If You Build It, Will They Come...

A colleague of mine here at the agency shared a fascinating article in our Slack channel with this compelling quote: "I did not go to medical school to sit on my butt for four to six hours a day doing data entry in a computer…"[1] I feel for this doctor. I recall the time when my general practice physician grandfather would know almost every patient's name in his practice, know almost all of their medical history by memory, and could simply give a call to the local pharmacist and say, in effect, "X needs to get a 30-day supply of Y medication." Sentiments like that in the quote make our jobs harder, and language that emphasizes "seamless" and "frictionless" can make it all sound hollow and empty. We have contributed to making physicians feel disconnected from the solution. Although this is an environment where I can ask questions and share information with my colleagues in other offices via Slack, where I can meet clients and/or business partners over Xoom (video conference), and look at my iPhone/iWatch or Fitbit to check and see how many steps I've had today, connectivity does not equal connectedness. Marketers have made the simple complex. We forgot that data creators cannot also be expected to be data collectors at the same time and yet we keep adding on to jobs and not taking them away.

Which leads me to the work that agencies are doing. All too often, great ideas beget tactics and tactics only. Tactics beg for media allocation and the means to acquire and retain audiences. This structure makes an assumption at every turn — that a tactic = connectedness. Marketers are creating more to the idea of connectivity and less to connectedness. We look at platforms and see shiny objects and say we need to be there. We forget that we have to deliver on a need that we can solve, not just acknowledge it.

Keeping connectedness in mind, we all should ask the following out loud more often:

What's In It For Me?

No amount of money thrown at or tactical innovation shown to solve a problem is ever enough if what we do does not think of our target first. Just because we represent a brand with THE best efficacy for the disease state does not mean that HCPs will prescribe the drug 100% of the time. Target-centric communications remind us that we need to solve for AND deliver a solution for that need. Is the solution creating something new because it

Rico Cipriaso
VP, Engagement Strategy
Ogilvy Health

can deliver it promptly and effectively? Then do so. Is the solution to merge into something that is already common in their day-to-day? Then do so.

Will They Change Their Current Behavior?

Many times, the simplest solutions are best. Our task is simply to identify the best tools in the world that the customer base lives in. A blog post from the Penn Medicine Nudge Unit talks about how some simple EHR notifications gave them a 37% increase in vaccinations as compared to the year before.[2] Should we therefore apply the "simple" button in all of our work? Hold that thought. Startups all over the industry that provide the "simple" solution are ones that humanize the process, not just simplify. From addressing HCP/patient experience (Oscar and GoForward) to applying behavioral economic principles like gamification (HealthPrize and CareCognitics), human behavior — or rather, person-centric behavior — is the fulcrum for that change.

Are We Building It To Get Around The Tech Enterprise?

I am fascinated by the growth of MarTech and marketing automation tools. Billion-dollar investments by Adobe with its almost $5 billion purchase of Marketo,[3] or the foothold a company like Salesforce has in this space, puts

all of us in a position to react to a marketing communications stack. Organizations invest money in these tools, yet we tend to build around them, instead of enhancing them. How can we best enhance and add value to the millions spent by our clients? By solving for the human problems associated with the adoption and use of the tech stack.

On the converse, how are organizations preparing for an ever-changing tech enterprise? By betting on people-first technology. Note that even the blue shirts of Best Buy are making healthcare bets based on people-centered technology — think providing services and independence to an aging population[4] and not just selling tech because it comes from their friends in Palo Alto.

We are fortunate to be in an era in which we have many ways to connect with each other. From that super computer we call our phone to the tools inside it that enable us to talk to friends all over the world with one picture or video, we are more connected than ever. Have you ever realized that the only reason why you know a friend's birthday is because you get a notification from your social media app of choice that tells you so? We can encourage one another via text but we forget that there is often greater impact with simple eye contact when talking to one another. Connecting is easy — being connected isn't.[5]

We chose this segment of our profession because we are tackling very human situations. Keeping that human top of mind should make our job easier, not harder, while stretching the possibilities, not limiting them. As marketers, we should always aim to solve for something greater than connectivity. **PV**

Editor's Notes: [1] *https://thehill.com/opinion/health-care/407044-government-health-monitoring-is-causing-physicians-to-leave-the-medical;*
[2] *https://www.pennmedicine.org/news/news-blog/2017/july/when-push-comes-to-nudge;*
[3] *https://news.adobe.com/press-release/corporate/adobe-acquire-marketo;*
[4] *https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/08/business/best-buy-greatcall-jitterbug-phones/index.html*
[5] *https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together*

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