

# eCommerce for healthcare organisations



7 key plays to handle the speed of change  
in the digital world

The background of the lower half of the page is an abstract composition. It features several overlapping, semi-transparent blue spheres of various sizes against a light blue gradient. In the foreground, there are large, dark blue geometric shapes, including a prominent triangle on the left and a larger, more complex shape on the right, which create a sense of depth and modern design.

Balance

Playbook

# Foreword

In today's digital landscape, there is a significant opportunity to bring eCommerce best practises and emerging digital technologies that have been successful in other industries into play within the healthcare and life sciences industry.

This playbook is centred around how eCommerce technology can create new business opportunities and drive revenue for healthcare organisations. Including both consumer brands offering products and services and business to business brands operating within the industry.

It does not cover the broader topics of digitisation of the healthcare system and patient care or digital therapeutics. Instead, we explore eCommerce platforms and their role in digital transformation for healthcare organisations and how they can strengthen a brands relationships with consumers, patients, and business partners.

Rapid digital and eCommerce adoption observed over the last two years has created a moment for healthcare organisations to transform their healthcare experience.

As with all businesses, it is difficult for organisational leaders and stakeholders to assess the long term sustainability of eCommerce platforms. eCommerce



platforms can have a lower barrier to entry, for example, reduced transaction costs and labour compared with traditional customer-facing operations. However, technology advancements in the last decade have made it possible to disrupt the healthcare and life sciences industry like never before, so an out of the box solution might not be the best fit. The investment for already established brands is significant, as they often need to re-work the entire supply chain for eCommerce and navigate complex legal frameworks.

But does it need to be so complicated? Well, the answer is yes and no. That's why we've put together this playbook. We want to provide readers with key plays based on industry research, insights from industry experts, and our own experience designing and developing transformative commerce solutions for leading organisations and brands.

Within the broad scope of eCommerce, this playbook looks at three channels, Direct-to-consumer commerce, Marketplaces and Business-to-business commerce.

We hope you'll find it helpful and the team at Balance and Adobe welcome any feedback or questions.



**Aaron Chidley**

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# Introduction



## Sustained engagement with the healthcare category online

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While the last few years of living through the global pandemic have been full of challenges, they have also been brimming with opportunities for the Australian eCommerce industry. According to **Australia Post**, in 2020, 9 million Australian households shopped online – that’s 82% of all households. Online shopping was initially driven by necessity while retail stores were closed, and this habit became ingrained even as restrictions eased. Other factors were also at play, including social distancing and the shift to working from home, adding to the sustained engagement with online.

Australia Post further reported that the health and beauty category captured the fourth largest share of online purchases, at 9.4%, with a year on year category growth of 56.8%. An enormous 4 million households purchased from health and beauty retailers online in Australia.

## Who can immediately benefit from eCommerce technology?

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### **Direct to consumer healthcare services**

Medical professionals and healthcare practitioners with a private practice, residential care centres, clinics (e.g. outpatient clinics), centres (e.g. optometry centres), practices (e.g. dental practices).

### **Direct to consumer and over the counter brands**

Over the counter and non-prescription drugs, vitamins and supplements, health food, eyeglasses and contact lenses, wound care and personal care, at-home dental care and orthodontics, sanitary products, medical devices.

### **Direct to consumer health and medical insurance providers**

Managed care services, case management services, insurance products and services.

### **Business to business medical device companies**

Medical devices, surgical appliances and instruments, machines and robotics, pharmaceutical packaging and labelling.

### **Business to business pharmaceutical companies**

Pharmacies, pharmaceutical manufacturing and distribution, pathology and clinical laboratories, medical imaging, biotechnology.

## Why should healthcare organisations sell direct-to-consumer?

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Bridging the digital and physical worlds, eCommerce provides healthcare organisations with an opportunity to innovate and expand how they operate across local and international markets.

According to a recent Adobe report, 'The Consumerization of Healthcare', the experience that healthcare consumers expect is responsive, convenient and digitally enabled. Further, nearly 60% of all respondents said they would "absolutely" or "very likely" switch providers if offered an experience that includes faster appointments, online booking and video appointments. Additionally, among those under 35 years old, 94% said they would be open to switching providers if offered a better experience.

“The experience that healthcare consumers expect is responsive, convenient and digitally enabled.”



And so the discussion around going direct becomes, how can healthcare organisations merge 'products' with a 'completely unified' customer experience.

How can the synergy of online and offline meet unmet needs and improve care? We have shared several key plays for healthcare brands wanting to go Direct-to-consumer (D2C) to dive deeper into this topic in our D2C chapter

**Play #1:** Foster direct relationships with customers

**Play #2:** Disrupt the market with a hyper-convenient experience

**Play #3:** Capture the value of data with a first-party data strategy

## The quest for competitive advantage in global markets

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Healthcare organisations cannot limit themselves to one market, country, language or culture if they want a competitive advantage across markets. To scale across borders, we have shared several critical plays in the marketplaces chapter

**Play #4:** Recognise the benefits and trade-offs of marketplace participation

**Play #5:** How to re-energise your globalisation strategy with marketplaces.

Of course, healthcare brands today cannot be all things to all customers. So recognising which markets are worth exploring and how to appeal to those customer groups continues to be a key consideration for the organisations we work with and those we spoke with whilst putting this playbook together.

## Digital frameworks to support B2B growth

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We know that a unified customer experience is much more than tightly integrated systems. Leading brands don't think about online and offline touchpoints, and they explore; who are we talking to? What are we trying to achieve? How can we meet the needs of our customers? What are the best ways to utilise different technologies and systems to meet our objectives, and how can we keep up with the speed of change in the digital world? We share several critical plays in the Business-to-business commerce chapter, which show how B2B can utilise a digital framework for growth

**Play #6:** Provide seamless digital interactions and self-service options

**Play #7:** Personalise content for decision makers with account-based marketing.



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# Channel #1

## Direct-to-consumer (D2C) commerce

### Play #1

Foster direct relationships with customers

### Play #2

Disrupt the market with a hyper-convenient experience

### Play #3

Capture the value of data with a first party data strategy

# PLAY #1

## Foster direct relationships with customers

D2C commerce for healthcare brands provides an incredible opportunity to foster a direct relationship with customers. Often when a brand goes direct through a commerce channel, it will be the first time they've had direct access to customers. Previously they may have only reached customers through retail and distribution partner networks.

A challenging aspect of activating D2C commerce can be that while you have now gained direct access to your customers, they now have direct access to you. Research from **Forrester** shows that today's consumers are drawn to brands that forge personal relationships. With access through a direct channel, fostering the relationship is more important than ever.

The direct access to customers gives healthcare organisations the opportunity for invaluable immediate feedback, which can be used to enable product innovation and fuel success D2C as well as in traditional retail and wholesale channels.

One of the most common frustrations cited from the customer feedback of our research participants was that they underestimated the resource requirement when launching an online store — across everything from order management to

returns management, warehouse logistics for the change from palette to piece, and fielding customer queries.

Fostering a culture of connection within your organisation requires that both sides, the brand and the customer, be present and actively participate in the relationship. Healthcare brands need to be ready for this significant shift and embrace the direct connections they can now have.



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## Take Action Now

How is your commerce channel better equipped to connect with customers and provide them with a seamless experience than if they were to go through a retail partner?

What advantage do customers gain from shopping directly and how are their needs better met through a digital channel?

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Expert Insight

“With the fast pace of digital transformation, it’s more important than ever for healthcare consumer brands to make thoughtful choices about their technology and eCommerce strategies.

Whether you come out ahead or get left behind depends on how fast you can adapt to the modern customer and how they want to be serviced.

How can you catch up if you are behind?

Start with an assessment of your organisations’ digital maturity and technology ecosystem.

Next, develop a roadmap to get you to where you want to be. Always critically evaluate technology solutions, but be sure not to let this get in the way of enacting suitable growth initiatives.”



Aaron Chidley

Director of Business Development, Balance

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# PLAY #2

## Disrupt the market with a hyper-convenient experience

There's every chance that you've heard about the boom of the hyper-convenience economy. Without even realising you've probably participated in it yourself with products and services like on demand food delivery, groceries delivered to your home within a specific time frame, click and collect features that notify workers you've arrived without stepping out of the car, or moved from in-person to virtual care in some way over the last 18 months.

We continue to see organisations within the healthcare industry place significant emphasis on digital initiatives geared toward improving care. Improving customer care through digital platforms is a priority amongst the majority of organisations we spoke with to produce this playbook. Healthcare providers and regulators need to consider access to patients and roadblocks including compliance, accessibility, access to technology and software, and connectivity.

**McKinsey & Company** suggest that companies wanting to make a transformational change should make hyper-personalisation a top goal for 2025. The time frame gives companies time to achieve goals if they take action now. However, it also factors in that enterprises are at different starting points.

When traditional companies start thinking about activating D2C commerce, the hyper-convenience economy demands that they think out of the box and establish an innovative way to stand out from the crowd — one company, one voice and one hyper-convenient experience across all channels. Remember that before the spike in uptake of telehealth before the pandemic, there were several barriers including consumer willingness to use telehealth, provider willingness to use telehealth and legal regulations.



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## Take Action Now

If there were no limitations on the services you could offer in tandem with your product offering, what would they be? Run a brainstorming session with varied business units to develop eight crazy ideas about how your product could improve the delivery and continuity of care.

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“The healthcare and life sciences industries are heavily regulated, and as we well know, many healthcare providers are often bound by legislation that restricts marketing communications.

Additionally, consumer brands may not necessarily own the patient relationship, which adds complexity to activating a D2C channel.

Nonetheless, there is a significant opportunity for the role of eCommerce in improving the consumer experience. We shouldn't think about eCommerce as an opportunity to collect data but instead as a valuable tool to help in creating a unified experience across all channels.”



**Stuart Mitchell**

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Head of Omni-Channel, Alcon ANZ  
[www.alcon.com](http://www.alcon.com)

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# PLAY #3

## Capture the value of data with a first party data strategy

This year a significant change is coming for anyone operating a commerce platform. Changes to data regulations designed to protect consumer privacy mean that companies will require users' permission to use data gathered from digital interactions. According to **McKinsey & Company**, data loss could leave brands and marketers entirely in the dark about behavioural and demographic insights that currently help them create target audiences and segments.

Consumer healthcare brands will need to act swiftly to activate a first-party data strategy (data directly from users who consent to share it) to ensure they don't find themselves left in the dark, or non-compliant with new regulations.

Brands will need to recognise where to focus on data collection at any given stage in the customer journey. Further, understanding why and how capturing data at any step of the journey will create value. For example, how can the data be used to prioritise resources effectively or identify which digital transformation initiatives will deliver the best benefit?

If data captured can drive growth, improve the customer experience and add value to the customer relationship, it's clear that a well-executed strategy matters.

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### Take Action Now

Review your current data strategy and when the changes to regulations will affect your region. Start working toward a first-party strategy that complies with the necessary changes to:

1. Be compliant with new regulations
2. Capture data with consent
3. Ensure data utilisation is prioritised



# “Why does having a first-party data strategy matter? With the significant shift coming for third party cookies and identifiers,

brands without a first-party data strategy will be in the dark about behavioural and demographic insights that currently help them create target audiences and segments.

The cornerstone of an effective first-party data strategy should be creating and sustaining customer relationships that produce a two-way value exchange. Meaning, customers will consent to share personal data only if they deem it worth their while. What this looks like is sure to be a continually evolving concept. As a result, brands will need to be agile and adapt as consumer expectations and behaviours change.”



Alexandra Lawson

Partner Manager, Balance

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# Channel #2

## Local and international marketplaces

### Play #4

Recognise the benefits and trade-offs of marketplace participation

### Play #5

Re-energise your globalisation strategy with marketplaces

# PLAY #4

## Recognise the benefits and trade-offs of marketplace participation

Participation in marketplaces has emerged as an increasingly popular way to reach customers without an infrastructure in place for a commerce channel. Healthcare brands are also breaking into new regions with marketplaces, testing the waters before investing in a fully integrated commerce ecosystem.

However, analysis of digital marketplaces is a vital part of developing a short and long term digital commerce strategy. It's essential to understand the ins and outs of a particular marketplace being considered for participation, such as the concept, degree of integration required, other retailers, customer experience, order management and more.

Healthcare organisations must evaluate the relative importance of marketplaces and the gained resources and new opportunities from integrating with them. Recognising the impact of different marketplaces means acknowledging the benefits and trade-offs and is just as important as recognising consumer behaviour in the real world.



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### Take Action Now

How will your organisation have to adapt selling behaviour based upon different marketplaces? Conduct an internal digital marketplace review to understand benefits vs trade offs.

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Expert Insight

“Marketplaces are worth considering for healthcare organisations that have a portfolio well suited to digital commerce,

but lack the technology infrastructure, internal capability and fulfilment solutions required for direct to consumer eCommerce.”



Lachlan Parker

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eCommerce Lead, Sanofi CHC ANZ  
[www.sanofi.com.au](http://www.sanofi.com.au)

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# PLAY #5

## Re-energise your globalisation strategy with marketplaces

Taking a healthcare brand global comes with significant opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, brands can break into a new market and establish their products through an international marketplace without the need for investing in an entire commerce strategy or owned commerce channel at first. However, on the other hand, without an established brand in a new market, going up against localised products that are often highly customised to their target market presents significant risk.

Healthcare brands can use international marketplaces as an entry point to gain shelf space and create brand trust. Also, they can utilise consumer behaviour as market research to understand how future iterations of the products and branding would need to suit local audiences. For example, how could the outcome be adapted to become highly localised for the new market?



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### Take Action Now

What are the changes that would be required to reflect complete immersion in the localised culture of a specific target market?  
What are barriers holding the organisation back from going global?  
Evaluate how a marketplace could help to overcome these?

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Expert Insight

“Marketplaces can certainly help healthcare brands break into new markets. Particularly where brand strength and shelf space are not as strong overseas,

marketplaces can help to give the brand exposure to a new audience, where investment in a direct channel might not.

A positive response in international marketplaces could indicate that a commerce channel is worth investment. Inversely a revised localised approach would likely be required if customer interest was lacking. Marketplaces can be a testing ground to gain these kinds of insights before investing in a fully-fledged digital strategy for a specific market.”



Derek Murphy

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Global Marketing Manager, Ego Pharmaceuticals  
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# Channel #3

# Business-to-business (B2B) commerce

## Play #6

Provide seamless digital interactions and self-service options

## Play #7

Personalise content for decision makers with account-based marketing

# PLAY #6

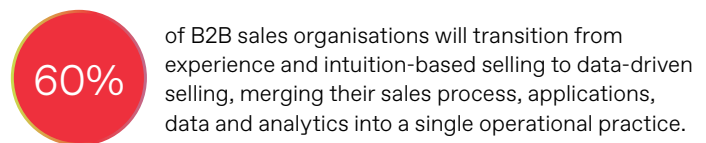
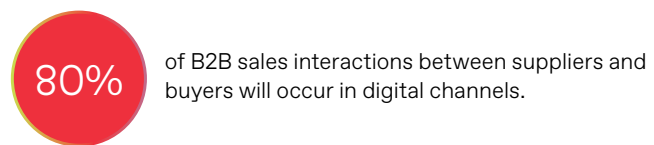
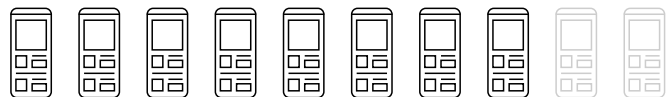
## Provide seamless digital interactions and self-service options

Led by a new generation of buyers, a shift has occurred in the Business-to-business (B2B) buying experience in today's digital-first economy, says **Adobe**.

It is expected that over the next five years, an exponential rise in digital interactions between buyers and suppliers will break traditional B2B sales models. Research from **Gartner** shows that by 2025, 80% of B2B sales interactions between suppliers and buyers will occur in digital channels. This is because 33% of all buyers desire a seller-free sales experience – a preference that climbs to 44% for millennials.

To create seamless digital interactions and adopt a more digital-first approach, healthcare organisations must invest in diversifying digital selling tools available to their customers. For example, healthcare brands will need selling tools that build engagement with their customers and decisionmakers in a way that replicates traditional selling, finding the synergy between the digital and inperson experience.

### Gartner expects that by 2025 ...



Source: *The Future of Sales in 2025: A Gartner Trend Insight Report*

## Take Action Now

By utilising your commerce platform, how can current selling activity be adapted to customers' preferred engagement channels and purchasing journeys?

Expert Insight

“It will always be an enormous challenge to add value to the network when you don’t own the patient relationship.

So, for organisations and consumer brands in our industry, we need to think about how we can add value, provide solutions, and contribute meaningfully, thus directly creating a relationship with our customers.”



Derek Murphy

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Global Marketing Manager, Ego Pharmaceuticals  
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## PLAY #7

# Personalise content for decision makers with account-based marketing (ABM)

Organisations striving to keep up with buyers and stay competitive in the B2B landscape must shift from a lead-centric to an account-centric mentality by acquiring, nurturing, and retaining high-value accounts, says Marketo in their definitive guide to Account Based Marketing (ABM).

In 2022, brands utilising ABM will be focusing on building and maintaining sales pipeline momentum in a post-pandemic world where B2B buyers expectations are higher than ever, according research from Forrester. Further, 93% percent of B2B marketers worldwide consider ABM extremely or very important to their overall marketing efforts.

At Balance, we recognise that personalised content for B2B decision makers with ABM is crucial to narrow focus and expand organisational impact. ABM is indispensable to compete in today's B2B world. It's here to stay—and along with it comes the potential for more targeted, personal, and better orchestrated buyer engagement.

Each tier of customer and buyer accounts warrants a different marketing approach and unique content, ranging from high-touch to more broad content experiences. Therefore, healthcare companies should be thoughtful in their process to ABM regarding content requirements and investment levels. This way, they can capture the total value of known or projected opportunities and apply resources wisely.



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## Take Action Now

Creating a unified ABM strategy can be extremely challenging for many healthcare companies. We recommend starting with aligning your ABM strategy with your overall business goals, thus aligning each goal with a content map and supporting strategy to facilitate growth.

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Expert Insight

“Our organisation prioritises adding value to the customer experience and translating our value to the digital experience for customers.”

Independence Australia is exploring account-based marketing to tailor our marketing further to support the retail experience. ABM provides an exciting opportunity for healthcare organisations to keep up with the continued preference for digital channels.

The B2B healthcare space is wide and varied, and clinical professionals come in many different capacities, which is why ABM can be valuable for the industry. We know in our case that a one size fits all approach doesn't work for our end customers, and so it stands to reason that it won't work for our business customers either.”



**Steven Rothberg**

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Head of Technology, Independence Australia  
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# Where to from here?

## Create your commerce channel with Balance

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If you're ready to kick start your commerce strategy, get in touch with our team of experts at Balance. Let us help you to:

- Focus on fostering direct relationships with customers and work with our eCommerce strategists to define essential customer journeys before you commence development.
- Create a hyper-convenient experience with our knowledge of how leading healthcare organisations are structuring their offering.
- Leverage the onsite data you collect and your first-party data strategy with Adobe-certified eCommerce practitioners in workshops tailored to your needs.
- Recognise and understand the benefits and business trade-offs local, and international marketplaces offer, with guidance from our team of analysts and solution architects.
- Understand the requirements of an end-to-end order and fulfilment process, and overcome what's holding you back from offering a seamless experience.
- Prioritise seamless digital interactions for your customers by working with us to develop a channel-specific CX strategy and overcome what's holding you back.
- Understand how to utilise personalised content for Account-Based Marketing, what's involved, and why you won't be successful without a sustainable ABM strategy.
- Drive maximum value from your technology investment, starting with a customised free demo of Adobe Commerce for healthcare.



Get in touch to organise an Adobe Commerce healthcare demo today.

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Visit our website

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## Experts in digital commerce

We are leaders of constant change. Driven by results, we create transformative and intelligent commerce experiences.

Founded in 2008, Balance specialises in designing, developing, and supporting high-performing, fully integrated transactional – eCommerce solutions. We partner with leading healthcare brands, educational institutions, corporations and government departments to drive growth through digital-lead innovation.

We help our valued clients utilise the market-leading Adobe technology stack to drive profitability and generate value for their organisation. Our talented team are problem solvers at heart, including industry-leading strategists, analysts, UX & UI designers, software engineers and developers.

As one of the longest standing Adobe partners, Balance are industry-recognised Adobe Commerce experts. Over the last decade, our organisation has made significant contributions to Adobe technology (previously known as Magento) through the global developer community. Further, we are incredibly proud to have been recognised with numerous Partner of Excellence and Spirit of Excellence awards.

Balance is part of Publicis Groupe, a global leader in communication. Through our unified and fluid organisation, Balance clients have facilitated access to all its expertise in every market. Let's talk about how we can work together to bring your commerce vision to life.

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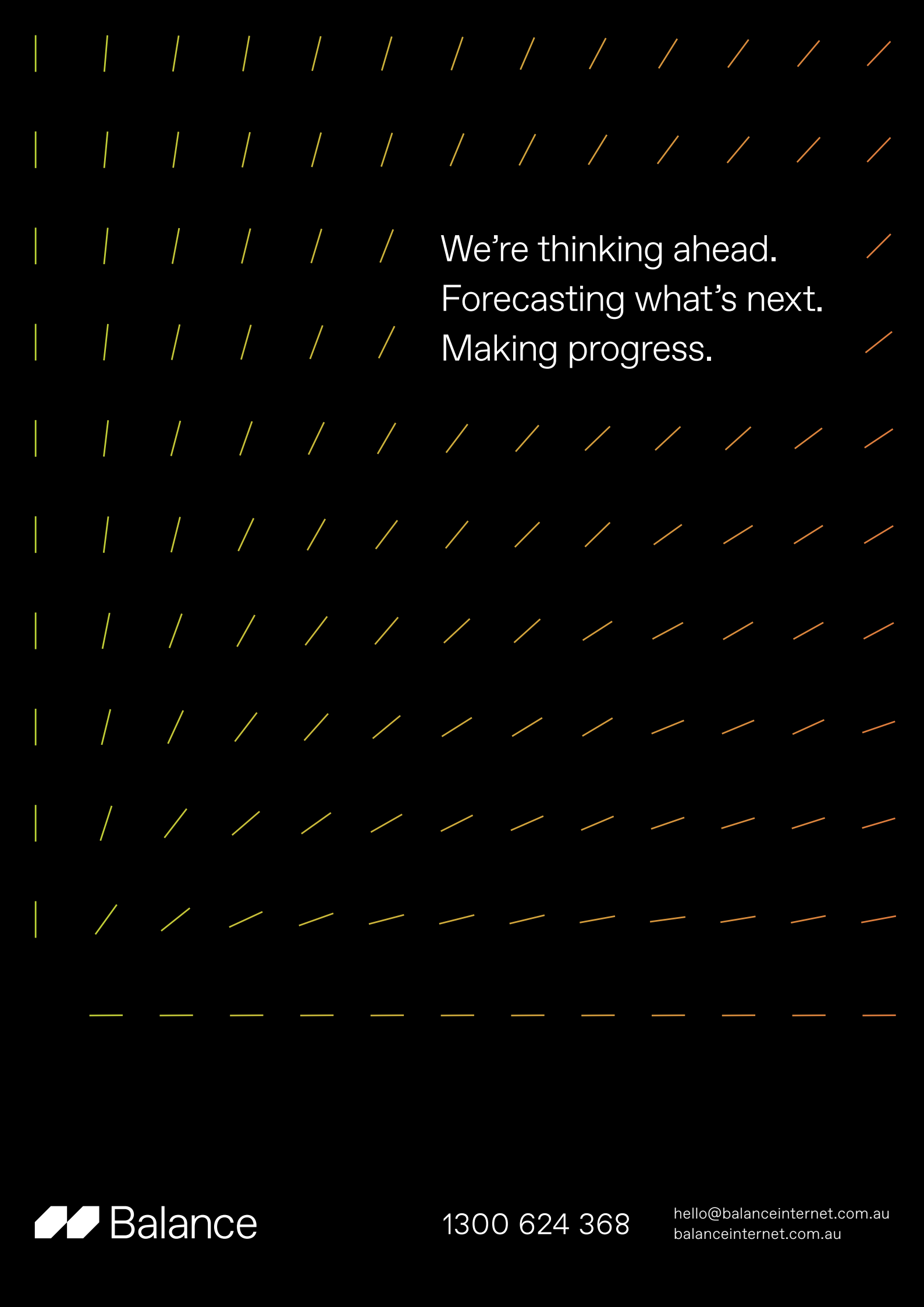
# Transforming Healthcare and Life Sciences

As one of the largest and most diversified software companies globally, Adobe enables everyone — including healthcare organisations, government agencies and the largest global brands, to design and deliver exceptional digital experiences.

Our strategy for powering digital business gives our customers a real competitive advantage, enabling them to engage their customers across every digital touchpoint. Our relentless focus on innovation; our category leadership with Adobe Creative Cloud, Adobe Document Cloud, and Adobe Experience Cloud; the large and expanding market opportunities we target; and our track record of successful execution against our strategy positions us for continued growth well into the future.

Adobe Commerce, part of Adobe Experience Cloud, allows brands to deliver a smooth healthcare experience with a robust digital foundation. From faster content development to dynamic personalisation and streamlined enrollment and care for patients, Adobe Commerce can help you to create seamless experiences that engage customers and keep them coming back.

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