



Feeding the Goat: EQUAL PARTS OPPORTUNITY AND FRUSTRATION

Is it just me or does anyone else have social media fatigue? It seems like we as an industry have spent the past three years talking incessantly about social media. We've wondered about the best platforms. We've stressed over a rogue post that sent our med/reg and legal departments begging for days of old. We've friended, unfriended, tweeted, and pinned. And we've found out that creating content for these platforms is analogous to feeding a goat. You've just fed it but immediately the damn thing is hungry again. It's exhausting. Well, hold on for the ride. 2013 promises to be equal parts opportunity and frustration. Here's a look at what marketers will be discussing throughout the coming year.

FDA Guidelines

It's been over a year since the long awaited FDA "guidelines" for social media made their appearance. I use that word loosely as all they really did was provide one sliver of guidance. Expect the overall ambiguity to continue. It's a brilliant move by the FDA. With the absence of specific guidelines, we as an industry will continue to be reigned in by the imaginary line we have drawn for ourselves. (Which by the way, is different depending on what pharma logo is on your letterhead.) It's like driving on a freeway where the signs say, "there are some rules, just drive and we'll let you know when you break one." People are either going to drive slow and never get anywhere, or they are going to drive fast until they get in trouble. Unless we choose to come together to help shape best practices, things will continue to remain the same well past 2013. (Take a minute and Google: Digital Health Coalition.)

Data/Analytics and ROI

The amount of data we receive from our online marketing efforts today is staggering, yet powerful. It's equaled only by the frustration level felt about how to capture and what to do with it. For 2013, we will see more efforts and technologies being created for organizing and streamlining our data. And while we are wor-

ried about using all of this data through our brilliant insights, we will also have to continue to defend social media tactics through an outdated ROI media model. Too many marketers use a media cost model for determining the worth of their social media investments. That only tells half of the story. Yes, there is the cost of the spend, but there is also the residual value inherent in the "social" part of the media. No one has yet figured out, or come to agreement on exactly what that equation is. Expect those conversations to be debated throughout the year.

Content and More Content

The most consistent theme I hear from marketers throughout our industry regarding social media is their frustration regarding the insatiable need for consistent and relevant content. A focus for 2013 should be about proactively building consistent and engaging content plans, starting with a content strategy, determining the content categories and then culminating with a full calendar. Taking time to create this comprehensive plan, will produce be the most effective return for social media all year.

Mobile On the Move

Just like the physicians, medical professionals and consumers we are trying to reach, we love mobile! In our offices, we talk about "responsive design," "geo-fencing," and "location-based services." We debate screen sizes, optimal rendering, and the virtues of SMS vs. QR codes. As it relates to social media, mobile is a powerhouse. Over a third of Facebook users and over half of Twitter users access their pages via mobile. YouTube has seen a huge increase in the number of mobile video views. From an advertising perspective, Facebook's mobile sponsored stories have higher click-through rates than their online companion ads and are worth serious consideration for a portion of online display budgets, especially with their ability to target niche disease communities, and consumers who have willingly given their demographic information during sign up and their psychographic information every time they

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click "like." In 2013, watch the individual platforms cater even more to mobile users.

The New Social Currency: Photos and Video

Although Facebook is the king of all social media as determined by sheer volume, the queen has been crowned, and her name is Pinterest. Pinterest is dominated by women and is growing at an astounding rate. Actually Pinterest is the fastest growing social network ever. The power of Pinterest is driven its simplicity and it's core deliverable: photos.

My final, yet favorite social media topic over the past year and the one that will lead far into 2013 is YouTube. Thanks to its parent company, Google, YouTube videos are indexed in search, which has made them easier to find and therefore increased the viewing frequency by consumers and clinicians alike.

It's a fun time to do what we do. Challenging, but fun nonetheless. And just as a reminder...it's time to feed the goat. **PV**

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