

# MAKING SOCIAL COUNT:

## How Mobile and Data Help Social Media Reach Their Potential

For years, pharmaceutical marketers have talked about moving “beyond the pill.” We know our work needs to provide patients with tools and services to help manage and improve their health, in concert with — or even instead of — our prescription brands. We’ve exhorted each other to not be satisfied with a great detail aid, a stellar DTC print campaign or a beautiful website and walk away. We know we want to create living products that work together to strengthen relationships, create engagement and foster learning.

### Social Networks

In the meantime, social media has become an indelible part of our own personal and professional lives. Though perhaps we treated them as curiosities a decade ago, social networks are now simply how we connect with neighbors and family or with breaking news and the latest trends.

We engage with the world on our social networks, but we still haven’t quite figured out how to engage with patients on them. Social media is the heart of the zeitgeist, but it still isn’t the center of all marketing plans, for three reasons.

#### First, it’s historically been thought difficult to separate social from overall ROI.

It’s often challenging to quantify the impact of any specific subset, independent from the rest of the group. It’s been difficult to untangle the threads of the brand experience and quantify the importance of each one — as difficult as it would be to determine the relative value of each brushstroke in a painting. However, the desire to categorize by medium lessens as the distinctions blur. A generation ago, the demarcations between print and television — even between newspapers and magazines, or cable and broadcast — were obvious. But, today, a story appears live on local TV and is immediately Tweeted, picked up by cable news, posted on YouTube, linked to from Facebook, screencapped for Tumblr, and snipped for Instagram and Vine. It’s a challenge to determine what that “counts” as, what really matters about its distribution, and how to prioritize and order such simultaneous, ongoing iterations as part of the brand story.

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#### Second, since marketing plans haven’t been patient-centric, data hasn’t been, either.

We’ve been able to track physician prescribing and parse rep visits, but measurement will become increasingly focused on the individual patient’s results. In lives lived ever more digitally, with patients using mobile devices longer and for an increasing amount of healthcare applications, it’s possible to track our target patients with ever-increasing fluidity, rapidity and precision. It’s possible to understand their paths through information in great detail: how long they engaged with a message, what behavior came from that engagement, and even how time of day and the geographic location played into it.

#### Third, passive data collection has not historically been as accessible as it is today.

But now, as technology continues to evolve toward smaller, faster and more capable devices, users also want more independence. Passive data collection is hugely important to tech in general and to social media in particular. The tools that we create for our patients and professionals can help by delivering insights to them, based on data the patient has allowed to be gathered in the background that can all be parsed together.

#### New Tools for Message Delivery

The pharmaceutical industry’s essential role is to provide healthcare professionals with tools to help them help patients. For centuries, those tools have primarily been medications. Today, it’s in our power to add new tools to our offerings, and to use new tools in our own work.

By leveraging the power of social media to spread messages, target niche audiences, and connect people on both intellectual and emotional levels, we can do more with our messages.

By leveraging social media’s newer capabilities to collect and interact with extremely precise data, we can ensure those messages are as useful as possible.

Our tools can expand out from simply providing a product to helping professionals work with their patients to shape and plan a lifestyle that offers the best possible chance at health. **PV**

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