

What **Star Wars** Teaches Us About Achieving **AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT**

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Sometimes pharma marketing can feel like a dramatic saga — there are the good guys, there are the bad guys, there are rebels, people who hide behind masks, and there's an audience who you really want to get on your side. So, in order to show the most important aspects of audience engagement I turned to my all-time favorite movie series, *Star Wars* — as well as to the insights of my colleagues and my own experiences — for the lessons that we can learn about how to do our jobs better — light sabers optional.

Princess Leia and Strategic Consumer Engagement

The most significant and critical shift in marketing today is in focusing on audience needs and preferences, rather than on the tactical aspects of a campaign. This is such a trend that it's one of the hottest topics at any industry conference you attend today or trade magazine you happen to pick up. But what does audience-centricity really look like? It must start with strategy. Princess Leia knew this when helping lead the Rebel Alliance to overthrow the Empire. She didn't start by jumping into a starship and blasting away storm troopers — that would be a tactical move with no strategy behind it. Instead, she strategized the best way to reach their goals, analyzed plans of success, and determined that their only hope would be to bring back the Jedi, a much better tactical plan than a full offensive. True, the first time you see her she's asking Obi-Wan "Ben" Kenobi for help, but there was a lot of standing around in a space-ship board room and brainstorming strategy with the other Rebel Alliance Leaders before that scene came up.

In the same vein, it may look like the tactic

of TV advertising is the best way to reach your audience of diabetes patients, but when taking a step back and looking at an overall strategy for reaching them, you'd learn that socializing and discussing their condition is important and influential to them. Armed with that information, your strategy — and therefore your tactics (perhaps a social media campaign rather than TV) — will likely change.

A successful strategy begins with the preferences and needs of the audience. What messages best resonate with them? What media do they prefer, and which do they have a higher affinity toward? Does email cause them to take action or do they have a better response to direct mail? Most importantly, what void can you be filling for them? As my colleague Paulette McCarron, senior VP, group media director, has said, "as an industry we need to shift from talking about audience-centricity to actually being audience centric. We have the intelligence and we have the resources so we have to just go for it."

A strategic, customer-centric approach shouldn't just be the best practice, it should be the only practice.

Stay Away from the Dark Side — or at Least Stay Out of the Dark

Know — don't guess, know — what media channels engage your target audiences. This information is available here and now, not in a galaxy far, far away.

I can take my client's target file and tell them exactly which channels will not just reach but

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engage those very prescribers. Pharma marketers need a deep understanding of their physicians' media behaviors.

The tools we have at CMI/Compas, including Media Vitals, help us understand what those behaviors are like. Rather than starting with a tactic, we start with the brand's own strategy, situation, and challenges, and match the appropriate segments and tactics against that strategy. James Woodland, our chief operating officer says "it's knowing your customer, whether patient/consumer, caregiver, prescriber, and having a granular understanding of their wants and needs, and then

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being able to execute your tactics on that granular level.”

Having the ability to execute to such a precise level can allow you to accomplish the impossible, just like Luke being able to destroy the Death Star with one shot. A single shot that was with the right weapon and targeted perfectly (using the Force helped too).

Stay Flexible — Or You'll End up Frozen in Carbonite

In Episode V, Han Solo thought he was joining his friend Lando Calrissian in friendly territory, only to discover he was betrayed by his old friend and had fallen right into Darth Vader's trap. It wasn't Han's fault, sometimes the best intentions can go awry despite the wealth of information you have at your fingertips. So it's critical to be flexible. Take stock often by having a measurement strategy lined up before campaigns start, and look at results as often as possible. If something isn't going quite how you had hoped, don't wait until you're frozen in carbonite, be ready with a plan B and a plan C to change tactics while still keeping momentum. Adam Scott Roberts, CMI's senior VP, group media director, explains, “some brands run a lot of advertising without first identifying true success measures, leaving them in the dark around what works and doesn't work. Understanding and creating success measurement is key to informing optimizations that will drive results.” In addition, anticipate the potential outcomes of various investments, and plan in advance what you will likely do as a result of any one of those outcomes.

Align your team to know what engagement trends to look for and what signs mean it's time to shift tactics. If only C3PO had known to look for the signs and warn Han, rather than just whining that something didn't seem right.

Sometimes The Original is Better

It's also critical — so critical it's almost become a cliché — to diversify your media. Mul-

tichannel marketing is much more effective than investing in one vehicle in nearly every case. Yes, digital and emerging media are hot; but new is not always better. Need proof? Just look at Episodes I through III compared with Episodes IV through VI. Sometimes traditional is better than new.

Be Bold: Know When to Ignore or Listen to Yoda

That said, it can be just as dangerous to only stick with the “tried and true” and be hesitant to try new things. Our industry has long been criticized for sitting on the sidelines and not jumping into new media. But we're in a unique position on the sidelines today in that it gives us a view of the whole picture, and perhaps the opportunity to jump into emerging media before even non-pharma industries.

Yoda famously said, “Try not. Do ... or do not. There is no try.” However, this is one lesson we should ignore. We should be trying lots of tactics in pharma marketing precisely because in the past we have not jumped in. As Susan Dorfman, chief marketing and innovation officer says, “spray and pray doesn't work. You can't blindly blast a message and feel confident that your job is done.”

We know that we need more targeted media today, and emerging media offers endless — often untapped — possibilities.

In emerging media, we've seen all that can go wrong and can go right. Others have made their mistakes, and we can learn from them. We understand the risks and the rewards. And we are in the position to look at the very early stages of new media in development and see how we can participate.

Pharma leaders — and remember there is enormous clout in being among the world's top advertisers — should be meeting with media startups and incubators early and often to see how we can work together.

Startups need larger corporations to guide

and mentor them and are aching for investors. By starting at the start, we can influence and ensure that their plans keep MLR in mind, leading to a much more pharma marketing-friendly experience. And even if we don't invest at that high level, marketers can keep their eyes and minds open to newer opportunities and consider them as ways to engage audiences as part of the overall strategy. After all, pharma is the industry that is curing cancer, certainly that is tougher than marketing that same cure?

As Luke says to Yoda later, “I don't, I don't believe it,” to which Yoda replies: “That is why you fail.” If we don't push ourselves to find the path to utilizing emerging media, we close ourselves off to high-potential paths of engagement.

Leave Them Wanting More — and Partnerships Can Deliver More

I'm awaiting the release of the seventh Star Wars movie with both excitement and trepidation. I want to love it as much as Episodes IV through VI, and so I'm hoping that the partnership of J.J. Abrams and George Lucas does just what we do with our clients to make sure there is no disappointment. So J.J. and George, if you're a PharmaVOICE subscriber, please listen up — and I mean listen up: keep your ears open to what your customers want, and your eyes open to how they behave, because both factors are critical in delivering the content that they truly need.

Above all else, what Star Wars has taught me about audience engagement is that you can't lose with a winning story. May the Force be with you. **PV**

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CMI/Compas is the indispensable strategic media planning and buying partner helping pharma reach and engage key audiences across patient/consumers, caregivers and prescribers.

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