

By Taren Grom

## Digital Agencies

We asked C-suite executives throughout the digital arena to provide their insights on what the biggest opportunities are for innovation, what the biggest barriers are, and identify a recent innovation that is improving the process.



**LEIGH HOUSEHOLDER**  
Chief Innovation Officer  
GSW

**Opportunities:** We're just on the cusp of really seeing the anticipatory Web come to life. It's a huge opportunity to

create experiences for patients and professionals that put the drudgery of disease management in the background and give them just-when-you-need-it support. It's all possible because of the increasing number of connected things: smartphones, lights, security systems, cameras, and more that are seamlessly connected to the Web. Together, they can sense our actions, locations, emotions, and more, to serve up just the right content at the right moment. Our things are going to start working together in unexpected ways, like a person's sleep monitor might alert a coffee pot to start brewing, which might also reset the thermostat, disarm the home alarm, and take a morning glucose read.

**Barriers:** We work in an industry largely guided by collaborative competition. Cindy Gallop, former BBH chairman, once brilliantly described that dynamic this way, "it's when everyone in a sector competes with everyone else in the sector by doing exactly the same thing as everyone else in the sector is doing." That style of competition can hold us back from taking big leaps, but it's what allows innovation and disruption to come in from the outside. We're seeing that happening now. Huge game-changers in healthcare experience are coming from Ford, AT&T, Nike, and Apple. Those aren't names that were common in our industry even a few years ago. The new rule of engagement is this: act now. Because if you don't do it, Google will.

**Innovations:** One innovation I'm watching right now is UCB's Facebook community. It's single-handedly proving wrong anyone who's ever said pharma can't do "real" social. A team of community managers interact with almost 47,000 fans with "Did you know?" facts and statistics, infographics, illustrations, and big community-building questions. Once the team gets a conversation going, they participate in it, answering questions, and recognizing comments in real time. The best part of the story, though, is the

internal mechanics behind it. When the team started, the company's medical, legal, and regulatory departments needed two weeks to review a post. That timing would have made real, responsive communication impossible. The director brought the social media team together with the medical, legal, and regulatory departments in a half-day workshop to co-create a new process for social channels. The new approach involves educating in-house community managers about the internal and external policies governing the brands' communications. It gives clear guidelines for what they can and can't discuss. Then, they work on their own. That's what innovation looks like in our industry. Forging partnerships across disciplines to ask old questions in new ways. To make innovation happen, you can't take the typical "can we?" approach, instead we have to follow this UCB model and add one critical word: "how can we?"



**KURT MUELLER**  
Chief Innovation Officer  
PulseCX

**Opportunities:** We've reached an age of convergence. "Digital" is no longer a separate channel — it's an integral part of our life and work-

flow. The greatest opportunity is integrating digital into the total customer experience and leveraging it to customize each experience to fulfill the unmet needs of each audience segment, while also bringing audiences together to engage in more relevant and meaningful experiences. The end benefit is better patient outcomes, a world in which everyone wins — marketers, pharma companies, physician practices, payers, and government. What I'm describing isn't a form of utopia that we won't see until 2045 — smart marketers can live in this land right now. It's entirely possible to integrate in-office, out of home, rep, telerep, nurse counselor, mobile Web, virtual house calls, Internet TV, at pharmacy, etc., with digital woven throughout to improve awareness, increase engagement, and drive adherence and advocacy.

**Barriers:** In a single word — complacency. There's a saying "the fear of loss is greater than the desire for


gain." It can be deliciously attractive to play it safe, not do anything, and keep doing the same-old, same-old, which is arguably one of the biggest barriers to innovation. It's easy to blame conservative medical-legal teams, the FDA, or others for turning off the innovation taps, but the gains made through taking small risks can be significant. You need to be performing customer experience audits and journey maps to identify the content and channels your audiences are most likely to engage with along their decision-making journeys. As marketers, it's our jobs to educate medical-legal and brand teams, to develop solid integrated marketing strategies that ladder up to strategic imperatives, which ladder up again to the overall brand goals and objectives. Using these strategies, we can initiate well-defined integrated pilot programs, and drive longer-term big success through smaller quick wins.



**LEEROM SEGAL**  
CEO  
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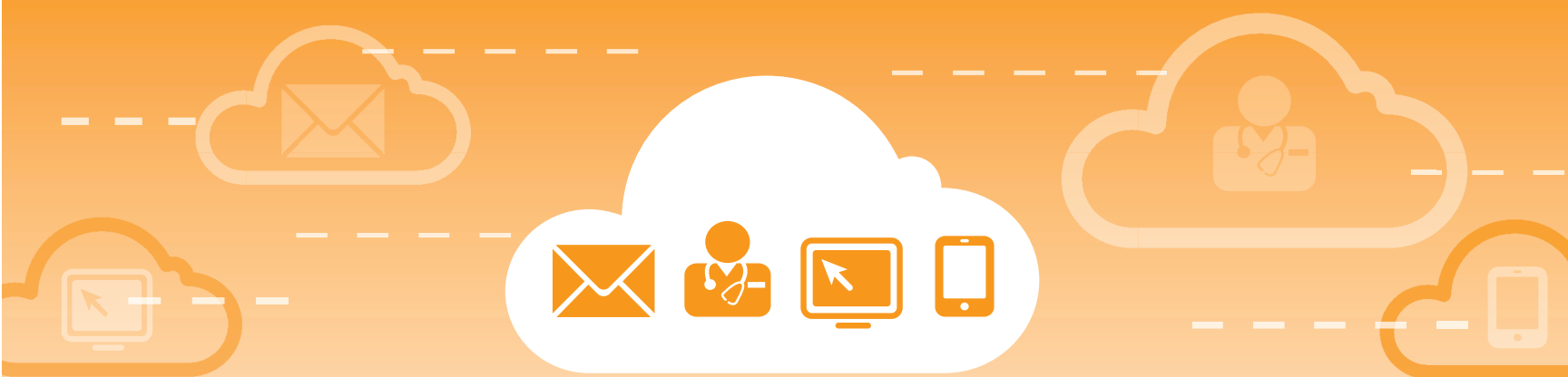
**Opportunities:** We see significant opportunities for innovation in dynamic conversations. In combining expertise in data management, ana-

lytics, software engineering, and user experience design, we can provide more contextually relevant engagement and, ultimately, more effective marketing. This innovation will enhance media and social campaigns, and advance the way various digital brand properties work. Ultimately, dynamic conversations are creating much more efficient and effective brand marketing.

**Innovations:** The idea of big data continues to gain attention and mindshare. Insights derived from big data analytics can have significant impact on almost every sector, including marketing. We're especially excited about the growing use of data to intelligently and automatically trigger experiences and actions in real time, which we call dynamic conversations. As we move even more into a world of continuously generated real-time data — think fitness wearables and on-body computing like Google Glass — the opportunities for personalized experiences and targeted engagement are exploding. 

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