firmly out of reach.

When it comes to accessing effective, affordable, and safe healthcare (SDG 3.8 and 3.b) a collaborative global approach is required between multiple stakeholders including policymakers, governmental bodies, healthcare providers and pharmaceutical companies.

The latter are crucial in ramping up progress and achieving sustainable and long-term access to medicine, especially for low-income countries where government expenditures on healthcare are in decline.

Lundquist's benchmark shows that five out of the 17 companies included in the research do not discuss access to medicine in any form which, considering the pressing nature of the subject and the size of the companies, is surprising. In fact, just a handful of companies truly communicate their efforts through their digital corporate platforms.

Purpose beyond profits

An essential part of closing the gap in healthcare will come from implementing pricing strategies that allow for increased access.

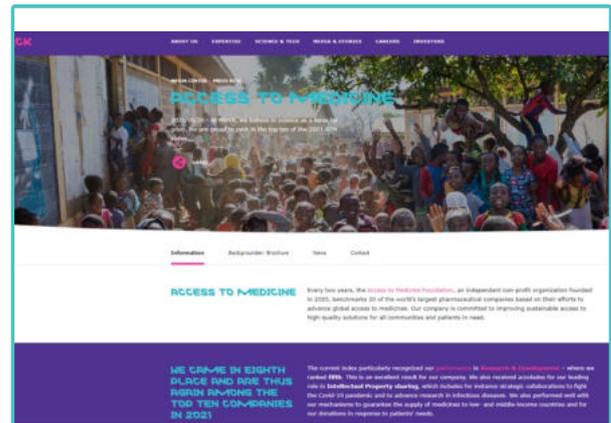
GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) dedicates a full section to pricing, acknowledging its importance and detailing their strategy when it comes to working with less developed countries.

Roche also focuses on pricing strategies based on country-specific circumstances such as GDP and purchasing power parity as well as personalised reimbursement models, aligning access to medicine with their overall business mission.

Access to medicine is also another area in which partnerships should be communicated and highlighted.

Development, production and infrastructure can create a significant burden on any single company so divvying responsibility through strategic partnerships within the sector and across the supply chain can allow better and more efficient advancement.

Germany's **Merck** puts partnerships centre stage when it comes to issues of access with a focus on creating sustainable supply chains. In fact, when it comes to distinctiveness in communicating stories and viewpoint, Merck really set themselves apart. The company has created a dedicated sustainable supply chain charter which gives added weight and value to their commitments and as a result generates a feeling of trust and accountability.



www.merckgroup.com

Ones to watch when it comes to communicating lasting solutions for eradication of infectious diseases and education programmes are **Bayer** and **Sanofi**.

