

# The Changing Face of Brand Building

- The number of channels that pharmaceutical marketers have open to them for brand building today is vast and each has its own requirements and benefits.

**S**ince the mid-1980s, pharmaceutical companies in the United States have been promoting their brands to the public through print, radio, and television advertisements. Today, more and more companies are turning to digital forums to reach their audiences with branding messages.

When promoting brands in these forums, companies must adhere to standards established by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as well as the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). But brand building is also about reputation and building a trusted relationship with the patient. And this is where the advertisements focused on disease awareness come in.

For audiences — physicians, patients, as well as payers — the priorities are unchanged: they are looking for ethical communication and marketing strategies. While products receive approval based on their efficacy and safety, health is about human emotion and personal wellbeing. Regardless of the forum, both brand building and reputation building requires making a connection with the audience through human-centric, compelling, yet educational storytelling. Effective brand and reputation building also requires working with trusted opinion leaders, including healthcare professionals, as well as other key influencers.

## Brand Building Blocks

To connect with an audience, marketers need to develop a brand strategy that spans positioning, value, brand personality, and qualities such as the reliability and effectiveness of a product. Branding experts propose six levels to describe a brand. The first is its attributes, both functional, which is key for creating brand recall, and emotional, which drives engagement.

The second level within the brand building blocks centers around benefits — what are the functional and emotional benefits to the patient. The third level is values, which speaks

to the value that the manufacturer brings. To create that value, the manufacturer needs to build trust with the patient or consumer. The fourth element is culture, which also goes to recognizing, appreciating, and fulfilling values.

The personality of the brand is the fifth element to consider in brand building. The brand's personality is often projected through imagery and the use of either key opinion leaders or even personalities to endorse product. Consumers do attribute personality traits to products, surveys have found, and marketers can build on that brand personality to build loyalty and create connections with consumers. The final element in brand building is the user, which means marketers need to understand the type of patient who will be using their product and what their fears, hopes, and expectations are.

When building their brand strategies, marketers need to consider their different audiences and what matters to them. For example, prescribers want to know the brand is

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efficacious, and that it is low risk or lower risk than other products in the category, particularly with chronic conditions. They are also concerned about patient retention, trust in the product and company, and getting adequate support and information. Patients care about many of the same benefits — efficacy, safety, trust, etc. — but they also want convenience, easy comparisons with other products, and company accountability. Payers, meanwhile, care about efficacy, safety, standardization, trust, and economies of scale.

These different elements need to be considered in every branding initiative, regardless of the forum, but how they are presented will vary.

## Developing Social Media Strategies

One of the most important avenues today is social media, especially given the push toward customer engagement and empowerment. This arena has been a struggle for many pharmaceutical companies, which worry about regulations around how they market their products as well as issues related to patient privacy.

But attitudes to social media are starting to change as more and more companies recognize the importance of building a rapport with patients as well as creating a positive brand image across various platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, among others. Patients want and expect to be engaged on social media. The way marketers engage with people on social media is different than other mediums, but at the same time messaging must be consistent, accurate, and compliant.

When engaging with patients through social media, marketers need to consider the type of content they use: will it engage the audience, does it come across as relatable and trustworthy, and does it make an emotional connection with the audience. They also need to consider the medium. According to Pfizer,

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Facebook is good for consumer-oriented, patient policy, and R&D content, Twitter is a good forum for breaking news, LinkedIn helps connect the audience with the company's people and science, while Instagram is a very visual medium.

Many leading pharmaceutical companies have found ways to creatively storytell around their pipelines and engage with the audience in new ways. Instagram is recognized as a way to educate, encourage, guide, and reach out to patients in need. As an example, the Novartis Kiss This 4 MBC initiative uses social media to raise visibility and research funds for metastatic breast cancer (MBC). The company found participation highest on Instagram, with many people participating in creative and unique ways. Pfizer has also taken a lead with Instagram campaigns. One example is the company's NASH (non-alcoholic fatty liver disease) campaign, where Instagram was used to provide visual storytelling about the condition, both through a short video and a longer story that included questions to make the experience more interactive.

One area that pharmaceutical companies have been wary of is the use of influencers, however, managed carefully, there are benefits to working with influencers. Where companies do work with influencers to build the brand, the focus needs to be on long-term

## EXECUTIVE VIEWPOINTS



**Gordon Olsen**  
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### The Key Building Blocks of Brand Building

Identifying the key tensions in the lives of the healthcare professional, patient, and payer in the context of the disease category and the competition that your brand can solve are the key building blocks of brand building. This knowledge will inform the creation of brand positioning, brand character, and brand identity, which will drive brand strategy and development of the communication platform. Communications can then be disseminated across multiple channels to drive awareness, differentiation, and brand preference.

relationships and quality of the messaging over quantity. And rather than working with celebrities, marketers will often work with doctors, fitness experts, dieticians, as well as patients.

Patients with social media followers are becoming an increasingly important resource for pharmaceutical companies. Influencers sometimes give their opinions free of charge, while others who post about a product or participate in videos or events do get paid. Pharmaceutical companies that are using patient influencers in social media programs are realizing greater exposure, with more people visiting their social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.



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### Key to Brand Building: Know Your Consumer

In real estate, it's location, location, location. In brand building: research, research, research.

In "Ogilvy on Advertising," David Ogilvy outlined some basic tenets for brand building: No. 3: Do your homework. Study your consumer thoroughly.

To build a brand, an agency and its client must not only research the consumer and the marketplace at large in great detail, they must do it before, during, and after their efforts — true in 1983, critical in 2020.

Another benefit of patient influencers in brand development is to get the patient perspective regarding the experience with a medication, the side effects, the benefits, and other factors.

There are, of course, restrictions on what influencers can say about a product, in line with FDA and other regulations and there remain ethical issues, particularly around educating the public about potential risks with a product.

Nevertheless, the potential to make brand connections with patients is beneficial, while always remaining ethical and within the bounds of the regulations. <sup>PV</sup>