

# Digital Media Gets Social: The Five W's

**W**hile traditionally slow to adopt new innovations across many sectors, pharmaceutical and health-care organizations have become more immersed in mainstream culture and have evolved their promotional plans accordingly. Following the societal trend of digital dependency, industry spend towards communicating with patients and prescribers is increasing. A recent study by eMarketer suggests that pharma and health-care digital ad spending will grow at a rate of 12.7% by 2018 year-end reaching \$2.87 billion. Marketers know that a variety of digital channels exist and, despite the tendency to find the new shiny object through which to communicate their message, many rely on traditional media channels. With 56.3% and 37.1% of their digital budgets being spent on display ads and search, respectively, is this the best use of funds?

The largest chunk of budget is being allocated towards display ads — a common approach that is not without challenges. Display ads can return a significant number of impressions, but measuring their effectiveness is difficult if the objective is to encourage some sort of behavior change. While display ads can generate awareness, there is not a clear way to understand if the desired behavior change was achieved or if campaign success is demonstrated. A current method to measuring effectiveness of display ads is to aggregate the number of impressions returned across a variety of digital properties. Again, impressions can be tracked but not behavior change.

Another limitation of display ads is the inability to know who is behind each impression. With the vast majority of budget being allocated towards them, it's critical to know that the funds are being spent on the desired audience, and in many cases digital properties attract unauthenticated audiences. And lastly, assuming you are reaching your target audience, attention must be paid to where you are reaching them. If your target prescriber views your ad while researching a family vacation to Disney World, will it make an impact?

Applying a social media strategy as an integral component of any digital plan allows brands to target and validate results.

## Leveraging Social Media

A way to overcome these challenges is to leverage social media as a premier and powerful digital channel. Its use is becoming more prevalent within pharma companies, most often within common broad-based channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, just to name a few. While these all have their advantages, particular reaching patient populations, the greatest opportunity lies within targeting prescribers in verified communities that are exclusive to them.

There are 5W's to leveraging social media as part of your digital promotional plan:

- 1. Who:** Social media offers the ability to precisely target by NPI or other prescriber characteristics to ensure your message is only communicated to your desired and authenticated audience.
- 2. What:** Constantly evolving social media platforms provide opportunity beyond a display ad to communicate your message through interactive media such as video, quizzes, and gaming to offer a more dynamic and meaningful experience.
- 3. Where:** Especially when leveraging a verified social media platform, you have the ability to communicate with prescribers where they are engaged and actively participating in a professional manner and mindset.
- 4. When:** Unlike display ad opportunities, your targets actively choose to engage



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within their social platform for professional purposes, collaborating with colleagues in their profession and seeking information and education relevant to them.

- 5. Why:** Demonstrate campaign effectiveness beyond impressions with engagement level data, including behavior change analysis.

There are many digital opportunities that marketers have at their disposal to communicate their message, but it's critical to push boundaries beyond traditional display advertising and look to more meaningful and measurable digital opportunities afforded through social media. Applying a social media strategy as an integral component of any digital plan allows brands to target and validate results. **PV**

*Skipta is the leading social network of specialized online medical communities for verified healthcare professionals. For more information, visit [skipta.com](http://skipta.com).*

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