



# Social Media: MOVING FORWARD

Taren Grom

*Social media has become part of every day life for most consumers and patients, and companies need to keep up if they are going to remain relevant within the healthcare continuum.*

**A**ccording to industry statistics, millions upon millions of Americans are using social media — Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, community-based sites, Pinterest, etc. And every day the data show increasing use of social media for healthcare-related concerns.

According to a recent PwC Health Research Institute (HRI) report, use of social networking sites has grown from 5% of all adults in 2005, to half of all adults (50%) in 2011. For example, Facebook, which began with 5 million users in 2005, today has 845 million participants, more than the entire population of Europe. Pinterest, a social image-sharing site using a virtual “pin-board” interface, just hit 11.7 million unique U.S. users, growing from 1.2 million only six months earlier. Twitter has also shown tremendous growth, reporting 460,000 new accounts



**KARLA ANDERSON** PwC

created on average per day. About one-third of consumers are using the social space for health discussions, and Facebook and YouTube are the most commonly used social media channels for viewing health-related information.

*“Social media is becoming operationalized within organizations to incorporate cross-functional teams and create a set of standards and guidances.”*

With so many consumers using social media to research health conditions, find answers to their questions, and search out others with similar conditions, can pharmaceutical companies afford not to be part of the conversation?

The answer is no, according to Peter Pitts, a former FDA associate commissioner and president and co-founder of the Center for Medicine in the Public Interest.

“From a philosophical perspective, healthcare companies need to ask themselves if it is responsible not to be in social media,” he says. “Social

## VIEWPOINTS



### DAVE ESCALANTE

Senior VP, OneKey and Marketing  
Cegedim Relationship Management

#### Know Your Social Media Audience

Identifying a physician's persona will add dimension to social media strategies. Through our research, we found four distinct persona types. Observers have few social media accounts and low activity. Socializers have high media presence and like to engage with others. Specialists are influential on certain topics and spread their influence through blogs and tweets. Thought leaders are recognized as experts and often mentioned online by others.



### ELIZABETH ESTES

Executive VP, Chief Strategy Officer, and Digital Scholar,  
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#### Lessons Learned

Pharma companies learned that as an advertising vehicle, social media offered low cost of entry and niche targeting opportunities, but with

inconsistent and varied conversion rates and ROI. As content and communication platforms, pharma learned that social media was not something that could be done halfway. Creating relevant content on a consistent basis was the biggest frustration heard around the industry. To do things better in 2013, pharma should lead with content and not platforms, invest in video, and figure out how mobile social media fits in their plans.

#### Key Strategic Components

There are two key components to a social media strategy: data and empathy. We live in a marketing world inundated with data. The key is to use what can effectively help create the foundation for strategy, but never forget at the end of the data streams are real people. Empathy in a social media strategy is the ability to find a balance between what we selfishly want these platforms to do for our brands, but to never forget what our target audience wants or needs from us. The key is to always lead with the latter.

### ERIN BYRNE

Chief Engagement Officer, Managing Partner  
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### Creating a Conversation

Pharmaceutical companies have learned that being social involves creating dialogue. They have started to find interesting ways to move from

“listening” programs to conversational marketing initiatives. They also have done a good job contributing to the professional community, engaging different types of healthcare professionals with experiences and information that are particularly relevant. In the future, engaging professionals will become even more critical, as HCPs will reward only the companies that add the most value with their loyalty. In addition, companies will need to find more accurate ways to measure their social media strategies — and their full online health and reputation — so they can optimize the return on their digital investment.

#### Meeting Audience Needs

Successful social media strategies must place the target audience at the center of their planning and cater to meeting each group's distinct needs. By adding value to the user, companies can create brand advocacy and extend the reach of their social media



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*"The fragmented user-generated content that defines social media makes it both highly trusted by consumers and extremely challenging to measure with classic ROI approaches."*

media is where the people are. If pharmaceutical companies allow the playing field to be dominated by those who are either trying to give helpful advice but are wrong or those who are knowingly hawking bad advice, is it responsible for them to watch silently from the sidelines?"

According to HRI's survey, 42% of consumers have used social media to access health-related consumer reviews (e.g. of treatments or physicians); 32% of respondents have used social media to view family/friend health experiences; almost 30% have supported a health cause; 29% have sought information related to other patients' experiences with their disease; 25% have posted about their health experience, and 20% have joined a health forum or community.

This instantaneous communication channel

consists of four unique characteristics, according to HRI that are changing the nature of interactions among people and organizations: user-generated content, community, rapid distribution, and open, two-way dialogue.

These are four areas that fall well outside the traditional communications boundaries of the highly regulated pharmaceutical industry.

Nevertheless, HRI authors say business strategies that include social media can help the industry take a more active, engaged role in managing individuals' health. Social marketing can evolve into social business with the right leadership and investment of resources. Organizations should coordinate internally to effectively integrate information from the social media space and connect with their customers in more meaningful ways that provide value and increase trust. Insights from social media also offer instant feedback on products or services, along with new ideas for innovation. Organizations that can incorporate this information into

their operations will be better positioned to meet the needs of today's consumers.

"Social media is a conversation that offers pharma companies the opportunity to be the first among equals and gain the respect of the people they want to influence," Mr. Pitts says.

According to Mr. Pitts, the social media opportunity may not necessarily or immediately benefit a specific brand. Social media's power is to position a company as a credible and potent source for information and to gain people's trust.

"The days of professional avatars and talking to patients through third parties isn't going to be as potent within the context of social media," Mr. Pitts says. "In social media, transparency is paramount. Companies are going to have to speak for themselves and that's a tremendous opportunity to build a corporate brand."

### Strategic Steps

Most experts concur that although social media carries risks, it also carries tremendous benefits.

"Alas, the healthcare industry has regrettably allowed social media to stymie because of its myopic focus on perceived regulatory risks," Mr. Pitts says. "Moving forward, social media strategies must include a thoughtful examina-

participation. Users pass along valuable content to their own personal networks, increasing message impact. It is also critical that a measurement plan be put in place to prove the value of social media programs and provide objective data to justify investment in expanding social media initiatives.



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### Guidelines for Success

A social media strategy must include guidelines at the enterprise level that clarify what is permissible from a regulatory standpoint. Without this, brands and their agency partners can end up playing a time-consuming and expensive guessing game.

From a technical perspective, it is critical to understand and support the use of APIs for the integration of existing social media platforms. APIs are the glue that holds social media together and connects an individual's identity with his or her personal network.



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### Media Outlets

The most successful social media outlets for pharmaceutical companies depend on the company's marketing or communications objective. The following are two examples of how pharma companies may use social communities to reach and engage with their various stakeholders.

Brand-sponsored patient communities are good examples of how social media can be leveraged to increase patient disease awareness through community outreach, or to deliver expert content and information to caregivers.

On the professional side, healthcare professional communities, such as Ozmosis and Within3, are good examples of social outlets that help healthcare professionals find, connect with, and collaborate with their peers, or exchange medical knowledge among their professional community.



**JIM ZUFFOLETTI**

President  
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### Protect and Invest

Social media is inherent with risk. However not listening or

not engaging is not the answer. A socially savvy company can gain great benefits from the technology, but defining clarity in purpose and intended goals is key to success. Social media is another form of electronic communication subject to the same regulations and laws, and to e-discovery. Before engaging, plan to protect the enterprise.

### Enterprisewide Engagement

Treat your social media strategy like any investment in a new technology or solution — adopt a rigorous enterprisewide approval process, such as the development of a business plan that includes purpose, return on investment, and risk mitigation. It's important to create buy-in at the top levels of the organization. Otherwise, initiatives won't be successful. This requires a full understanding of the value of social media to all levels of the organization.

tion of both the risks and the benefits. It's incumbent on those designing social media programs to bring the people doing medical/legal reviews up to speed on both risks and benefits. The risks are pretty evident, but the benefits are often more subtle and we can't expect our colleagues in compliance to always understand how and why programs are being designed."

"We've seen a change in how pharmaceutical companies are approaching social media," says Karla Anderson, partner, advisory pharmaceutical and life sciences practice, PwC. "Social media is becoming operationalized to incorporate cross-functional teams and create a set of standards and guidances."

Ms. Anderson says this approach gives "permission" to the different teams, whether they are coming from a promotional or non-promotional slant, to use social media in a way that the organization is comfortable with and with the appropriate level of risk.

"Companies that have done this well bring to the table the usual stakeholders of marketing, legal, and regulatory, as well as IT and security, because of the issues associated with privacy and data exchange," she says.

Stakeholder consensus is more crucial than ever given the FDA's stance on providing concrete guidance.

"The first thing to realize is that there are never going to be hard and fast rules," Mr. Pitts says. "If companies choose to wait to see what the FDA says before they take their next steps in social media, they're going to be waiting for a very long time. The Golden Rule for both regulators and the regulated is to be conscientious about first amendment issues and regulated versus unregulated speech."

"The FDA has been very clear that it's not going to offer platform-specific guidance," Mr. Pitts continues. "There's not going to be a Facebook guidance, a YouTube guidance, a Twitter guidance, so on and so forth. The draft guidance the agency put out in December 2011, basically said pharma guide thyself. Some found this very empowering; but many more found it frustrating because there are a lot of people in the healthcare business who want to be told exactly what to do before they do anything. Those folks who prescribe to the Precautionary Principle — or not doing anything until they know everything — are going to find themselves behind the curve."

Ms. Anderson says the companies that are doing social well have put some real investment into the strategy of what they want to do and what they will and won't do.

"For example, companies need to determine the business purpose behind a social media campaign," she advises. "Questions that need to be asked, include: is it going to be focused on branded activities or cross-functional activities? Is it going to be focused at the corporate level, a therapeutic level, or a product level? Once they have answered these questions, then they can start to develop a strategy and a roadmap."



**PETER PITTS**  
Center for Medicine in the  
Public Interest

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The roadmap is crucial, she says, because it provides a starting point, which can ease the anxiety surrounding such a far-reaching initiative.

"By identifying which group to start with and the planned continuum, the organization can start to learn and use the information gathered and achieve a comfort level," Ms. Anderson says. "This information can then be fed back to the larger group."

A key aspect of social media is that it's social, which means that it is a two-way or multi-way conversation, therefore it is going to be very resource intensive.

"Social media programs are not fire-and-forget websites that can be left to run themselves," Mr. Pitts says. "Social media requires people on both ends of the keyboard full time. Many companies don't understand that. Companies understand the investment they need to make on a website or for digital marketing, but just because social media exists on a digital platform, doesn't mean it requires the same level of investment. There is a much higher level of investment needed and not only in marketing and communication, but also in legal and regulatory review because more happens at a faster pace. Social media is not the same as digital advertising."

Ms. Anderson agrees that there is absolutely an underestimation in terms of the resources needed. At the same time, there is an overestimation of what is required in some cases.

"Social media is just like any other face-to-face channel: it needs to be appropriately resourced," she says. "Some companies believe they can dabble in the space, but then they don't get the adoption or the benefit back."

Again, she emphasizes it goes back to how people are defining what it means to participate in social media as an organization and the strategies being employed, i.e., is it being used for talent recruitment, clinical trial recruitment, therapeutic education, customer messaging, etc.

"If done professionally and purposefully, social media requires a broad set of resources and a commitment," Ms. Anderson says. "In some cases, there is an overestimation of the resources that it's going to take."

### Can There be a Social Media ROI?

Healthcare businesses have started to listen to what's being said via social media, but aren't translating social media conversations into prac-

tice. More than half of the companies PwC surveyed worry about how to integrate social media data into their businesses and how to connect social media efforts to a return on investment. Some organizations are capturing sentiment and standard volume numbers on various sites, while others know that they need to go beyond capturing "likes" and "followers" to collecting qualitative engagement metrics.

"At the end of the day, different people are going to different places to get different information," Mr. Pitts says. "And ROI for social media is going to have to be determined in a different way. It can't be looked at in the short term; it's a long-term proposition. And the wonderful truth is that, when it comes to social media, once companies are in it, they can't ever go out. They've got to be there for good — their own good and the public good. They've got to change the way they view communications with their various constituencies. It's going to be much more difficult, but I think in the long run the return is far greater both in product sales and corporate reputation."

Mr. Pitts says if companies look at social media just as a way to sell products, they're going to fail.

"If companies understand that social media is a medium that's going to allow them to be the first among equals, to have an ongoing conversation, to learn as much from what they're hearing as to what they're telling, they'll succeed beyond their wildest dreams," he says. "But if they minimize social media as just the next level of DTC, it's going to be frustrating and fraught with peril."

Jack Barrett, CEO of WEGO Health, says the fragmented user-generated content that defines social media makes it both highly trusted by consumers and extremely challenging to measure programs with classic ROI approaches like panel matchbacks to prescription data.

"But as pharma social media marketing programs scale to significant dollars, ROI is a requirement and new models need to be developed and vetted by social media companies, by ROI experts, by researchers, and most importantly by companies spending on these programs," he says. "As we speak, WEGO Health and Evolution Road are assembling an industry collaborative to create an objective, rigorous architecture for measuring the ROI of health social media. The goal is not to prove or disprove the value of social media or social marketing, but to enable the industry to credibly measure ROI and drive effective optimization. Once developed, the approach will be available to all stakeholders so that they may apply true ROI measurement to their work — ideally on the way to creating an industry standard." **PV**






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