

AI, VR, AR: A New Age of Digital Tools Changes the Game for Marketers

- Whether it's social media forums, internal digital platforms, AI-powered apps and chat bots, or augmented and virtual reality, the digital tools open to the pharma industry today are changing the face of marketing.

More and more pharma companies are using digital tools to reach their audiences. According to one survey, more than 50% of companies expect to double their budgets for digital marketing campaigns by 2023. And according to another survey, allocation of the marketing budget to digital was 34% in 2020, twice what it was four years ago. That same survey found that digital channels deliver 24% higher productivity than traditional channels.

The challenge for the industry is how to integrate digital programs into the marketing mix in order to communicate with end users

when and where they want. Such programs need to inform while also being inclusive of the patient experience. Increasingly, artificial intelligence and machine learning applications are making it possible for companies to personalize marketing initiatives, based on customer-specific data.

Choosing the Right Tool

Pharma companies are becoming more active on social media, with many leading companies making good use of Twitter to share not just information about their products but also to share patient perspectives, interviews, Q&As, personal interest pieces, stories about employees and patient experiences — all while encouraging feedback to build engagement.

In March, Pfizer launched its #KnowtheFacts Twitter campaign to share information about COVID-19, enlisting Chief Medical Officer Mace Rothenberg to explain what the virus is, how it spreads, and who is at highest risk.

Often companies choose to use several social media forums to engage their audience. For example, UCB's Patients at the Heart campaign — a digital series that highlights what motivates UCB employees to help patients — has run on the company's website as well as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

A number of companies have turned to Instagram to reach an audience in a powerful visual way. For example, Pfizer serialized its Cure Hunters and Dear Scientist campaigns using Instagram stories, with three or four panels talking about the campaign and the option to link to a longer video or a more in-depth story. Merck also has found strong resonance through Instagram and uses the platform to amplify key disease facts, conduct geo-targeting around college campuses, partner with influencers, and, before COVID-19,

used it to reach audiences leading up to events such as music festivals.

Augmented reality and virtual reality — collectively referred to as extended reality (XR) — are likely to become important tools in the digital marketing arsenal as a way to encourage customer participation and increase brand awareness. XR enables consumers to better visualize a product — how it works, possible side effects, drug interactions, etc. — as well as learn more about the condition itself. XR also is a valuable tool when marketing to HCPs since it allows sales reps to demonstrate the benefits of a product quickly and in an engaging way. For example, interactive AR can give a visual presentation of a 3D organ to let a sales rep show a doctor the effects their products have on the body.

Digital marketing experts have noted, however, that all pharmaceutical companies could be doing more on social media, including using social media for local markets in local languages. Other recommendations include: determining which platforms are used most often by the audience the company is seeking to reach; assessing what competitors are doing; and adopting social listening to learning about the best opportunities for engagement.

Why Digital Marketing Makes Sense

One of the benefits of digital marketing is the opportunity to engage the patient audience with value-based content as well as with the physician audience, providing on-demand information to a new generation of HCPs.

Today, a growing percentage of HCPs are digital natives — those born in 1980 or later — and reaching them in ways that are familiar is becoming more and more important. Over the next decade, these professionals will be

The Case for Social Media and HCPs

Social media ranks among the top three channels across all regions for pharma

Europe

Non-promotional webinars - 65.8%
KOL webinars - 65.6%
Social media - 63.3%

Asia

KOL webinars - 71%
Social media - 69.3%
Non-promotional webinars - 66.1%

North America

KOL webinars - 73.1%
Social media - 72.7%
Non-promotional webinars - 68.1%

Source: The Digital Savvy Pharma Marketer 2020, Indegene

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**Nick Bartolomeo**

Co-lead
Fingerpaint's SHIFT
Performance Center of
Excellence

Creating a Omnichannel Experience

What can pharma gain from a dedicated digital marketing strategy? That's an interesting question and word choice "dedicated." I feel pharma might actually lose something by dedicating a strategy. Digital is a channel that needs to work in concert to create an omnichannel experience, having a relevant, one-to-one dialogue with customers. When channels have individual strategies, it's harder to ladder them up to your brand goal and drive performance. Digital and media agencies are being replaced by performance agencies that understand this intimately.

**Bryan O'Malley**

Co-lead
Fingerpaint's SHIFT
Performance Center of
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Driving Performance

We won't be talking about digital marketing in five years. It's already outdated terminology. Is anyone creating campaigns today that don't involve digital? At the end of the day, it's about

driving performance. The technology will certainly evolve, but whether it's a web page, a voice assistant, or a pair of AR glasses, the fundamental strategy for success remains the same: analyze the data, personalize the experience, measure the results, and optimize the outcomes.

**Dan Wilmer**

Executive VP and Chief
Product Officer
InStep Health

Creating Mindset Moments

Any pharma manufacturer that forms a dedicated digital marketing strategy gains an important mentality that prioritizes media efficiency and measurement. We believe that the greatest success comes with combining these digital strategy attributes with point-of-care tactics such as in-pharmacy and HCP office marketing programs. This approach meets patients when they are in "mindset moments" — those times when a patient is focused on their health and improving their well-being — and, as a result, provides pharma marketers with highly relevant, measurable messaging opportunities.

The Promise of Consumerism

We are just beginning to realize the promise of health consumerism, where patients proactively advocate for themselves and have an outsized voice

in their care decisions. As this trend manifests itself over the next five years, the savviest digital marketers in pharma will be able to engage with these hand raisers, giving them more tools and support to manage their symptoms — gaining loyalty and customer lifetime value as a result.

**John Eichert**

Senior Principal, KOL
Consulting Resources
IQVIA

Redefining the Role of the Thought Leader

Industry often defines "KOL" as an academic who researches, speaks, and/or publishes frequently, and typically on a national, or even global level, as opposed to recognized community members who provide advice on treatment decisions to local or regional audiences. IQVIA defines "KOL" as one type of thought leader (TL) who plays a defined role in the overall marketing process by creating evidence, generating opinions, establishing credibility, and building awareness. However, he/she doesn't affect the audience's decision whether to adopt a new product. Stakeholders must consider all segments of thought leadership because these individuals establish the scientific narrative and provide education and

come the dominant group, and pharmaceutical companies will need to ensure they are reaching them in innovative digital ways.

At a patient level, leading pharma companies are using engaging ways to reach patients, answer questions, and develop a trusted relationship. For example, Pfizer worked with advocacy groups to encourage chronic pain patients to share photos and tell their stories

through various social media forums. Johnson & Johnson has been reaching out through its Care Inspires Care campaign, which seeks to bring people together for a healthier, more caring world. And during the COVID-19 crisis, J&J has been using digital platform to share personal stories of dealing with the pandemic as well as stories of innovation in the fight to find vaccines and treatments for the virus.

Managing Social Media Concerns

Despite the promise of social media, concerns have been raised about the use of social media to promote drugs. For example, pharmaceutical and healthcare brands spent as much as \$1 billion on Facebook mobile ads in

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guidance to HCPs making patient treatment decisions. Companies must prepare TLs to answer questions and provide treatment advice based on the most complete and accurate information available. In the COVID-19 era, with in-person activity restricted, TLs serve as a more important channel than ever for disseminating science, evidence, and experience to practicing HCPs. Comparing and connecting clinical TLs (medical professionals) to industry social media influencers (both HCPs and lay persons) is valuable for communicating and amplifying validated and credible scientific knowledge to provide meaningful and valuable health information to consumers. That said, as pharma considers all channels in their promotional strategies, it must continue to use its resources to ensure that both ethical drug products, as well as information about them, come only from qualified persons and channels.



Peter Stark
VP, Omnichannel
Marketing
IQVIA

A Dedicated Digital Strategy

A digital marketing strategy currently plays a key part, and will continue to serve a crucial role in customer

engagement. However, to be truly effective, it must be viewed not as a standalone strategy, but as a stream within the broader promotional mix. In other words, a digital marketing strategy is one component of an omnichannel strategy. As with all marketing campaigns, dedicated resources, subject matter expertise, and technical capabilities are critical to enabling and measuring the success of digital marketing campaigns. When life-science organizations formulate a digital strategy, it would be more appropriate to replace the concept of dedicated strategy, with orchestrated strategy. This concept engages customers (HCPs and consumers alike) in a coordinated, collaborative manner across all channels, including digital. In the current pandemic climate, where in-person channels are highly restricted, orchestration is especially crucial for HCPs. Companies need the ability to quickly activate digital campaigns to complement or replace in-person field activity.



Nick Bellomo
Tech Lead
Ogilvy Health

A Virtual New World

Due to current events, digital marketing in the pharma space has moved more

virtual, with congresses moving to online and virtual platforms. This trend will continue in the future, even post-COVID-19. Social media outlets will take more of a hold for patient marketing with an emphasis on usable artificial intelligence (AI) technologies for tactics, such as chatbots. AI will also play a role in predicting patient needs based on behavior that will allow for better targeted messaging.



Christopher Jankoski
Digital Strategist
Ogilvy Health

Digital Influencers

Successfully leveraging digital influencers in pharma starts with choosing the right partners, both in terms of aligning with your brand's values and working with those who have the potential to reach the most appropriate, untapped audiences. Influencer programs should be rooted in delivering impact instead of reach, therefore, micro-influencers can be a valuable campaign asset. Micro-influencers offer a gateway to a more engaged and targeted audience, while leveraging the trust and authenticity of a relevant partner to achieve your brand's objectives.

2019, which has led to concerns about intrusion on consumers.

The FDA is working on a study to determine attitudes toward an Instagram influencer and what is being said for a fictitious endometriosis product. The agency will assess perceived benefits and risks, attitudes to the product, as well as how the ad prompts pa-

tients to behave, for example, requesting a script from a doctor.

In addition, industry groups such as the Network Advertising Initiative (NAI) are working to address concerns through self-regulation. Recently, NAI published a code of conduct, which can be found at <https://www.networkadvertising.org/code-enforcement>,

that provides the latest updates on health-related tailored advertising.

The social media forums and digital tools such as AI and XR will become important ways to reach both HCPs and patients. How companies leverage these to connect effectively, ethically, and in keeping with regulations will be key to their marketing success. PV

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