

# Reaching Hard-to-Reach Healthcare Professionals: ENGAGE IN ON-LINE COMMUNITIES

**P**rescribers, pharmacists, and medical directors all have an ongoing need for information on the latest advances in their respective fields. Yet, it is increasingly difficult for life sciences to deliver product information via in-person rep visits; in fact, many busy professionals have a policy against seeing industry sales reps making them hard to reach. Within the pharmacy community, for example, approximately 43% of pharmacists have limitations to seeing reps. How then, can companies best deliver the type of scientific information on product efficacy that healthcare professionals need?

Delivering curated brand content to targeted healthcare professionals within private niche online communities is becoming more meaningful and opportune. When medical news and reference materials are delivered via digital platforms to groups defined by healthcare profession or disease state, members can find purposeful information that is relevant to them. And when branded information is placed carefully in such settings according to members' recommendations, it's viewed as a welcome resource rather than as intrusive advertising.

## Targeting 72,000 Pharmacists Digitally

One leading global pharmaceutical company had compelling scientific data related to its over-the-counter (OTC) therapy and sought a way to share that information with retail pharmacists. The company recognized that pharmacists are a trusted resource for consumers and that their influence is both strong and far-reaching. Pharmacists are tied with physicians as the most trustworthy profession in the public's mind, and every retail pharmacist has the potential to influence hundreds of consumers at the point of sale. It is no wonder that the claim, "No. 1 Pharmacist-Recommended Brand" is so coveted by marketers.

The brand team worked with Skipta to develop an integrated engagement campaign to reach the 72,000 pharmacist members of a specialized online community (representing 36% of all pharmacists in the US). The community members, who must be verified as licensed pharmacists to participate, use the private and secure platform to gather and

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exchange information and to collaborate and consult with one another as well as to receive information on the latest treatments and advances in medicine.

The program included a series of engaging media strategically placed in areas of the community devoted to consultations, news, and career advancement, including alerts, branded e-mails with links to resources, and a customized section of the community showcasing content related to the product and disease area. The client expected a minimum of 5,000 engagements over the six-month campaign.

## High Click-Through Rates and Low Cost of Engagement

In this example, the campaign far exceeded expectations and the guaranteed level of engagement. Two weeks before the campaign concluded, it had already garnered a total of nearly 17K engagements—more than three times what had been anticipated. Specific results included:

- ▶ Banner ads produced more than 211,000 impressions, with a click-through-rate (CTR) of .10%
- ▶ A total of 7,000+ of the customized, branded e-mails had been opened, with a CTR of 5.9%
- ▶ Of the three broadcast alerts sent, more than 7,400 were opened, with a CTR of 4.4 %
- ▶ The branded webpage garnered nearly 250 views with an average time per tab view of 1 minute, 48 seconds

Basic math shows that the cost per engagement worked out to \$5.80 — dramatically less than that of print advertising or in-person sales calls (when they are even permitted).

The brand team is so pleased with the results that they have elected to extend the commitment, and the company is now plan-

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ning similar strategic initiatives for several prescription products aimed at specialty physicians and medical directors.

## Conclusion

The results from the above case are indicative of what can be achieved when targeting engagement within specialized online medical communities. Pharmacists, similar to physicians and other allied health professionals, are receptive to receiving information of perceived value in their own time within an on-line forum reserved for their interests and needs. PV

*Editor's Notes:*

1 [www.gallup.com/poll/1654/bonesty-ethics-professions.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/poll/1654/bonesty-ethics-professions.aspx)

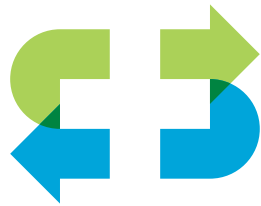
2 *Specific criteria were developed to define engagement with every program element. For instance, engagement with a branded content page was defined as spending more than 30 seconds on it.*

**Skipta is the leading social network of specialized online medical communities for verified healthcare professionals.**

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