Creating
CUSTOMER-CENTRIC
Brand Marketing Strategies

Building and strengthening customer-relationship tactics can help companies maintain their edge and gain a competitive advantage.

IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH PHARMAVOICE, AMY ASHKENAZI-KIMMEL, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC ALLIANCES AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AT SOFTWATCH INC., AND KAREN KULLER, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AT SOFTWATCH, DISCUSS THE NEED FOR THE INDUSTRY TO ADOPT CUSTOMER-DRIVEN MARKETING APPROACHES.

AMY ASHKENAZI-KIMMEL

Accompanying the shift in marketing focus from product to customer is the advent of the Web and maturing of CRM technology.

In today's pharmaceutical landscape, retaining and growing market share is a greater challenge than ever before. With looming patent expirations, weaker than anticipated product pipelines, and political and competitive pricing pressures on prescription drugs, the product-centric focus of traditional pharmaceutical marketing is quickly giving way to a more customer-driven approach. Innovative and effective ways to build and strengthen customer relationships are becoming top priority for pharmaceutical companies working to maintain their edge and gain a leg up on the competition.

"The strength behind the multichannel approach is that all of the significant data from all the customer touch points can be captured, whether it's from a call center, the Web, direct mail, or surveys," Ms. Ashkenazi-Kimmel says. "All the data can be aggregated in one location, allowing a full analysis of the effectiveness of each channel and the results that are being captured."

Although pharmaceutical companies are beginning to adopt customer-driven multichannel marketing approaches, the silo mentality still dominates.

"It is going to be a tough sell for a long period of time," she says. "I think as brand managers start to recognize some of the efficiencies that come into play by sharing data or sharing approaches to marketing they will be more amenable to this strategy."

Ms. Ashkenazi-Kimmel and Ms. Kuller say accompanying the shift in marketing focus from product to customer is the advent of the Web and maturing of CRM technology. The result is a proliferation of touch points for reaching, attracting, and engaging customers to create lasting relationships throughout a product's lifecycle. Advancements in the area of interactivity and personalization are offering companies the opportunity to engage with important customer segments based on their needs, attitudes, and preferences. In the quest for improved ROI, newer and more targeted forms of communications are

KAREN KULLER

Ensuring that campaigns are defined, implemented, and tracked in a coordinated and consistent fashion increases the chance for marketing success.

encouraged together with traditional mass marketing approaches to strengthen the impact and appeal of the brand experience.

One thing is clear, according to Ms. Ashkenazi-Kimmel and Ms. Kuller, creating long-term relationships in today's competitive environment depends on being able to effectively leverage and manage media touch points both online and off — from TV and print advertising to more interactive vehicles such as e-mail and portals.

An integrated multichannel marketing strategy, which coordinates the execution of marketing programs across these various channels, can help marketers differentiate their brand with the audiences they care about. Marketers can provide an engaging customer experience across the media spectrum, enable better segmentation based on individual attributes and preferences, identify opportunities for advancing personalized interactions with customers, improve customer satisfaction in the delivery and timing of marketing messages, measure the success of individual channels in driving overall campaign effectiveness, and enhance the coordination of related promotional activities between marketing and sales.

It is the promise of improved marketing effectiveness combined with the lure of organizational efficiencies enabled through channel integration that is spurring a growing number of companies to consider a multichannel approach to build better relationships with their customers. However, this growth is not without obstacles.

"One of the biggest challenges is from an organizational perspective — overcoming some of the cultural hurdles to take the necessary steps to implement a multichannel approach and to get past the silo mindset to integrate different systems within and across brands," Ms. Kuller says.

CLOSING THE GAPS

Conducting multichannel marketing involves closing any existing information and technology gaps between the various online or offline channels that make up a promotional campaign. Whether the programs are executed via TV, direct mail, call centers, or the Web, the individual phases of any given program should function as integrated elements of a cohesive strategy that together provide important insight into customers' needs and preferences along the way.

"The captured data give marketers a better understanding of the touch points that are driving user participation and which touch points are successful," Ms. Kuller says. "Additionally, the data about the users can be more comprehensive because information is being combined from disparate data sources."

The SoftWatch executives say perhaps the biggest opportunity of multichannel integration is enhanced measurability enabled through easier data aggregation and analysis. Through integration, marketers gain instant access to centralized data for tracking and measuring each channel's effectiveness in reaching and attracting customers — down to the individual user segment. This is important, they say, considering greater industry focus on choosing the right tools and messages for the right audience.

Ms. Ashkenazi-Kimmel and Ms. Kuller cite a recent FDA survey showing that consumers today are much more likely to go to the Web than call a toll-free number after they've seen a direct-to-consumer advertisement. Being able to capture and measure data can instantly reveal what channel is working most effectively to generate the right user responses, while empowering marketers to make mid-course adjustments that ensure that their campaigns have the greatest impact.

THE ROLE OF THE WEB

The Web's importance in multichannel marketing is based on the distinct role it plays in driving customer-centric strategies. Its interactivity and ease of use makes it one of the most powerful channels for establishing an ongoing dialog to gain insights into customer behavior and drive action. Ms. Ashkenazi-Kimmel and Ms. Kuller cite Forrester Research data that show the Web's importance will continue to grow in the years ahead alongside pharma companies' interest in meeting rising customer expectations and gaining efficiencies via targeted, personalized direct marketing.

"The percentage of the marketing budget that is allocated to Web initiatives versus offline initiatives is going to increase as marketers realize that this is a critical part of the marketing budget," Ms. Ashkenazi-Kimmel says. "The Web wasn't even an available option four or five years ago; marketing was done via traditional offline channels."

According to Ms. Ashkenazi-Kimmel, the Web is a relatively new opportunity for pharmaceutical companies and marketers are just beginning to get comfortable with the medium. They also are beginning to realize that there is a ROI that can come from direct communication.

Further contributing to its effectiveness as a marketing channel is the Web's growing popularity with patients and physicians, the executives say. A recent Forrester Consumer Technology survey reveals consumers' greater willingness to share personalized information on pharmaceutical company Websites in exchange for access to the tools and information they consider valuable. Physicians also are turning to the Web in search of new ways to facilitate the delivery of care or communications with patients. As a channel to these key audiences, the Web offers a highly cost-effective way to deliver targeted important information, messages, and incentives to drive interest in various promotions.

For all of these reasons, Ms. Ashkenazi-Kimmel and Ms. Kuller say no multichannel strategy is complete without a well-integrated Web component. As more of the customer experience becomes moderated through the Web, companies will need to contend with the demands of using the medium to cultivate and maintain relationships that are responsive to their customers' ever-changing needs. According to a recent Aberdeen report, this is something customers increasingly expect: "A company cannot lean on its offline practices to make up for the unsatisfactory Web experiences of its customers. In many cases, an attractive offline charisma will mean little to a customer who interacts primarily via the online channel. Even in light of all the recent talk about the importance of multichannel this and multichannel that, a company's online channel must stand and deliver on its own merits."

The Web's ability to stand on its own merits is significantly enhanced when it operates in tandem with other media to meet customers' expectations for meaningful interactions, SoftWatch executives say. Driving these interactions depends on enabling customers to quickly and easily obtain the information and services they seek — at any given touch point. That the Web is rapidly becoming the touch point of choice for patients and physicians alike only reinforces the urgency of using the Web as part of a more comprehensive multichannel marketing strategy.

MAKING MULTICHANNEL COMMUNICATIONS REAL

Ms. Ashkenazi-Kimmel and Ms. Kuller say the best way to understand the real value that multichannel pharmaceutical marketing brings to bear is through the eyes of the customer.

As an example, they use "Anne" as a case study. Anne is an asthmatic female who comes across a DTC ad in a copy of her favorite monthly women's magazine. The ad directs her to call a toll-free-number or visit a Website for more information. She decides to call and is greeted by a customer-service representative who answers her questions. The customer-service rep creates a profile of Anne that automatically generates a personalized e-mail invitation asking Anne to join the company's online support community. When Anne checks her e-mail the next day and clicks through to the site, she is pleased to see that she does not need to register, because a profile already has been created for her on the site.

Ms. Ashkenazi-Kimmel and Ms. Kuller present another case study: "Dr. Hiller." Dr. Hiller is a general practitioner with a specialization in women's health. She recently learned about the launch of a highly prescribed breast-cancer treatment through a company-sponsored seminar. Dr. Hiller visits the company's physician Website to request more product information. The next day, she receives a follow-up call from her sales representative informing her that a package of information has been sent to her office. Her sales rep also uses the opportunity to let her know that an interactive Web seminar will take place the following week, which she can join to learn more information about the product.

The SoftWatch executives say technology solutions are making such previously unimaginable scenarios possible by addressing the unique informational, communications, and organizational challenges

Addressing Multichannel Communications Questions

What structural changes must occur to support multichannel marketing, either within or across brand teams? And, how can companies close the gaps within their organization to leverage these opportunities?

> The answer lies in the integration of enterprise technologies that together ensure the effective realignment of organizationwide business, marketing, and sales processes around the customer.

A SINGLE CUSTOMER VIEW: All too often, companies operate in information system and database silos, making comprehensive customer data analysis either difficult or expensive. By synchronizing databases, however, companies can elevate analysis to the enterprise level to obtain a single view of customers as they travel across all channels. Regularly aggregating and analyzing customer data puts the customer at the center of the communication or business transaction to ensure he or she gets what he or she needs out of the interaction. Instead of cross-referencing disparate sources of data generated from call centers or e-mail responses, marketers can allocate their resources toward understanding what that data reveal about their customers' health-management or information needs and then be responsive to those needs while they are still pertinent. Obtaining a single view of the customer also can provide analysis for identifying new segments as well as driving more tailored communications to each segment.

SHARED ACCESS TO DATA ACROSS CHANNELS: As most companies have little, if any, coordination in the execution of their marketing strategies across channels, it is difficult to identify customers as they migrate from one touch point to the next. As a result, the customer experience oftentimes can be frustrating. For example, if a customer has had multiple communications with the online call center regarding a product kit he or she would like to receive, and

pharmaceutical companies face in reaching out to patients and physicians across multiple channels.

Companies can start to evaluate the value of multichannel initiatives for their brands by: identifying key audience segments based on their key attributes and how they might change or expand throughout the course of therapy; building campaign messages that specifically address the needs of those target segments for a more personalized experience; understanding how the different channels will work together to create a logical progression toward a call to action that meets the end goal; and considering how data and key learnings can be leveraged across campaigns, brands, and franchises to improve marketing efficiencies and enable best practices.

In the move to create long-lasting relationships — getting and retaining customers — depends on delivering the most valuable experience possible.

"Loyalty is definitely a factor when trying to address such issues as compliance and persistence," Ms. Kuller says. "By creating long-term relationships with customers, a pharma company can identify compliance issues as they come up and improve the likelihood that a patient's experience with therapy will be a satisfactory one. This is because patients who are engaged are also more willing to share personal information about their experience with the product. Pharma companies can use that information to create a more targeted marketing approach that delivers the right messages accordingly."

Multichannel marketing is one way to help drive better responsiveness and measurability. By guiding customers through important decisions about their health, treatment, and prescribing options companies can win their loyalty and trust. And by creating positive, seamless interactions across all touch points, pharmaceutical companies have a better chance of keeping patients engaged. ❖

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then contacts the off-line call center to ask additional questions, current marketing structures would require that customer to outline his or her history of communications online before the agent could provide meaningful assistance. With coordinated data-sharing between channels, that same agent can easily access the online communications and pick up where those communications left off. Similarly, a physician might be pleased to find his or her sales representative prepared to address his questions about a new product because he or she has already submitted them to the medical-affairs team through the company's product Website the day before. Shared access to data across channels ensures a more positive and seamless experience for customers, and ultimately, a better return for companies looking to maintain customer relationships longer term.

INTEGRATED CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT: Customer-data analysis is pointless without a means to respond to the information that is delivered throughout the campaign-management and execution process. Integrated campaign management gives marketers the tools to plan, modify, and deploy campaigns across more than one channel to effectively respond to customers' needs and preferences as soon as they are identified. These tools can, and should, provide access to all promotional elements associated with a marketing program. For the patient or physician, an integrated campaign-management process translates into a more seamless and satisfying experience based on whatever stage of the dialog they happen to be in, or whatever touch point they prefer. Take for example a physician-driven compliance program where patients are encouraged to participate by registering via a dedicated Website and completing a detailed self-evaluation survey. If the response analysis indicates that too many patients fail to complete the survey, the company can refine the campaign in real-time by revising the survey to increase the likelihood that patients will complete the survey. Or, the company might decide to eliminate the survey altogether in favor of a more user-friendly marketing approach.

WORKFLOW AUTOMATION: Automating the workflow of the campaign execution allows companies to ensure the consistent and timely delivery of promotions across media. Too often, because marketing teams work in silos, there is little or no control over the consistency of messages and timing of campaigns executed across different mediums. An automated solution enables companies to appropriately time the execution of each campaign stage, and ensure that the right audiences receive the right message, at the right time, and through the right medium. Automation also ensures that customer responses captured in one campaign stage are quickly followed up with the triggering of the appropriate next stage in the campaign, even if the two stages are executed through different channels. For example, the completion of a self-evaluation questionnaire on a Website by customers could result in the immediate execution of an e-mail campaign with a rebate coupon, thanking the customers for their participation in the questionnaire. If the customer did not complete the questionnaire, but rather requested more information, this response would trigger a direct mailing with a package of information tailored to that customer.

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE: Implementing customer-centric strategies in healthcare always requires careful consideration of the legal and regulatory guidelines designed to protect patient confidentiality and privacy. Key among these considerations is HIPAA, which outlines what administrative procedures and technical safeguards should be in place to ensure the safe transfer or exchange of patient information. Because multichannel marketing relies on using computerized systems as repositories of customer data, any technology solution designed to support such a strategy should incorporate the appropriate security and privacy mechanisms for healthcare.