

Transcending Traditional Social Media: FROM AWARENESS TO UNCOVERING ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

It goes without saying that social media is one of the most widely used forms of communication today. Pharmaceutical companies are trying to “crack the code” and understand how to effectively use this channel to achieve organizational initiatives while complying with rigorous industry regulations. Progressive companies have navigated this challenging environment, breaking new ground and using broad based social media channels to educate, inform and connect with patients.

Particularly successful are those campaigns that leverage social media to generate awareness among patient populations for whom social is deeply engrained in their daily lives and relied upon as a primary means of communication and collaboration. Also effective are those campaigns that are centered on awareness of a topic of common interest, capitalizing on the true essence of connectivity that social embodies.

It's promising and exciting to see the momentum social has garnered in our industry thus far. Tremendous opportunity still exists for pharmaceutical companies to transcend beyond awareness campaigns, and leverage social as a strategic means to engage with the notoriously challenging to reach healthcare professional (HCP).

This Shift is Two-Fold

First, it's important to understand exactly which social outlets to use when targeting HCPs. While data does suggest that HCPs are utilizing broad-based channels, it's likely they are doing so for leisure, as a way to connect with family and friends. The most effective social channels to target HCPs are those where membership is verified to ensure a protected environment, specialized for like-minded peers within a focused area of expertise and activate a forum for communication and collaboration. Delivering information to HCPs in a place where they are already engaged, and conversing on topics relevant to their profession is the optimal way to drive engagement.

Second, it's necessary to evolve the objective. When targeting healthcare professionals, you must go beyond pushing content out to

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them that can potentially go unnoticed due to information overload. HCPs want content, information, and resources that are relevant to their profession and their patients. More importantly, they play an active role in contributing their experiences and expertise amongst colleagues.

Such professionals embody a wealth of knowledge and valuable insight, and while being time starved, seek opportunities to voice their expertise and collaborate. They don't simply want information presented to them, they want the opportunity to interact with the information, and discuss with colleagues. This is where we need to alter our thinking. The influence of social goes well beyond introducing a topic, and simply seeing the message disperse. In this context, social becomes the vehicle for discussion and collaboration around a shared topic of interest amongst peers.

The combination of disseminating product and brand information within a protected, gated social community where HCPs are interacting amongst each other is a powerful opportunity for brand marketers to both engage in a meaningful way and learn from the vibrant conversations that are occurring. This method goes beyond advertising in the form

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of pushing out a static message, but introduces a means to listen in on what HCPs are discussing. Harnessing the nature of social media, this approach helps marketers glean deep insights into HCP preferences, opinions, and experiences by way of their organic interactions with peers.

The conversation that occurs within a specialized social environment is more focused, meaningful, and authentic than what occurs within broad based social platforms. Such insights provide value to brand marketers, by uncovering information gaps, needs and overall sentiment that can be used to create and adapt communication strategies. ^{PV}

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