

MARKETING

A New Wave of Opportunities: Social Networks, Blogs, and Other Nontraditional Marketing Media

IN THE WAKE OF A DTC PULL BACK AND A RISING TIDE OF NONTRADITIONAL OUTLETS

AND TOOLS, marketers are starting to change their messages, how they are being delivered, and to whom. Physicians, while still a primary target audience, are being joined by patients, caregivers, and other stakeholders.

Industry experts are divided as to how rapidly pharmaceutical marketers will embrace new and emerging technologies to capitalize on the number of opportunities new media afford.

Some in the industry, such as David Harrell, president and CEO of OptimizeRx, predict that “nontraditional” marketing will become “traditional” marketing in 2008 — and beyond — and will be based on allowing all stakeholders access to the right information, at the right place, and at the right time.

Others, including Kevin Aniskovich, president and CEO of Intelecare Compliance Solutions Inc., do not think Web 2.0-associated projects will have a great impact at all in the coming year.

“In reality, there are very few early adopters within pharma — part and parcel to legal and regulatory restrictions imposed on brands,” Mr. Aniskovich says. “There will be some interesting moves by smaller brands that have less to lose on a flop, but the overall marketing mix will be very much the same — and that is substantiated by the types of RFPs brands are seeking today.”

James Shanahan, CEO of Maverick Network Solutions, also believes that despite the almost geometric growth of blogs — a Google search for “pharmaceutical blogs” results in an incredible 9.8 million hits — and other nontraditional media in the pharmaceutical space, they will not have a significant impact on pharmaceutical marketing strategies in the short term as most manufacturers will continue to postpone the inevitable and develop a proactive strategy to deal with their impact.

“In the meantime, their influence on patients, caregivers, regulators, policymakers, and the media will continue to grow,” he says. “Consumers are hungry for information for themselves, their families, and friends who have special medical needs. Yet as with all Web 2.0 phenomena, there are more pretenders than authentic sources of information. The big opportunity for pharmaceutical companies is to take a leadership position and create social networks and communities of people who are interested in the curative properties of their products.”



BARBARA PAGANO
HealthEd

TARGETED MARKETING AT ITS BEST PROVIDES CONTENT THAT IS MEANINGFUL AND RELEVANT TO PATIENTS' NEEDS, not the one-size-fits-all approach of traditional DTC.

There are myriad opportunities for pharmaceutical companies to leverage nontraditional media and viral marketing as core components of both the patient- and physician-targeted marketing mix.

“As patients are becoming more savvy, they are demanding testimonial-based feedback upon which to make informed decisions about their health,” says Anshal Purohit, director,

strategy and new business, at Donahoe Purohit Miller Inc. “Physicians are beginning to collaborate with one another directly through these mechanisms as well, and, therefore are relying less on traditional pharma-sponsored settings for networking and learning. Pharmaceutical companies must evolve their strategies to account for these significant changes in communications needs as they are becoming a nec-

essary and unavoidable component of the marketing mix.”

Susan Hempstead, principal, account services, at Stratagem Healthcare Communications, also believes that online Web 2.0 strategies offer opportunities to develop conversations with customers and prospects, rather than simply talking at them, and to advance these conversations in a meaningful

Experts

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SCOTT COTHERMAN

Corbett Accel

■ More companies will follow a model that some agencies have demonstrated as successful in moving customer behavior and brand market share. The results of colliding two disciplines — customer insight development and consumer brand-building knowledge with pharmaceutical marketing and advertising expertise — to accelerate brand uptake and extend brand life will become a best-practice standard. Companies that have succeeded in integrating these two disciplines will be able to demonstrate the return on investment required to thrive in a more challenging healthcare marketplace.

KATHY MAGNUSON

Brand Pharm

I have seven best practices for marketing success.

- Clearly define a brand positioning and stick to it.
- Select four key strategies that can be implemented in a focused manner.
- Do not dilute efforts with one-off types of programs.
- Stay focused on a plan that will bring the greatest success.
- Plan for patent expiry during the pre-launch stage.
- Have a contingency plan for every stage to be prepared for significant changes in market forces.
- Do not let market research make every marketing decision.

RICHARD MINOFF

Dorland Global

■ Best practices to achieve pharma marketing success, in my opinion, are driven by a mindset that is hard to come by in our industry regardless of whether you're a

client or agency partner. Specifically, I'm talking about a decided shift away from in-bred industry conservatism. Rather than the usual preoccupation with the "tried and true," the "what is," and risk-averse thinking handcuffed by market research to the death that goes on in our industry, best practices dictate a needed shift away from this mentality.

- By focusing on using more intuition and imagination, a "what could be" mentality, and calculated risk, some companies are embracing new ideas that drive change. These change masters are believers, and they want to understand the underpinnings of target audience mindsets, the key drivers/motivators, and the linking of concepts to drive marketing success.

PATRICK MOORHEAD

Avenue A | Razorfish

- Focus on Relevance. Because consumers possess more control over their media experiences than ever before, now more than ever marketers need to focus on delivering relevant messages in nonintrusive methods. The more relevant the message, and the more flexibility offered in how that message is consumed, the more audiences will respond and come to value those communications.
- Adapt to Emerging Media. Adopt the perspective that change is good, as change means opportunity — the opportunity to connect in new ways, to enhance and extend communications investments, to engage in dialogue as opposed to lecture, and to collaborate with consumers instead of convincing them.
- Abandon Mass for Niche, Reach for Depth. The emerging media landscape offers the opportunity to retool perceptions about marketing effectiveness and what is really valuable. Reach must be redefined as a measurement of depth — not width — in audiences. Research continues to demonstrate

that it is far more valuable to connect with a small audience of highly engaged consumers and foster a deep dialogue relationship, as opposed to reaching a very broad section of consumers in order to reach that same audience with a shallow and ultimately limited one-way message.

- Listen to Consumers. They are talking about you. Whether you are listening, participating, and adapting, your consumers are online today discussing your brand, their condition, and leveraging the online community of peers to seek answers. Marketers must abandon their "arms length" approach to communicating with consumers and instead adopt a collaborative approach of listening and participating with relevant information in order to succeed.

TIM NOFFKE

Integrated Project Management Company Inc.

- Too many biopharmaceutical organizations continue to be plagued by launch delays. Everyone celebrates a timely approval, but it often takes weeks or months before the product moves out the door. What to do?
- Start early. Achieving a swift launch is a highly interdependent effort that requires close teamwork across R&D, regulatory, marketing, sales, manufacturing, and a host of other functions. Successful companies begin launch planning four to six years in advance.
- Take calculated risks, such as ordering labels, manufacturing initial stocks, so that the "elements" are at the ready. Risks need to be supported by hard data, not just "gut feelings."
- Most important, plan for when things go wrong — and they will. What if FDA requires new studies? What if an API sup-

plier comes up short? Having specific contingencies and decision-making processes in place will speed resolutions.

GARY NORMAN

Rx Edge

■ Targeting, message relevance, and education are the elements that make DTC marketing successful. Through our work with an extensive number of brands and therapeutic categories, we have identified some fundamentals. They are: have a measurement plan in place at the outset; put considerable effort toward identifying key patient target groups; connect with patients through a combination of tactics and techniques, such as television to stimulate awareness, retail pharmacy programs to drive home the message when consumers are thinking about healthcare copay cards to build a loyal following, and so on. Last but certainly not least, track the results and ROI. When marketers measure results, they can refine plans, validate decisions, and deploy proven vehicles that drive patient action and lead to better health outcomes.

BARBARA PAGANO

HealthEd

■ When it comes to developing a successful educational marketing strategy, the plan must follow a patient-centered approach and reflect an understanding of the health beliefs about a disease and its treatment. Effective patient education marketing provides information that is both accessible and understandable. By understanding how people learn, marketers can then use the appropriate health education model to teach them. Considerations include accounting for the emotional barriers to treatment, health beliefs, learning styles, and health literacy. Successful educational marketing can influence treatment adherence and lifestyle

changes that, in turn, improve patient outcomes, ultimately contributing to the corporate bottom line.

LORRAINE PASTORE

LifeBrands

■ In specialty therapeutic categories, such as oncology and HIV, it is critical to develop and communicate a clear strategy at an early stage. Products in these categories can move into launch phase quickly, and may receive competition from next-generation compounds very soon after launch. It is critical, therefore, to develop a solid roster of key opinion leaders and product advocates to establish the science, and to create brand awareness prior to launch, so as to reach peak sales quickly. To do this successfully in these specialty categories, it is necessary to understand the nuances of selling in these markets.

CHRIS TAMA

Ferguson

■ Both the development and delivery of content has changed. It's important that companies make the shift from "recall" marketing research to "real-time" marketing research. Observing and studying real-life situations while they are actually happening can unleash such powerful insights that entire positioning and message strategy developments are revamped to reflect them, resulting in remarkable success.

■ The options for delivering content are more plentiful and targeted than ever. We are a society that demands information when, where, and how we want it. We need to make our content available to customers in a way that they prefer to get it. An integrated real-time, interactive approach needs to be considered.



CHRIS TAMA
Ferguson

WEB 2.0 GIVES ADVOCATES A PLATFORM TO DISCUSS THE IMPACT A BRAND HAS HAD ON THEIR LIVES. This is very important; the key is to leverage contextual marketing, as with social networks, to help tell the brand story.

way, listening to and learning from the audiences that are being served.

"Today, no fully integrated campaign achieves maximum results without some sort of interactive component," she says. "As marketers, it is our job to activate our brands through both offline and online media. Web 2.0 initiatives enable us to gain a deeper understanding of our audiences and drivers of their behavior, and identify new product opportunities. Social networks, blogs, and other nontraditional media are already playing an important communications role for companies for whom the consumer is critical to brand adoption, and efforts are rapidly evolving to include physician audiences as well."

The potential impact of social media on marketing could be significant, according to Patrick Moorhead, national manager of research and development for the Advanced Marketing Solutions group of Avenue A | Razorfish.

"Marketers have an unprecedented opportunity to foster and enable communities of engaged and passionate information-seeking audiences who want to connect with each other with relevant, trustworthy information, and with brands themselves," he says. "At the very least, pharmaceutical marketers should begin to leverage the immense wealth of consumer-generated opinion and discussion by incorporating word-of-mouth research programs into their strategic and media planning efforts. The dialogue between users, and about brands, continues whether marketers pay attention or not."



JAMES SHANAHAN
Maverick Network Solutions

OUTSOURCING PARTNERS WILL BECOME MORE IMPORTANT AS MARKETING TECHNIQUES BECOME MORE AND MORE COMPLEX.

Partners will become more involved in strategic planning and understanding the market as a way to increase their value.

Mr. Moorhead says this type of dialogue provides two key opportunities: listen and enable.

“Word of mouth research allows for direct, unfiltered insight into the opinions, factors, and attitudes of the consumer and can reveal insights that enhance and shape not only the creative messages used to speak to consumers, but the media venues chosen to deliver the message,” he says. “Next, brands that discover methods of tapping into this rich vein of consumer engagement by enabling community dialogue, personal connections, and tangible people-powered dialogue between brand and consumer stand to gain incredible relevance and value perception in the consumer mind. By joining the conversation as a participant as opposed to remaining outside, brands have the potential to create deep, meaningful relationships with consumers that are valued far more than any ad message that could be delivered.”

There is no doubt that major shifts are occurring as new, real-time communication channels, such as social networking sites and blogs, make the migration from everyday life into healthcare communications, says Chris Tama, president of Ferguson.



MIKE LAZUR
LHG Partners

FOR THE PUBLIC TO ACCEPT DTC AND NOT FOCUS ON ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO HIGHER DRUG PRICES, DTC needs to deliver more usable information and fewer overt emotional tugs.



ANSHAL PUROHIT
Donahoe Purohit Miller

“These new channels empower influential individuals to have an effect on shaping and affecting market perceptions,” he says. “A trailblazing example of ‘citizen marketing’ is the blogger site, Jerry’s Blog, which was a personal diary written a few years back by a patient enrolled in a clinical study. The popularity of this blog demonstrated how a single individual could influence the perceptions of an investigational new drug before marketing approval. Another more recent breakthrough in nontraditional media is the social network MySpace Addiction 411, which was established to help those seeking support for opioid dependency. This is the first social networking site actually sponsored by a pharmaceutical company. Clearly, a new era in communications has begun.”

Barbara Pagano, senior VP at HealthEd Interactive, also believes pharmaceutical companies should consider user-generated content (UGC) technology to enhance their customers’ experience with their products.

“The Web is a crucial source of information for patients, so any way to create meaningful ‘stickiness’ that encourages them to return will help companies foster an ongoing relationship with their customers,” she says. “Introducing online forums keeps site content fresh by providing valuable new information and support.

“In addition, by monitoring other social networks and blogs, pharmaceutical marketers can glean insight into the experience that patients are having with a brand,” Ms. Pagano adds. “Pharmaceutical marketers can then use those insights to address misconceptions or to more properly set expectations in their patient education materials.”

Kathy Magnuson, executive VP, managing director, Brand Pharm, says while social networks have created a great stir in the consumer space, the industry needs to ensure that these

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TARGETED, PERSONALIZED COMMUNICATION SHOULD BE A CORE COMPONENT

of any thorough patient-based marketing platform, as it will play an increasingly critical role in the DTP arena in upcoming years.

tactics are not obvious marketing efforts, as they will be discounted as being too commercial.

“It will be interesting to see how healthcare providers make use of programs and if they have viability for pharmaceutical marketing,” she notes. “How these activities enable and improve the clear exchange of scientific information is being tested, particularly under the less-than-clear regulatory environment around Web 2.0.”

The new marketing environment will require pharma companies to develop a new skill set that goes well beyond the comfort associated with traditional media and the prototypical rep sales call, says Richard Minoff, president of Dorland Global Health Communications.

“The emergence of all the evolving new media will have many reeling,” he says. “As an industry we must become much more focused on connectivity and engagement, which these new media offer. Quickly marketers must open their eyes to the rapidly developing new world around them. While linked social networks, blogs, and the like are growing exponentially, the fact remains that their impact is not well-known, particularly in pharma. So while there is no doubt that their use will continue to grow, their ability to achieve brand goals will take some time to dissect, evaluate, and properly benchmark for significance.”

TARGETED, PERSONALIZED PATIENT COMMUNICATIONS IS THE MOST EXCITING — AND MOST UNDERUTILIZED — AREA.

We have the tools to provide one-to-one communications with the growing numbers of highly motivated, information-seeking patients and physicians. Successful marketers will be those who meet patients' demand for a high level of responsiveness and interactivity from the resources, brands, and products they trust and use.



PETER NALEN
Compass Healthcare Communications



KEVIN ANISOVICH
Intelecare Compliance Solutions

THE MORE INFORMED CONSUMERS ARE ABOUT A PARTICULAR DISEASE

STATE and the risk factor of not getting on and staying on some kind of therapy, the more willing they are to adapt their behavior and motivation.

Scott Cotherman, CEO of Corbett Accel Healthcare Group, agrees that while today's brand marketers are simply observing and exploring the impact of social media on brands, tomorrow's marketers will include social media as an integral component of brand planning.

"Also, advocacy relations, public relations, interactive services, and marketing will become blurred as agencies integrate these services to access the social media channels," he says.

Social media are already having a major impact, particularly in specialty areas such as cancer and HIV, where patients, friends, and families are actively researching and sharing information on treatments, especially regarding pipelines.

"Pharmaceutical and biotech companies need to understand what's out there, be part of this discussion and impact decision making, all under increased regulatory scrutiny," says Lorraine Pastore, president of LifeBrands. "There are few more critical areas for personalized patient communications than cancer, HIV, and other specialty diseases with complex treatment regimens. Patients, their friends, and families must piece together information from a variety of sources. Web 2.0 will obviously be employed to a great extent in this arena. Also, Web 2.0 is the approach that most closely resembles the interaction between the rep and the physician. Web 2.0 is about interactivity — uploading and downloading. As it gets harder and harder to conduct personal selling,



GARY NORMAN
Rx Edge

perhaps ultimately personal selling will take on this new form."

Pharmaceutical companies recognize that patients are increasingly involved in their healthcare choices and are proactive in seeking information about disease states, treatment options, and the experiences of others, says Denise Campbell, senior director, consumer marketing, at AstraZeneca.

"Providing on-demand information across a variety of online and offline media contributes to patient awareness and facilitates effective dialogue between the patient and the doctor," she says.

Dan Berman, CEO of PharmaCentra, believes the transition to a social Internet community will evolve over time as pharma companies, physicians, and patients become familiar with this important tool.

"Relevant content will be king, enticing patients to visit frequently and use the information portal as a health resource," he says. "By becoming a resource to the viewer and encouraging open dialogue, pharma companies can benefit in many tangible ways: re-establishing themselves as valued members of the greater community; achieving greater reach through the Internet community; exercising

AT THE END OF THE DAY, PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS DO NOT CARE ABOUT A MEDICATION OR A PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY — they care about what a

particular medication and that company can do "for them." The onus is on the brand manager to deliver that message.

greater control over their image; and branding their message with pin-point accuracy."

UNTAPPED RESOURCES

The growth of broadband Internet access and the increase of interactive, viewable technologies on a variety of portable devices is expected to continue to drive the use of non-traditional media.

"The good news is we can now better execute and measure sophisticated multichannel CRM programs," says Peter Nalen, president and CEO of Compass Healthcare Communications. "We can employ the right combination of Webcasts, e-mails, newsletters, starter packs, text messages, or even phone conversations to get a patient through their first month of therapy or motivate a physician to try therapy with a new patient type. But to be successful online, agencies and brand managers will need to understand and adopt the Web 2.0 consumer-generated phenomenon for our highly regulated industry. Web 2.0 already is being used. Patients who submit questions to medical sites or become members of online support groups are part of Web 2.0. Physicians increasingly connect with colleagues or specialists outside their area of expertise using Web 2.0 tools.

Participatory social networking applications, such as blogs or message boards, are still largely untapped by pharma and have huge potential in helping to create long-term relationships with patients, doctors, and caregivers.

"Patients have countless questions and concerns when considering and taking medica-

MARKETERS WILL INTEGRATE THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF WEB 2.0 TO BUILD ONLINE COMMUNITIES SPECIFIC to a

treatment, procedure, or disease state that patients, caregivers, physicians, and other stakeholders can access.

tions,” Ms. Pagano says. “Providing patients with a real-time forum to communicate with other patients who are struggling with similar issues may help them become more comfortable talking with their doctors. In addition, the use of mobile devices as a marketing tool in pharma is still in the nascent stage.”

For Mr. Aniskovich, the real question is: what media/technologies are yet to be widely utilized by pharma?

“For one, the industry is being inundated with access points to caregivers — a major untapped market as the true decision makers for many treatments and patients — yet we fail to see any real focus in these areas,” Mr. Aniskovich says. “Second, medication nonadherence. This is nice buzz phrase and surely everyone admits that it is a problem, but providing suggestions on a Website, for example ‘Put a post-it note on your bathroom mirror,’ is neither adequate nor responsible. We need to educate patients as to why adherence is important and provide them with the resources to adhere based on the lifestyle they live; we can’t force everyone into one bucket.”

Mr. Minoff says while the industry is farther along in using new tools in patient communications, particularly in the PR space, the issue is not what will be the next “hot” technology/media, but rather how to best use and understand the key drivers and impact of each emerging technology/media vehicle.

“For today’s marketer, it’s really about how to best match the continuum of brand goals to brand strategy and ultimately to the best media tactics,” he says. “Web 2.0, or the second generation of Web-based communities and hosted services, such as social-networking sites, all aim to facilitate collaboration and sharing between users. But, to take full advantage of these new media vehicles and use the Internet as a highly interactive platform, pharma companies must seriously attempt to better understand the rules for success using these new media. As such, it’s about taking advantage of these tools by being well-versed in them and understanding whether they can be applied effectively across the brand spectrum.”

Ms. Magnuson anticipates that more companies will start to use SMS delivery of mes-



RICH MINOFF

Dorland Global

sages — once it is determined how to do so with fair balance — as well as PDA downloads to deliver content to healthcare providers.

“Wii and other gaming type technologies are sparking a great deal of novelty use; we will be making a concerted effort over the next few years to incorporate these technologies into more effective delivery vehicles for healthcare messages,” she adds.

Another area generating interest is portable records, but according to Mr. Tama, nobody has truly delivered on the promise of digital, portable health records that patients can carry with them.

“Disoriented, unconscious, or forgetful patients are endangered if they can’t properly report details of their health profile,” he explains. “A digital registry that is accessible by authorized healthcare professionals could be of immense help in both diagnosis and treatment. Additionally, open access to aggregate data could help us better understand the realities of how patients are actually taking treatments and ultimately assist us in addressing what might be done to improve compliance, safety, and education.”

Mr. Tama details another application that may well be the final frontier for healthcare markets: home-based diagnosis.

“Although right now it seems the stuff of science fiction, home diagnosis will one day have a significant impact on both healthcare professionals and patients,” he says. “For a variety of reasons, actually going to the doctor or hospital can sometimes be a serious barrier for people requiring treatment, which results in those who will skip treatment altogether. If someday people are routinely afforded the option of initial home diagnosis, invariably patients who might otherwise look to avoid a doctor visit will have a greater impetus to go in, get treated, and ultimately, better avoid potential long-term health complications.”



SCOTT COTHERMAN

Corbett Accel

CLIENTS ARE STARTING TO TALK IN EARNEST ABOUT THE NEED TO FULLY INTEGRATE PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS AND PATIENT THINKING INTO THE PURCHASE DECISION,

particularly with the rise of consumer-directed/driven healthcare.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE BUZZ

According to Ms. Magnuson, one of the biggest challenges the industry faces is making sure its brand strategies are clear and then delivering these messages through digital media.

“Unfortunately, the industry continues to view digital media as a destination first and crafts digital strategies as an afterthought rather than ensuring brand strategies incorporate the best use of available media,” she says. “When incorporated properly into the brand strategies, Web 2.0 and other digital media offer great opportunities to communicate key messages about brands. So if we continue to look at Web 2.0 as a strategy, we will continue to misuse it and end up polluting the opportunity.”

Mr. Aniskovich believes companies need to take a risk when it comes to Web 2.0.

“I know risk is a terrible word to use when discussing marketing opportunities,” he says. “But at the end of the day, it is Web 2.0 technologies — social networking, flexible sys-



SUSAN HEMPSTEAD
Stratagem

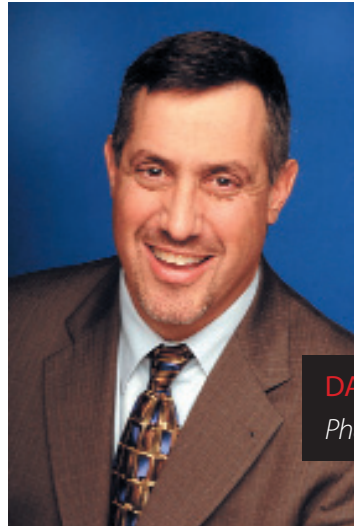
WE ALL KNOW ABOUT THE FOUR P'S OF MARKETING AND WEB 2.0 ENABLES A FIFTH P: PARTICIPATION. With participation comes engagement. And with engagement, comes increased brand loyalty.

tems architecture, empowering patient behavior through online and offline tools and resources — that can gain brands a demanding lead in loyalty, and it is loyalty that will effectively build a relationship marketing program. The best way for pharma to leverage the benefits of a Web 2.0 program is to unshackle their agencies and allow them to become free-thinking once again. Furthermore, use the third parties that are developing and rolling out these technologies because they know the space and opportunities; this would reduce the learning curve and infrastructure burden and a campaign could launch before in-house engineers even had a planning session.”

Pharmaceutical companies should find every opportunity to secure their voice within Web 2.0, Ms. Pagano says.

She adds that brands that honestly engage their users and prospects can reap rewards by focusing less on the risk involved when entering into a minimally controllable online territory and more on the potential for the brand.

“If the idea of Web 2.0 still leaves a company weak at the knees, there are opportunities to test the waters through modified, lower-risk tools and services, such as an archived forum or time-delayed boards,” she says. “These can lead the way toward full integration of Web 2.0 applications at a pace that may be more comfortable for that company. Additionally, by partnering with relevant and respected organizations like advocacy groups, pharmaceutical companies can truly deliver



DAN BERMAN
PharmaCentra

AS TEXT MESSAGING AND MOBILE SERVICES BECOME MORE MAINSTREAM, they will take on a more active role in patient compliance and literacy.

the social-networking characteristic of Web 2.0 without compromising the trust a patient-user would expect from such a site.”

THE NEXT STEP IN THE DTC EVOLUTION

Many in the industry agree that the DTC of today is no longer the sole voice in a consumer marketing effort.

“Pharmaceutical companies are moving away from traditional push strategies and toward more targeted approaches where consumers can choose to engage at a comfortable level, in a multitude of places, and on demand,” Ms. Pagano says. “While DTC has a role in the marketing mix, it is most effective when layered within a solid blend of approaches that take into consideration patients’ experiences, attitudes, and beliefs, which are often the biggest barriers to driving consumer action. Patients who adhere to treatment experience better outcomes, minimizing the negative buzz often resulting from noncompliance. Empowering patients beyond what can be accomplished in a 30- to 60-second DTC spot sets the stage for longer and stronger relationships with your brand.”

In Mike Lazur’s opinion there are many forces coming together to drive DTC communication in a more credible direction.

“For the public to accept DTC and not focus on its contributions to higher drug prices, DTC needs to deliver more usable information and fewer overt emotional tugs,” says Mr. Lazur, managing partner of LHG Partners. “People want reliable, truthful information grounded in factual evidence, so they can make the most informed choices for themselves in consultation with their physicians.”

OptimizeRx’s Mr. Harrell believes that DTC will continue to evolve into DTP.

“Pharma brands are seeking specific

patients needing their therapies versus inefficiently marketing to the general consumer masses.

“Additionally, a much larger focus of consumer/patient marketing must be to help patients access and maintain therapy,” he says. “I also think a DTE — direct to employers — marketing strategy must be further developed to outline how products can improve overall health outcomes. Lastly, innovative pharma marketers will recognize that consumers can be their biggest advocate within doctors’ offices if they can provide broader patient access support and helpful educational programs that generate personal brand loyalty.”

According to Mr. Tama, targeted patient and consumer communications are becoming a gold standard for motivating behavior change.

“Engaging and compelling patients to act requires us to connect with them on an emotional level — a very individual level,” he says. “Because of the proliferation of communication channels driving messages to all of us, it is critical to integrate with the channels that the patients are already going to and speak to them in a way that is relevant, compelling, and motivating. To successfully market products today it is critical to know where, to whom, and how to communicate. Direct-to-patient communication is an indispensable pillar of a successful marketing strategy.”

MESHING PATIENT EDUCATION AND MARKETING

Many experts believe that patient education and marketing will continue to merge into what is best termed educational marketing.

“Perhaps a discount clothing chain said it best with their motto: ‘an educated consumer is our best customer,’ ” says Gary Norman, executive VP and general manager of Rx Edge. “Some of the same logic can be applied to marketing a pharmaceutical product and the linkage of marketing and education. When we refer to educating the patient or consumer, we are really talking about behavior. The more informed consumers are about a particular disease state and the risk factor of not getting on and staying on a therapy, the more willing they are to adapt their behavior and motivation. Consider the steps involved as the patient goes from initial condition aware-



PROVIDING ON-DEMAND INFORMATION ACROSS A VARIETY OF ONLINE AND OFFLINE MEDIA

contributes to patient awareness and facilitates effective dialogue between the patient and the doctor.

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“Today’s informed patient may distrust slick advertising, preferring the long form of patient education, which is marketing made relevant, useful, and palatable,” she says.

There is an important role for truly personalized patient communications and yet the industry remains mired in communicating with a “general patient profile,” Mr. Minoff says.

“In large part this is because there are still so few pharma staffers and agencies that share a common lexicon and approach,” he adds. “Yet, in my estimation, communications are too general and their impact is modest at best. For instance, pharma CRM programming has been around for about 20 years and yet little has really changed. I remain amazed that every time I talk about the finer points of patient segmentation-driven communications, or the use of psychographics, most marketers have no or little idea why these two topics really matter. To that end, we need to move past the core, block-and-tackle patient programs to more direct,

highly specific patient programming that addresses a specific patient’s particular issues; otherwise we have wasted many opportunities, let alone money.”

Mr. Moorhead agrees, adding that targeted personalized communications will become the cornerstone of successful audience engagement strategies.

“Never before have there been so many options for consumers in media consumption, and correspondingly there have never been more evolved and dynamic technologies available to marketers to reach the right person with the right message at the right time and in the right place,” he says. “Pharmaceutical marketers must adopt a customized approach to speaking with consumers as personalization and consumer control of media become conventional aspects of people’s daily lives, and, consequently become the price of entry for marketers

seeking to connect with consumers. The opportunity is immense, and, if realized, could radically revise the consumer communications landscape marketers currently engage with.”

Many in the industry believe that as patients become accustomed to targeted communications in other areas of their lives, they will naturally come to demand a level of personalization from the healthcare industry as well.

“The development of targeted, personalized communication should be a core component of any thorough patient-based marketing platform, as it will play an increasingly critical role in the DTP arena in upcoming years,” Ms. Purohit says. “Patients have always played an important role in both diagnosis and treatment. This role has only grown more significant as access to information, peers, and advocacy groups is enhanced through the Internet. Therefore, marketing plans must take into consideration the growing savvy of their target patient base, and marketers should develop programs and materials to inform these audiences.”

Ms. Magnuson says while the industry should be able to deliver better communications than the pre-approved, insert-this-paragraph-here type of messages being delivered today, whether companies can ever convey the personalized messages patients need to keep them involved in their healthcare is questionable.

“Interpretations of the HIPAA guidelines will preclude truly individualized communications,” she says. “We, as with healthcare professionals, have to provide transparent, objective information on therapies that allows patients to make informed decisions. Pharma company Websites currently are the last place consumers look for information on a brand, because they believe this information to be too biased. As a result patients look to other sources, some of them inaccurate and misleading. We need to help our customers deliver the information in a way that is credible and easy to understand, using tools that allow consumers to personalize the message to their relevant situation.” ♦

ness to action. They must first become cognizant of a particular health condition, gather information about it, determine what their symptoms might mean, learn about prescription alternatives, see a physician regarding therapy options, get a prescription, fill it, begin treatment, and adhere to that treatment. Marketers need to take these steps into account and think of ways to communicate and help consumers move knowledgeably through the treatment-decision continuum.”

According to Ms. Pagano, as treatments become more complex, and life expectancies extend as a result of those treatments there is an intense need for pharmaceutical companies to deliver salient health information that not only differentiates their product from competitors, but also engages and provides information and support to the patient and his or her doctor and caregiver.

PharmaVOICE welcomes comments about this article. E-mail us at feedback@pharmavoice.com.