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SECTION 1

Executive Summary – Did We Forget the Foundation?

AI at the Forefront – But at What Cost?

Over 400 delegates arrived in Dubrovnik this May with AI on their minds. The NextPharma Summit promised a window into the future of life sciences: faster launches, deeper customer relationships, and more innovative commercial models. And yet, as the sessions unfolded, it became clear that a fundamental truth had been perhaps overlooked.

Forgotten But Foundational – The True Role of CRM

Everyone spoke of artificial intelligence. Some acknowledged the foundational data capability needed to support it. Everyone referenced cross-functional engagement as a key to success. Few asked whether our teams were actually working with the kind of coherent, accessible, and orchestrated customer knowledge that enables it. At the root of this dissonance is a technology we once celebrated and now ignore: the CRM.

From Compliance Tool to Strategic Hub

For over a decade, we treated CRM as a compliance box, a sales force tracker, and an archive. Today, it has become a graveyard of siloed screens. And that matters because CRM is no longer a passive tool. It is the starting point of every conversation with HCPs, the root of every insight, and the nexus of every AI use case we claim to pursue within commercial operations. Moreover, the war announced between Veeva and Salesforce and a new contender to save the day, such

as Microsoft, makes the Commercial Ops team truly wonder if this is going to take time and effort in the next few months for another transition.

> " Without it, our AI efforts are sandcastles in the tide. Without it, our field forces are flying blind "

By design, CRMs must become the fabric for making pharma a data-driven organisation. We often hear we have data (or buy it), but do we? Really? It seems the data we seems having is frozen, in duplicated silos and therefore far from being a currency that can augment value from one department to the other. This core layer from which microservices, intelligent automation, and agent-to-agent (A2A) ecosystems are born seems to be far from being set and understood. Without it, our AI efforts are sandcastles in the tide. Without it, our field forces are flying blind.

Over those two days in Dubrovnik, what stood out was the way commercial leaders are beginning to connect the dots between ambition and adoption. It became clear that the actual transformation engine is not the technology itself, but the precision with which we align it to how people work and decide in the field. This is about making things click—between teams, between systems, and most importantly, between intent.

SECTION 2

Day One: We Talked Transformation, But Did We Skipped the Process?

AI, they said, was enabling more intelligent segmentation, better targeting, richer omnichannel experiences

Day One began with scale. Global CMOs, Medical Affairs heads, and strategy leaders took the stage to describe their reinvention journeys. Erica Taylor (Genentech), Dr. Matthias Vennemann (Bayer), and Jean-Bernard Simeon (Viiv) told stories of cross-functional acceleration. AI, they said, was enabling more intelligent segmentation, better targeting, richer omnichannel experiences.

But as we listened, it became clear that while everyone could describe the 'what' of transformation, few addressed the 'how'. The real challenge isn't the toolset —it's the muscle memory. If AI is to scale, it must be embedded in workflows. If omnichannel is to work, it must speak to the realities of data quality, consent orchestration, and regional field operations. Speakers like Marco Andre (Novartis) reminded us of AI's false dawns. Wayne Simmons (Pfizer) championed the flywheel model—continuous, customer-led motion. Yet underneath both ideas lies one enabler: systems that not only collect data but activate it. CRM didn't get a mention, but its absence was felt.

SECTION 3

The CRM Workshop – Where Things Got Real

At 15:15 on the Academy Stage, Alex Patsko and I asked a room full of executives a simple question: **What does your CRM do today?**

We presented the landscape as it is: Veeva, once dominant, now focusing on Vault; IQVIA sunsetting OCE with corrective releases only through 2029; Salesforce pressing hard with Life Sciences Cloud but dependent on partner ecosystems. We showed that none of these platforms alone answers the fundamental question: **how do I activate my data, adapt my processes, and scale across geographies?**

Through the Stay-Combine-Shift model, we introduced a strategic lens. Stay if your stack delivers ROI and agility. Combine, if you need modularity without chaos. Shift, if you're ready to design for the next decade. The real choice isn't vendor. It's philosophy.

We mapped CRM not as software, but as a business systemic framework that could stay true, whatever happens, as a tech stack landscape in the next few years. We introduce a few business rules as an example of where the data handshake and structure are defined by the business (and often why it struggles to scale later on). Territory. Sampling. Consent. Orchestration. Dashboards. The room lit up when we moved from strategy to scenario. Some saw their blind spots. But we felt that most of the room saw the opportunity.
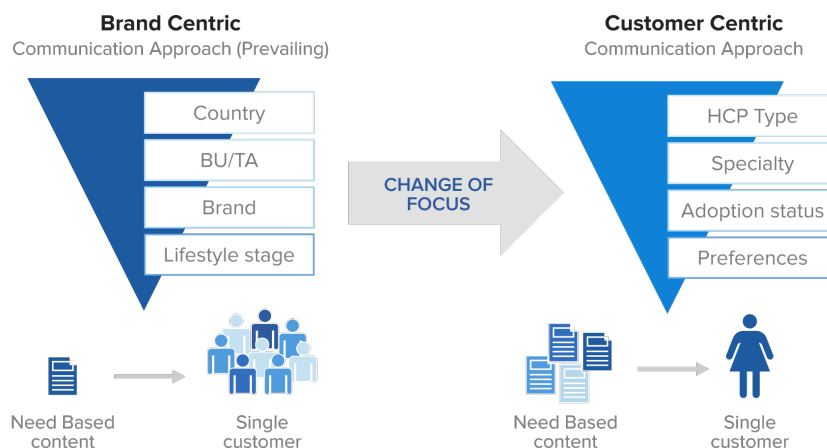
What will you decide?

01	**Stay** (Veeva CRM) Legacy Play + Fixes

02	**Conbine & Adjust** (Hybrid Solution) Adoptable & Scalable

03	**Shift** (Salesforce) The Fancy Play with AI

And then we showed the future: AI agents guiding sales reps in real time, voice-to-data reporting, NLP query bots, predictive visit prep. This isn't fiction. It is happening, but only if your CRM becomes the data layer, not the bottleneck.

Moving focus from Brand to Customer

Brand Centric
Communication Approach (Prevailing)

Country
BU/TA
Brand
Lifestyle stage

CHANGE OF FOCUS

Customer Centric
Communication Approach

HCP Type
Specialty
Adoption status
Preferences

Need Based content → Single customer

Need Based content → Single customer

SECTION 4

Where are we going?

CRMs are becoming commercial operating systems like SAP or Workday that perform other functions. As such, letting the transformation be led solely by the platform is risky for ensuring adoption and scalability for the business and, more importantly, ensuring cohesion with the specificities of departments or regions in the last mile.

Monolith
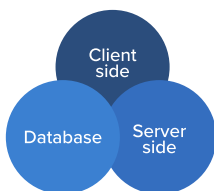
Microservices
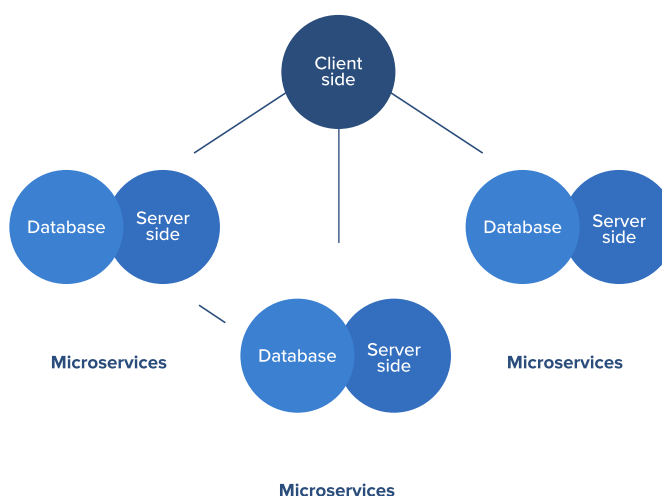
AI at the Forefront – But at What Cost?

That tech or channel approach is somehow copying/ pasting the setup from one company to the other, forgetting that the datasets and rules we will define for the organisation at some point can't be delegated to external parties and processes, and teams will have to get their hands dirty within sales, medical, and marketing.

CRM is where your customer memory lives. If that memory is fragmented, your insights are flawed. If it's outdated, your AI is biased. If it's siloed, your orchestration is performative.

We are moving from human-to-human interactions to application-to-application (A2A) interactions. Agents will negotiate pricing, trigger adherence nudges, schedule visits, and manage regulatory narratives.

However, they will only be as smart as the data you feed them, and that data sits in CRMS for most pharma.

Your teams must feel the value, your management must sense the intelligence in execution, and your patients and HCPs must benefit from speed, relevance, and accuracy. That is what transformation looks like. That is the art and science of future-proofing your commercial structure.

In Dubrovnik, I saw a community ready to lead, but still underestimating its foundations. If you take anything from this paper, let it be this:

Don't scale innovation on yesterday's assumptions. Rebuild your core. Begin with your data and build your commercial operating system the right way.

Let's talk if you're ready to start.

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