

## Leading the Corporate Charge \* for Social Media

**LISA ADLER, VP of corporate communications at Millennium: The Takeda Oncology Company, makes the case for social media leadership to start with corporate communications.**



Lisa Adler

➔ **PV: What should the goals of a corporate social media program be?**

**ADLER:** There are many opportunities for companies to engage in social media; generally these fall into three categories.

Certainly, chief among the reasons to embark upon a proactive social media program is to enhance awareness among a company's key patient, investor, healthcare professional, and media audiences. Many of those groups are actively embracing Twitter, Facebook, and blogs as a source of dispensing information, as well as retrieving data. It stands to reason that biotech and pharma companies need to involve themselves within this milieu. As an example, many key life-sciences reporters are quite proactive in tweeting breaking news, presentations at medical meetings, and promoting their own stories that they have posted on their websites.

The second opportunity is creating relationships by engaging customers and other important audiences. Social media can provide a company with an opportunity to respond to and provide others with relevant information, identify potential

needs, and to respond to inquiries. This outlet allows companies to provide the information their customers are looking for and to learn about their experiences with their drugs and their business units.

A third goal is to monitor issues and the competition. The immediacy of news and information — especially when negative — requires a platform for two-way communications, namely a forum to respond to erroneous reports, etc. in a timely manner. Social media, if used correctly, can reach people in a forum that is personal and relevant.

➔ **PV: Should the social media strategy be a "shotgun" approach or be cast more narrowly?**

**ADLER:** The entire premise of social media is about personalization. We can get information, learn what other people are thinking, and give insights all through social media. This is a very one-to-one approach. This level of intimacy is what makes social media dynamic and different from anything we've seen before. It's a new way to think and a new way to communicate.

➔ **PV: How can corporate communications work collaboratively with other company stakeholders?**

**ADLER:** Corporate communications is typically seen as the driver of all forms of communications, both internal and external for the company as a whole, as well as for separate functional groups and products. In our company, corporate communications viewed social media as an opportunity to lead the adoption and execution of an entirely new venue. We created a cross-functional team — legal, regulatory, clinical, commercial, pharmacovigilance, IT, etc. — to develop companywide standards and guidelines for leveraging social and digital media.

We determined a process whereby we are able to conform to all regulatory requirements, specifically capturing and reporting side effects, and actively updating these processes as the FDA approach toward managing social media evolves. In addition, we plan to provide training to all employees to ensure they understand how to engage with social media to achieve business objectives.

Part of the message is to work social media strategies through corporate communications. This will allow us to ensure consistency and adherence to our guidelines and create efficiencies.

➔ **PV: Why is the corporate communications department best suited to lead a social media program?**

**ADLER:** Who takes the lead on adopting, integrating, and managing a social media program is the second-most frequently asked question beyond "why do we need social media?" Creating a presence in this new realm is something that is frightening and daunting to many companies. Because pharma presence in social media is relatively new, there is no clear understanding of where the lines are drawn to ensure regulatory compliance. Generally, the industry looks to FDA warning letters to provide specific guidance about what not to do. I've heard FDA speakers talk about 'new tools, old rules' and that's the approach we believe companies have to take.

Current regulatory guidelines make corporate communications/PR the safest place to start. Making the case for corporate communications leadership is based on the fact that this group is responsible for, and the most experienced in telling the company story. The corporate communications function also is adept at establishing long-term relationships with media, patient, and investor communities, to cite a few stakeholders. Moreover corporate communications is experienced at the implementation of strategic and tactical counsel, along with developing and monitoring company conversations that come in the form of key messages and corporate talking points.

➔ **PV: What value does corporate communications bring to a social media program?**

**ADLER:** As the voice of the company, as well as the engine that drives the corporate visibility among key audiences, corporate communications adds value throughout a social media program in distinct business areas, including establishing relationships — media, patients, investors, healthcare professionals, caregivers, etc. — content development, and monitoring, all within the social media realm.

Further, corporate communications is always on the lookout to identify new media — bloggers, for instance — who are beginning to cover the market as well. Creating social media content — blogs, Facebook content, Twitter feeds — will initially reside within PR, those who are the most adept at creating written content.

Finally, an internal PR team is used to chronicle company news coverage and will extend this expertise to include company mentions on blogs, Facebook pages, and tweets. **PV**

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