

Product partners Amazon with life sciences companies

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An electronic platform is being pitched to pharmaceutical companies in New Jersey.

M3 Health, based in Norristown, Pa., has teamed up with Amazon to offer Ping™, a customized version of Amazon's Internet of Things (IoT) Dash button that doctors can use to request samples of medications or other services from pharmaceutical companies.

M3 aims to have the button on the desks of as many doctors as possible, with Ping available in Wi-Fi and cellular versions. M3 is partnering with The Marketing Agents, a boutique marketing firm in Summit that specializes in marketing and selling new health care technology products, to distribute Ping to life sciences companies in the state.

The button can also be used by patients to contact a pharmaceutical company for any reason, including information on the side effects of medications, or to arrange to have a pharmaceutical company remind them to take medications.

"With Ping, M3 has created the first customer engagement solution using the Amazon Internet of Things Dash button, so it's very important technology to bring to health care right now," Nigro said.

Jennifer Valentine, M3 Health's president, said M3 is the first health care company that Amazon accepted into its 1-click IoT platform. Amazon introduced the product last month at its IoT conference as an example of the different uses of its Internet of Things Dash button product. "We approached Amazon with a proof of concept plan, and they accepted us as the only health care company in their 1-click IoT technology preview program," Valentine said.

"We went through the whole process of becoming a partner with them, working with their engineers, talking about what our vision is and what the business problem is that we were solving with this, so we had to prove to them that we were worthy of getting behind the curtain."

Ping's customers are pharmaceutical companies that can share it with doctors, as well as patients. "A pharma company can sponsor it for their doctor networks and tell them that it's almost like a concierge service," said Nigro.

Valentine said that the new product cuts down on red tape because it allows doctors to avoid having to log on to a pharmaceutical company's website, having to log in, and fill out copious amounts of forms whenever they need to request something from the pharma company.



Jennifer Valentine, president, M3 Health, showing her product, Ping, a one-touch customer engagement device for healthcare. - AARON HOUSTON

"The button is so simple," said Valentine. "Doctors can press it and send a signal to the pharmaceutical company when they need samples or when they need to speak to the medical affairs team. They can press when they need to find a pharma sales rep. For patients, they can press it when they take their medicine and, if they don't press it, the pharma company can have an intervention with them. Patients can also press it when they need to hear from a support system or a nurse."

Valentine said that Ping can also be customized by a doctor for a particular drug or service from a pharma company.

"Think about it for the elderly," she said. "If we give them a button that works off cellular service, they don't have to figure out their Wi-Fi or download an app. They just press a button. So this is a way of engaging patients without them having to look for information."

Nigro said the product so far has been popular among New Jersey's life sciences companies because they often lack the marketing force to distribute new medications and innovations.

"We've seen a great reaction from pharma because this can help their sales forces," she said. "This product can help fill the gap for the representatives of pharmaceutical companies because it gives them access to physicians. That's still the main challenge for them - getting the rep into doctor's office and having a relevant communication with them, so that's where this becomes such a unique product."

Valentine emphasized that Ping can also help provide real world data to drug companies, as well as help doctors with their value-based care programs, because



From left, John Grunstein and Cheryl Nigro, principals and co-founders, The Marketing Agents, and Jennifer Valentine, president, M3 Health. - AARON HOUSTON

the back end of the new technology can record the general behaviors of doctors and patients, as well as indicate the effectiveness of medications in the real-world, as opposed to clinical settings.

"This allows pharmaceutical companies to look at engagement numbers," she said. "You know, people look at the Amazon technology and what's being done on the front end, but what's really being done on the back end also becomes important to the pharmaceutical companies. They get to really understand the behavior of their doctors and patients."

Though Ping is available to pharmaceutical companies around the country, it is initially being marketed locally because The Marketing Agents are located in Summit and due to the heavy concentration of life sciences companies in New Jersey.

"We started The Marketing Agents five years ago, what we do is focus solely on health care innovations for both pharma and wellness brands and services" said Nigro. "So our partnerships are with entrepreneurs with proven technology. We created a partner network where we can be the front-facing strategy people - we are the client service people that help our partners have their innovations reach doctors, nurses, patients, and any other stakeholders, and we help train the sales force."

"Our partners have very unique tech platforms, but they don't have a robust staff, or they don't really know how to integrate innovation into a bigger vision," she said. "We have about seven different partners right now that are all heavily in the technology space."

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