



By Robin Robinson

▶ Google+ Or Minus For Pharma?

TREND WATCH: Will The Industry Use Google+ Business Pages?

No Need to Rush, Experts Say

In June 2011, Google launched Google+ for personal use, and many in the social media industry debated whether a G+ for business would be forthcoming. Not to disappoint, in November, Google rolled out business pages to G+.

The big benefit to G+ business profile pages is direct connection functionality, allowing a consumer to find a page easily by putting the '+' before the business name in a Google search. This will link a person directly to the company's G+ profile — if it has one.

According to Google, it created its Google+ pages for businesses and brands so that consumers can build relationships with the businesses they like and vice versa. Customers can recommend businesses or brands with a +1 or add them to their circle. The businesses can do the same, adding customers to a circle so they may actually interact with the company's personnel and the brand.

Google+ trails behind Facebook in users, but it does have an advantage: it trumps Facebook in its ease of use for creating business page traction, and this could be seen as a huge benefit. The steps for generating followers for a G+ business page are minimal compared with Facebook's "like" process.

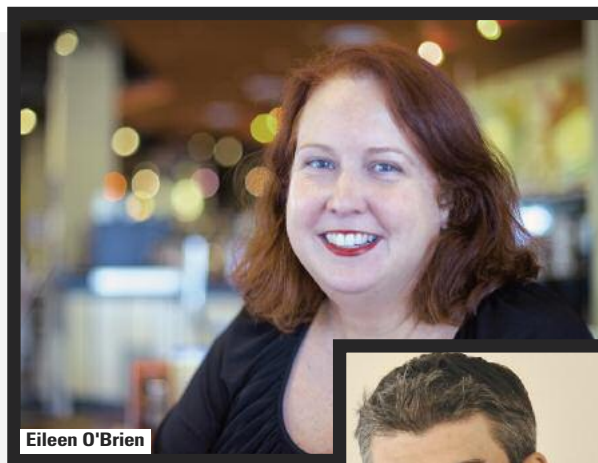
In its first five months, Google+ had more than 40 million personal users and it hoped to reach 100 million users by the end of 2011. Facebook had more than 800 million users and was projected to hit 1 billion by the end of the same year. At press time, only two pharma companies, Roche and Pfizer, had launched G+ business pages — as a way to stop others from falsely using their name, according to reports, rather than to use the social network.

According to Eileen O'Brien, director of search and innovation at Siren Interactive, Metcalfe's Law states the value of a telecommunications network is proportional to the square of the number of connected users on the system, and in that light, there is no need for the industry to rush into G+ for business.

"Google+ does not have the volume right now to make it valuable to the industry," Ms. O'Brien says. "However, Google+ does allow for more sharing, and I can't express enough the importance of pharma using a 'share this' functionality. Providing share-worthy content and making it easy to share is one thing that pharmaceutical companies can do well and I urge marketers to take advantage of this approach."

According to Ms. O'Brien, a recent study reported that website pages displaying the Twitter share button generate seven times more social media mentions compared with those that do not.

A company can have its content shared on Google+ without creating a business profile page. Ms. O'Brien en-



Eileen O'Brien



Jonathan Richman



Wendy Blackburn



Carly Kuper

courages companies to monitor G+ even if they are not using it, since the system does not require verification to set up a company or brand profile page.

Wendy Blackburn, executive VP at InTouch Solutions, has doubts that pharma will, or even should, embrace Google+.

"Personally, I don't think the likelihood of pharma adoption is very high," Ms. Blackburn says. "In most cases, companies are having difficulty with Facebook. Google+ is one more hurdle, and I haven't seen that Google+ offers any specific benefits over Facebook or other social platforms. From a marketer's perspective, it just comes down to where the customers are. Until Google+ reaches more critical mass or in some way offers more for pharma companies than Facebook, I am not convinced the industry has a reason to adopt it."

Jonathan Richman, author of Dose of Digital pharma marketing blog and group director of strategic planning for Possible Worldwide, also questions the value in using Google+.

"The industry's involvement with any social network needs to go deeper than designing a brand page," he says. "As consumers gain more and more control over what information they access via social media, companies need to offer value. A brand page needs to have content that makes people actually want to seek it out. The content



has to be worthy of a Like, a posted comment, or a retweet, and now, +1."

According to Carly Kuper, VP of communications at Communications Media, a wait-and-see approach in this case is a good strategy for pharma, but a company should still be prepared to take action if G+ does take off.

"Right now so many are predicting its early death, even people within Google, that pharma companies will want to wait to see if it is worth the investment," Ms. Kuper says. "If Google+ proves to be a success, there will be a lot of benefit for pharma to participate. Google+ was created to allow companies to take full advantage of data, meaning it has high potential to let us reach those who want to be reached with exactly the information they need. Pharma companies should grab their brand pages now to be ready either way."

▼ For more information, visit plus.google.com/pages/create.

TECH CHECK  **APPS / TWEETS / VIDEOS**

Apps...

PFIZER UPGRADES FLU TRACKER APP



Relief Finder 2.0

Just in time for flu season, Pfizer launched a more robust version of its Robitussin Relief Finder 2.0, a free iOS app that allows users to track flu activity nationwide, find out which product aligns with their symptoms, and locate nearby stores that sell various types of Robitussin products, as well as coupons to use once they get there. This is one of several apps geared toward consumers or healthcare professionals that Pfizer released in 2011.

▼ *To download, visit <http://itunes.apple.com/app/robitussin-relief-finder-2.0/id478944965?ign-mpt=uo%3D6&mt=8>*

Tweets and Facebook....

SALIX USES SOCIAL MEDIA TO BUILD COMMUNITY AND AWARENESS

Salix Pharmaceuticals, a specialty company focused on the prevention and treatment of gastrointestinal disorders, shares condition-related news, provides educational resources on gastrointestinal conditions, and informs consumers, healthcare professionals, advocacy partners, media, and investors of corporate news and events. No stranger to Twitter, Salix joined in 2009, and since then has amassed more than 1,300 tweets and more than 500 fol-



lowers. The company's tweets are notable because they are not used to blatantly promote products or treatments, but instead the company uses the channel as an opportunity to raise awareness of patient resources, such as nonprofit organizations and patient advocacy groups. When it does tweet about a corporate announcement or news, it veils it behind "a new press release crossed the wire today. You may view it by using this link to our website" message, which seems a polite way of saying: here's some news about our company but we are not going to force you to read it.

According to a statement on its website, Salix recognizes the value of social media as a platform for communicating, and it hopes to continue its engagement with social media as it learns more about the needs of its audiences. Salix publicly provides its social media policies via a link on its website, as well.

▼ *For more information, visit facebook.com/salixpharma or twitter.com/salixpharma.*

Videos...

GSK RAISES AWARENESS OF PNEUMONIA RISKS VIA YOUTUBE

In honor of World Pneumonia Day, Nov. 12, 2011, GSK uploaded a video aimed at increasing the

awareness of the threat of pneumonia for children under the age of 5. The video reports that the disease is the world's leading killer of children of that age and there are 150 million new cases each year. Physicians on the video report that every case can be a serious threat to a child's life, in both developed and developing countries. Worldwide, pneumonia kills more children than AIDS, malaria, and measles combined. Although pneumonia is treatable, many children are still dying because of lack of access to healthcare and treatment. The video encourages viewers to share it with friends and family to spread awareness of the disease.

▼ *To upload video, visit youtube.com/watch?v=220AGAPqLCo*



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Mobile Sensing Platform Wins Sanofi Award

Ginger.io, a behavior analytics company that uses a proprietary mobile sensing platform to model patient behavior for different health conditions and symptoms, won Sanofi's \$100,000 Data Design Diabetes challenge last fall, which was aimed at developing a scalable, data-driven product that can benefit anyone in the diabetes ecosystem. The platform automatically monitors potentially dangerous mental health issues through a smartphone app, based on the user's behaviors.

Users don't have to do anything to trigger the platform. It runs in the background and monitors call frequency, location, and text messaging habits to figure out when users are under the weather. Ginger.io Cofounder Anmol Madan collected

320,000 hours of data from research participants' cell phones and discovered what kinds of cell phone use patterns signal the beginning of issues such as the flu or anxiety. Other studies showed a correlation between mood and diabetes self-care.

When a Ginger.io user displays abnormal behaviors, an alert goes out to his or her caregiver network. The app was not on the market at press time, but once it is launched, the company plans to conduct a study to determine whether the caregiver alerts make a difference in diabetes disease management.

Earlier in the year, the company released a similar mobile app called DailyData that analyzes information on the user's location and the frequency of calls and text messages to determine whether that person is having health problems.

▼ *For more information, visit ginger.io.* 