

Marketing on a TWO-WAY STREET

Biopharmaceutical marketing's traditional one-way presentation format continues to evolve into a more interactive model, integrating social media and other digital forums to give patients and physicians access to deeper levels of information tailored to meet their specific needs.

Social media is seen by many as today's equivalent of meeting friends for a chat at the local diner or coffee shop, albeit with a much wider reach and somewhat longer life span message-wise.

Joe Willis, VP, sales and marketing, Skin-Medica, notes that social media is easy to access and instantly connects users with a community that's not bound by geography or location.

"Social media has become an inherent part of who we are and is part of a new fundamental in connecting with other people, whether business or personal," Mr. Willis says.

Joan Mikardos, senior director, digital center of excellence, Sanofi, cites the control social media gives consumers — allowing them to talk about a brand or company almost anywhere, at any time, to a potentially vast audience — as being critical in the technology's tremendous impact on life-sciences marketing.

"As marketers, we can stand still and just do what we have done traditionally, or we can figure out a way use social media either by listening or engaging," Ms. Mikardos says.

At the highest level, social media provides a voice to the customer and opens up conversations within the market, notes Dennis Flannely, head of marketing and strategy, ImmunoDiagnostics Division, Thermo Fisher Scientific. And organizations should be joining this conversation.

"Social media places the responsibility with the organization to communicate openly to customers to be viewed as a trusted partner," Mr. Flannely says. "In the digital space, customers are looking for accurate information, and if an organization is not speaking with transparency, patients and healthcare professionals can quickly sniff out the fiction and impact the organization's reputation in the marketplace."

According to Donna Wray, executive director, management advisor and practice leader for digital & relationship marketing, TGaS Advisors, the political climate within pharma companies is finally allowing for something that should have happened years ago: developing true customer relationship management for their healthcare professional customers.

"Ironically, even with its great HCP ana-

"Social media places the responsibility with the organization to communicate openly to customers to be viewed as a trusted partner."

lytics, pharma is still light years ahead in patient CRM, but the gap is closing," she adds. (To read more about marketing operational excellence, please turn to the showcase thought piece: From Operational Excellence to Strategic Partner: A Call to Action for Pharmaceutical Marketing Operations.)

"When used responsibly, social media has a tremendous ability to improve the flow of information between consumers, healthcare providers, and industry," says Denise Allen Williams, VP, marketing and customer solutions at Merck. "With new websites, blogs, and apps coming online virtually every day, consumers are becoming more empowered to manage their health, and healthcare providers are realizing new opportunities to engage with patients and manage their practices."

According to Benjamin Lei, associate director, interactive e-marketing at Genentech, in the life-sciences sector it's well understood that patients and, to a lesser degree, healthcare professionals, are very active in many forms of social media, and that many have developed large followings to their blogs, Twitter streams, or Facebook pages.

"Social media is certainly taking up a lot of our mindshare; we're spending a lot of time figuring out the right ways to gather information and engage in these spaces," Mr. Lei says. "But like most drug companies, there are lim-



DENNIS FLANNELLY Thermo Fisher Scientific

itations to what we can do given the regulatory and legal risks associated with less-controlled or space-limited environments."

Lou Mullikin, senior VP of sales and marketing at Kowa Pharmaceuticals America, observes that without defined rules of engagement from the FDA, many companies are struggling to participate in and adapt to the changing landscape of online conversation. He cites the


MICHAEL UTZ EMD Serono

“There are many new tools and technologies available, such as e-detailing which may provide more interaction with physicians, but the companies that will stand out will take time to listen more closely to healthcare professionals.”

example of Facebook’s disabling of comments on pharma-sponsored pages as underscoring the need for regulatory clarity around content ownership and responsibility.

“It’s critical that, as an industry, we are able to contribute to this conversation as providers of accurate, fair-balanced information,” Mr. Mullikin says. “We look forward to the day we can do this confidently and responsibly—as outlined by the FDA— as part of our shared mission to improve patient care.”

Michael Utz, director of U.S. marketing, neurodegenerative diseases, EMD Serono, says that while life-sciences companies need to respect the regulatory environment in which they are required to operate, there are still ample opportunities to engage with consumers using social networking tools. He cites EMD Serono’s unbranded Facebook page, MS Voices, developed for the multiple sclerosis community, as one way in which companies can use social media tools to reach and listen to consumers.

“This information is extremely valuable, as it allows for more real-time feedback on what consumers are thinking about market events and trends,” Mr. Utz says.

Information is one of the top reasons people use social media—and, in part, that means doing research on brands, says Chris DeAngelis, VP, strategic initiatives, SSI.

“People want to stay informed about other people’s attitudes, experiences, and opinions about products and services,” he says. “With social networking, people can reach many others at once with their views, and can respond to brands and events in real time, as they are experiencing them.

“Social networks, and the ‘Avids’ who dominate the conversations on them, will be increasingly important to marketers, both in terms of communicating out about their products and listening in on conversations to understand their audience’s interests, concerns, experiences and preferences,” Mr. DeAngelis continues. “Savvy marketers will use social networks to help craft effective messages, assess the impact of their communications on patient and

consumer conversations, and drive interest and attention to traditional channels. The most effective marketers will learn to integrate both new and traditional channels to optimize message impact.” (To read more about connecting with physicians and patients, please turn to the showcase thought piece: Connecting with Professional and Patient Targets.)

John Krayacich, senior VP, sales and marketing with Exact Sciences, observes that social and digital media are enabling physicians and patients to engage in conversations that extend beyond the traditional boundaries of face-to-face communications.

“Physicians don’t have to be face to face with other physicians to engage with colleagues regarding new therapies or tests,” Mr. Krayacich says. “Feedback on products, procedures, and diagnostic tools are being solicited in chat rooms and blogs, on patient advocacy sites, and during online CME events, as well as through other non-traditional channels that are at times out the reach of industry. Patients weigh in on treatments and technology-savvy physicians are responding and forming opinions of products based on these interactions, many times even before a sales representative has had a chance to visit the physician’s office.”

Digital Not Yet Traditional

Even with audiences’ continued march into the digital space, experts agree that traditional marketing sources remain an integral component of an overall pharma marketing strategy. According to a survey released earlier this year by KRC Research, roughly eight out of 10 physicians view pharmaceutical research companies and their sales representatives as useful sources of information on prescription


LOU MULLIKIN Kowa Pharmaceuticals America

medicines. The survey, which was supported by Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), also found that physicians consider a broad range of factors in making their prescribing decisions, with almost 70% of respondents saying they used information provided by biopharmaceutical research company representatives.

The KRC Research survey also looked closely at how physician respondents view their interactions with biopharmaceutical company representatives. For example, more than 90%


JOHN KRAYACICH Exact Sciences

“The importance of the consumer will only increase as online communities continue to form and develop into support networks for others, and marketers need to know who is directing the digital conversation for their brands.”



DENISE ALLEN WILLIAMS Merck

responded that interactions with representatives allow them to learn about new indications for approved medicines, potential side effects of medicines, and both emerging benefits and risks of medicines. In addition, 84% of physicians said interactions with representatives allow them the opportunity to provide feedback to a pharmaceutical company about their experiences with a specific medicine.

“What is clear from the results of the survey is that physicians review and integrate information from many sources to stay informed about medicines,” observes PhRMA CEO John Castellani. “This helps them make the most informed treatment decisions possible.”

According to Ken Ribotsky, president and CEO of The Core Nation, marketers are not just talking “at” their target audiences anymore.

“It’s all about engagement and the ability to create positive, two-way conversations with physicians, patients, and consumers,” he says. “We also have the ability to listen in on what these groups are saying to each other, not just to us as marketers. With new digital platforms, marketers are drawing people in with a high level of interactivity that is creating more interest in and excitement about healthcare brands.”

Mr. Ribotsky adds that marketers will create more opportunities for patients to talk directly to one another, whether it is through social media or other forums that encourage engaged conversations.

“As a result, there will be more courting of patient opinion leaders who can strongly influence the decision-making process among their peers,” he adds. “There will also be continued emphasis on helping patients become better self-advocates, empowering them to help themselves while also driving demand for healthcare brands.” (To read more about how comparative effectiveness is impacting the industry, please turn to the showcase thought piece: *Is the Business of Health Care Getting in the Way of Providing Good Health Care?*)

Mr. Flannely says regardless of whether marketers are using traditional or digital chan-

“We don’t envision any apps on the horizon that can replace the existence of a trusted relationship with a company representative who can provide information that is individualized to the interests of the healthcare provider.”

nels, the goal remains the same: communicate a story that connects across all constituents.

“Whether they are seeing a brand in a magazine or in the digital space, the goal is for a consistent intrinsic brand value across all of those media,” he says. “If a company does not articulate the intrinsic value, it can lose control of its brand.”

Mr. Lei says while digital marketing offers improved efficiency and greater ease in collecting data, traditional outlets such as the rep-to-physician relationship remain important.

“We are more focused on how digital marketing programs can be integrated with overall marketing and selling strategies,” he says.

Mr. Krayacich says a key element driving the changing biopharma promotional mix is the ability of technologically capable physicians to access vast amounts of scientific and clinical information on their own time.

“The portion of the marketing mix and the extent to which it is used will depend upon a strong strategic analysis of the respective therapeutic area and brand,” he says. “A critical part of that planning is uncovering where the digital conversations are occurring and who is creating and influencing content.”

According to Marc Weiner, managing partner at Ogilvy CommonHealth Worldwide, content strategists are making content assets more searchable, shareable, and relevant to physicians.

“Looking forward, content will be more scalable beyond today’s mobile devices and video channels, and marketers will need to consider channels that haven’t even been invented,” he says. “As reimbursements continue to be tied to outcomes-based medicine, doctors are looking for better data to support their treatment plans. Looking forward, pharma communications will need to include more relevant diagnostic, treatment, and management tools.”

From a patient perspective, Mr. Weiner says at one time, marketers primarily communicated through mass media gatekeepers, which offered a level of safety and distance from the consumer.

“Social media has reset expectations around customer service,” he says. “Consumers demand immediate, accurate, and useful information. If they don’t get it, they’re going straight to Twitter, Facebook, and Google+ to share their experiences. Marketers will need trained staff to address the acute needs of patients. Special content and procedures will be developed for proactive and reactive messaging to consumers.” (To read

about the four basic ideals involved in the management of an agency, please turn to the showcase thought piece: *Agency Ideals*.)

“Technology has made it so easy for people to get the information they want, when and where they want it,” Ms. Mikardos says. “We

VIEWPOINTS



KEN RIBOTSKY

President and CEO
The Core Nation

The True Value of a Brand

With the advent of comparative effectiveness, we can no longer influence physicians’ choice of treatment based solely on efficacy, tolerability, and safety — or through price reductions and rebate strategies. Marketers will need to demonstrate that brands can deliver more broad-based, positive outcomes, such as lower total healthcare costs, absenteeism, and even pre-absenteeism (when a patient is working, but unproductively), as well as other pharmaco-economic endpoints, that show a brand’s true value.



SCOTT WEINTRAUB

Chief Marketing Officer,
Principal
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Physicians: The Gold Standard

Pharmaceutical companies are focusing on CRM programs to communicate product messages and establish patient relationships. This has started decreasing the distance between consumers and brands, but there’s still a gap. Patients don’t trust pharmaceutical companies as an information source. Over the next few years, there will be a shift to pharma-sponsored, patient-centered platforms to allow physicians — the gold standard of patient trust — to commu-

need to ensure our mix has a multichannel approach so that information on our products and services or therapeutic areas can be accessed in whatever format people want.”

“Digital marketing is a great tool for enhancing community,” Mr. Wills says. “We have so many traditional programs in place, and the digital environment offers us as mar-

keters yet another opportunity to create greater engagement or greater intimacy with our closest customers.”

According to Mr. Mullikin, to properly take advantage of today’s real-time communication needs, manufacturers have an obligation to create information sources that are truly value-added, clinically relevant, and eas-

ily navigated, and that the end user can quickly access at his or her discretion.

“While technology continues to create innovative communication channels, the challenge for industry is to successfully integrate these opportunities into a strategically sound and comprehensive brand strategy,” he says.

Mr. Utz sounds a note of caution about the

nicate both branded and personal messages directly to patients.



MARC WEINER

Managing Partner
*Ogilvy CommonHealth
Worldwide*

A New Marketing Thread

Last year, we were explaining how social channels and peer influencers were changing the paradigm of how people discuss pharmaceutical brands. Now, we’re seeing keen interest in the mapping of online thought leaders and the viral tracking of messages. It’s about following a thread of data and topics to discover the new influencers. Looking forward, we’re already seeing more focused messaging packaged for smaller but more important audiences. And it’s being tracked, messaged, and modified in days, not weeks or months.



JEFF GAUS

President and CEO
Prolifiq Software

A Multispecialty Approach

The pharmaceutical industry faces unprecedented challenges — mobile sales forces, FDA regulations, diminishing face time with providers, marketing and sales process restrictions, reimbursement issues — pressuring companies to do more with less. Today’s sales forces must be multispecialty representatives with extensive clinical knowledge and access to detailed “share it now” information through mobile technologies. Companies will need to operate with cultures of good intent and always be confident they are acting in the interest of the consumer.



DAVE ESCALANTE

VP and General Manager,
SK&A & OneKey
SK&A, A Cegedim Company

The Online Race

The stats tell the story: 86% of physicians use the Internet to gather health, medical, or drug information; two-thirds of doctors are using social media for professional purposes; 41% of physicians who access social networks professionally are active on two or more networks. Physicians are racing to get online. Are you able to catch up to them?



CHRIS DEANGELIS

VP, Strategic Initiatives
SSI

Avid Online Users

It’s a common misconception that social networks are dominated by the young. In reality, however, SSI’s research shows that social networking is common across all age groups. As expected, about 90% of respondents 18 to 24 have visited social networking sites within the last week. Some might be surprised to see, however, that about 70% of those 35 to 44, 60% of those 45 to 54, and about half of those 55 and older also have been social networking within the last week. In every age group, SSI has identified a segment called Avids — those who spend five or more hours a week social networking. About half of social network users 24 or younger fall into the Avids category, but there are Avid users in every age group. Avid users are most likely to post comments, answer polls, and share opinions on brands. And they are intending to increase their social media usage over the next year.



SHANE KENNEDY

Executive VP, Sudler Digital
Sudler & Hennessey

It’s About the Connections

As physicians become accustomed to having their medical advice questioned by a patient’s 25,000 friends on PatientsLikeMe, pharma marketers struggle to harness a communications platform that gives people unprecedented power to spread positive — and negative — sentiment across the globe. Marketing in this new environment means connecting to those having experience with your brand to those without. It means correcting the bad information in the name of patient safety. It means amplifying the voices of advocates, while addressing the concerns of detractors and, if done well, making them converts. Ultimately, social media is pushing pharma toward a true two-way conversation with patients and caregivers, ready or not. And we believe this is a good thing.



DONNA WRAY

Executive Director,
Management Advisor and
Practice Leader for Digital &
Relationship Marketing
TGaS Advisors

A Business Case for Social Media

The consequences of avoiding social media are serious. Medical misinformation is readily available. All brands should be sure that anyplace people might look, they can find the way to accurate info. On the other hand, some brands are dabbling in social media because of the hype without a justified business case. There are many marketing tactics that should be fully invested in before diving into resource-intensive social media initiatives.



constantly changing nature of today's promotional messaging space, with its ever-growing delivery options and vehicles.

"If marketers are not staying on top of and using these channels, their brands will be left behind," he warns.

Mr. Flannely agrees that if biopharma organizations aren't thinking digitally, they are missing customers.

"In the digital space and the way the markets are moving, there is now an opportunity to get into deeper segmentation and really get after the behaviors that are motivating these customers to take action," he explains. "As an example, about half of technologically savvy patients are using social media to begin the

conversation regarding their health. We are now able to join this conversation and provide data in a way that allows the patient to pull and assess that information the way they want, access it where they want, and importantly, to them, bounce the information off their trusted social networks. So, marketers should be thinking in that digital mindset to identify the specific segments they need to activate and provide the right information to join this digital conversation with their customers." **PV**



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