



# What Advances in Technology Did TO HEALTH CARE COMMUNICATIONS

Contributed by

**W**elcome to the 21st century — a time period where advances in electronic media have opened new opportunities to communicate with physicians and patients, explore creativity, and help bring the health care world closer together. But as we'll see, there are some things in our business that even the best technology can't do.

## Capturing the Mobile Physician

According to Manhattan Research, about 72% of physicians today use their smartphones to access clinical information, review publications, and participate in educational sessions. Soon, they'll be turning to mobile devices for administrative functions and patient care as well. The mobile physician will no longer be practicing just in the office.

Which means marketers have to figure out how to be where their audience is. Content that used to live in a printed sales aid now needs to be accessible on a laptop, a smartphone, and a tablet. Web conferencing, e-details, iPads—we now have a variety of memorable, engaging learning tools that were unimaginable just a short time ago.

## Boosting Our Creative Expression

Creative people will tell you that inspiration can occur anywhere and at any time. Technology now offers us more ways to collect and share that inspiration. Find an image while walking down the street? Take a picture with your phone and e-mail it to others. Need the perfect audio track? Hello, iTunes. With so much at our creative fingertips, more time can now be spent thinking, composing, and turning these inspirations into big ideas.

As far as execution goes, options have exploded with digital technology. Yes, I can remember when an agency rendered “markers” for presentations. It seems that just a few years ago we were excited about burning

video programs onto DVDs. Now we're talking about things like augmented reality, which we're not sure how to get through our clients' medical and regulatory teams, but we'll try.

## Bringing an Industry Closer

The jury is still out on the subject of whether e-mail, Web meetings, and video chat have actually made us as brand teams more productive and efficient. What's more exciting is that physicians can now collaborate in real time through social networks, reviewing case studies, treatment protocols, and published research—all unimaginable five years ago. And an hour or two spent on a patient community site makes it clear how technology has changed how patients view their own care.

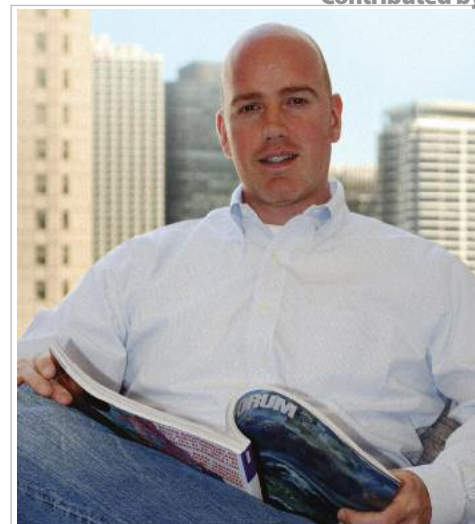
## What Technology Can't Deliver

Before we get too excited, however, it's important to clarify what technology can't do for us. At least at this point in time.

**It can't think.** Technology doesn't change the basics of creating good communication. A strong creative campaign is still produced the old-fashioned way — a collaborative client/agency relationship, a strong strategy, simple positioning, and talent.

**It can't judge good from bad.** Unfortunately, technology has also made it easier to create and execute bad ideas. Because we now have more tools and techniques to play with, sometimes bad ideas pass as good. Marketers need to remain vigilant in pushing themselves (and their agencies) to find fresh, compelling ideas that deliver real impact.

**It doesn't replace face-to-face.** While technology can open doors, capture attention, deliver information, and facilitate interaction, trust is still built in person. So create your YouTube channel, but still invest in peer-to-peer programs. E-mail your agency all day long, but fly them in with some regularity. There's sim-



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ply no technological replacement for building a genuine relationship.

**It doesn't save you money.** Some would say these new advances should bring costs down—creative, production, even administrative costs. Fact is, good content (no matter the medium) takes time and effort. Digital channels require more of it. And since digital channels have yet to replace traditional ones, you have to budget more dollars to add them to your plan.

## Why We're Still Here

The advances in electronic media have left their mark on our industry, and health care communication will never be the same. No longer are we an advertising agency just doing print ads. Today, an integrated plan includes pURL programs, iPad detail aids, search, e-details, branded and unbranded Web sites, and on and on.

And while we can't wait to see what's next, we need to always keep in mind what technology cannot replace. You and me. **PV**

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# Keeping it simple can get pretty complicated.

There's a school of thought that says the best ideas are often the simplest ones. Sometimes we wonder where that thinking has gone in today's health care communications. As an agency, we've seen many marketing communications plans the size of phone books (heck, we've even helped create them). But that doesn't stop us from trying, at every point between initial strategy and final campaign, to keep ideas simple.

## What simple gets you

At the risk of stating the obvious, simple communication is easier to remember. No one has the time (nor the desire) to decipher a complicated message. Simple is easier for your reps to deliver and easier for your customers to understand and act on.

Simply put, simple enables big brand ideas. Not to sound self-serving, but once you get your singular message down, you set your agency creatives free. Free to concept big, breakthrough,

multichannel campaigns. Take a look around—at the heart of your favorite ad lies a staggeringly simple selling idea.



Simple also gives you focus. It keeps everyone on the same page and concentrates their efforts in one direction. Imagine that.

## But why is it so hard?

Maybe simplicity just isn't human nature. Between scientific data, customer research, and market analyses, you've often got more information than you know what to do with. Psychologist William James said, "The art of being

wise is the art of knowing what to overlook." Being wise isn't easy.

Then there's the reality of pharmaceutical promotion. Complex data. Fair balance.

There's a lot to include—but none of it should get in the way of your brand's basic (simple) premise.

Finally, corporate life includes politics, compromises, decisions by committee, and other enemies of simplicity. We get it.

## We can help

Daunting, yes. Impossible, no.

We stick to simplicity every day, and we can help you do the same for your brand.

All it takes is a phone call—simple enough, right?

**5 Strategies  
for Simplicity  
available at**



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