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e-Marketing

Exercising Your Brand

A strict marketing regimen will help keep your brand healthy in the digital environment

A March 2008 report from eMarketer notes that in 2009 online ads will make up 10 percent of the total US advertising spend, amounting to \$30 billion. Of course, the crossing of this critical threshold won't come as a surprise to pharma marketers, who have watched their share of online spending increase by leaps and bounds in recent years.

As digital grows from an experimental tool to a mature channel, more emphasis is sure to be placed on maximizing return on investment, bringing online in line with every other channel in the marketing array, from sales representatives to direct-to-consumer (DTC) television ads. Years of highly effective off-line marketing programs have allowed most organizations and brand managers to develop a list of tried-and-true principles to ensure the success of the next program. But because digital is such a new channel, no one has yet developed a comprehensive list of principles for successful marketing online.

Consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies, fighting in an ultra-competitive marketplace with small profit margins, have had to be innovators in finding new ways to communicate their messages to their customers. And they have led

much of the innovation in online brand promotion, utilizing Web sites, search engine optimization (SEO), e-newsletter programs, mobile marketing, and tailored, individualized messaging. Applying the lessons learned through years of experience in CPG marketing to pharma can give an immediate advantage to the first companies willing to truly embrace these principles.

If pharma can effectively implement these principles, it has potentially even more to gain than CPG companies: Because pharma products have

Of course, simply copying every digital program created for CPG isn't going to work, because regulatory issues between CPG and pharma aren't comparable. (Pharma is, of course, one of the most regulated industries in the world.) However, there are ways to implement online programs that obey the regulatory rules and also respect the sensitive nature of DTC pharma marketing. A series of comical YouTube videos may not be right for your brand, but completely discounting that channel isn't the answer either. (Novartis, for instance, ran a very effective campaign for FluSource.com, garnering more than 795,000 views of the contest rules video alone.)

Digital no longer gets a free pass. As budgets become tighter, senior managers are going to require that every program

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much higher margins, a similar investment yields much better returns. So where CPG must carefully manage spending on a program to maximize the small lifetime value of a customer, pharma can deliver an even richer experience, because its lifetime value is far greater.

Getting Out in Front

Industries such as CPG have developed some of the most cutting-edge digital programs, and also have learned a lot of expensive lessons. Much of this experience can be effectively (and legally) tailored to pharma, and those companies who get out front in this race are going to have a considerable advantage for a long time.

show value from day one. If pharma companies are willing to embrace the 10 principles we've developed by working in both healthcare and CPG, we believe their brands will be stronger and that they will see an immediate improvement in a number of measurable outcomes for all of their digital programs.

Digital Rules for a Healthy Brand

1. Show, Don't Tell A demonstration, picture, or video always beats words on a page. Make your content scannable (easy to read quickly) and memorable. KnowMenopause.com uses videos of both patients and healthcare professionals to deliver content, instead of using countless pages of text.



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2. Build an Integrated Approach Do your Web site, e-newsletter, banners, AdWords, widgets, blog, emails (and so on) all work together to drive action? You've got to do all this before even considering TV, radio, and print. Pharma can learn a lot from the marketing of alli, an over-the-counter product from GSK. The OTC version of weight loss pill Xenical, alli launched with a large media campaign that included several unique consumer programs such as a comprehensive starter kit with each bottle (which included a well-designed pill case) and a highly customizable Web site at myalli.com. What made the program stand out, however, was the alli cookbook, with special recipes to help users avoid foods likely to cause undesirable side effects. In-store efforts pulled all this together with excellent product placement strategies.

3. Deploy Rapid Segmentation With Digital Technologies There's no excuse for sending the same thing to everyone, or for providing the same information to everyone. Find out what each Web site visitor needs and provide it. PurplePill.com, the Nexium-branded site, does this with its navigation. Visitors can indicate whether they are curious about symptoms, are suffering from symptoms, are ready to talk to a doctor, or are a current Nexium patient. Depending on what they select, they have immediate access to content tailored to their needs.

4. Create Value for Everyone, Not Just Your Brand No one trusts Big Pharma anymore, right? So create something that helps the patient, and they'll help you. A number of brands have used an unbranded site to educate patients and help them find the information they need. Roche did it well with fluFACTS.com, a site that offers good, basic information about the flu and useful tools like a flu tracker—all without pushing the company's flu product, Tamiflu. This approach has undoubtedly driven traffic and awareness of Tamiflu.

5. Structured, But Flexible Give users the ability to make your stuff

their own—be it through customized homepages, content they can borrow, or a section of your site that they own and manage. Once they've invested time and energy there, they'll be more likely to return to your site. This rule hasn't been fully embraced by any pharma companies, but brands throughout the healthcare industry have effectively leveraged it for years. Consider an online program to support Glucerna and FreeStyle from Abbott Nutrition, Diabetes Control for Life (diabetescontrolforlife.com). All features of the site are completely individualized, allowing users to select the tools most useful to them, customize meal plans and activities, and determine which news articles appear on their personalized site.

6. Clinical Doesn't Mean Colorless Research shows that consumers find visually appealing sites more credible than their plain counterparts. Did you make your site look like an exam room?

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(Incidentally, in the same study, healthcare professionals had the exact opposite reaction, preferring more plain-looking sites.)

7. Something Old, Something New Because imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, flatter. Learn from what's worked, and what hasn't. Don't stop at looking within your company or even within pharma at large. Apply lessons from other companies and industries. From this, create something that's never been done before. Don't shy away just because it hasn't been tried before. If it's effective, go with it.

8. Simple, Cost Effective, and Scalable Because you need to impact a lot of people to meet your goals doesn't mean that spending more money is the answer. Find out what your patients want and

deliver it. Create programs you can build over time in planned phases. As you get positive results and more funding, build on your successes and cut your losses. Resist the temptation to create more one-off campaigns that don't have a long life span.

9. Don't Let Legal Run Your Program Yes, pharma and healthcare have their own unique set of regulatory hurdles, but this doesn't mean you have to ignore all of the new channels available to you. If the latest tools (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, widgets, etc.) aren't allowed, find smart people who can figure out how to take what patients love about those tools and distill it into something you and your legal team can agree on. Reckitt Benckiser is one of the few companies willing to reject the idea that MySpace and sites like it aren't a place for pharma. You can visit their MySpace page and become friends with "addiction411." This page links to

the TurnToHelp.com site. The effective use of MySpace to help educate adolescents (one of the site's key demographics) about the risks of and treatments for prescription painkiller addiction shows that just about any digital channel can be brought into regulatory compliance.

10. The Patient Is the Boss With infinite choices online, you have only seconds to show why you are genuinely different before your audience moves on to the next search result. If you obey all of the above principles but ignore this one, you might as well give up now.

Now that you know the rules, be sure to consider them before designing your next digital program or look for ways to enhance your existing programs. Tack them to your wall and look for ways to enforce the rules every day. **PE**