



Why Small Ideas are Now THE BIG IDEA

Today's pharmaceutical marketers need to weave many small ideas to touch each patient at the right place and time.

For decades marketers looked at “big idea” and “reach and frequency” as the cornerstones of their campaigns. Today a one-size-fits-all idea repeated at top volume no longer qualifies as a complete marketing strategy. Top brands look for ways to seamlessly integrate into their customers' lives. Yet in our industry, healthcare — a business more personal than any other — many still continue following the old model.

Relationship Adjustment

Our audience's expectations about what it means to have a relationship with a brand have changed dramatically. We need to stop looking for this one magical big idea and start thinking about having conversation with — not talking at — each individual physician, patient, or caregiver at each point in our relationship with them.

I believe in creating many small ideas that braid into narrow-casted campaigns that become woven into the tapestry of a brand. Individually, each element may not seem like much — a healthy eating app, a geographically targeted disease microsite, a monthly compliance text — but together they bring to our customers the right part of the story at just the right moment.

Take a Bite from Apple

Who does this well? I'm afraid to be cliché, but our friends in Cupertino, Calif. Apple excels in creating an ecosystem of tiny brand interactions, offering value bit by bit while ushering the customer into the “magical” brand experience — until the day the customer realizes she's conditioned to interact with her device dozens of times a day.

“Ha!” you say. “Pharmaceuticals don't work that way. People aren't interested in interacting with a drug brand.” If so, it's only because we've spent a century blasting them with one-size-fits-all “big ideas.”

Go to a park, and you'll see dozens of people jogging with FitBits on their wrists. This is just one example of how we make hundreds of health decisions every day and are constantly seeking support in making them.

A carefully created brand experience — brand tapestry — should constantly intersect with that search and seek a way to support the customer.

Customer Service is the New Marketing

Surrounded by generics, we can't hang our hats on medication benefits alone. We have to consider how the services around each brand are defined within the context of everyday life — giving physicians an interactive module to prescribe, curating content to help patients understand their condition, and chiming in when a patient is eating out or food shopping with relevant suggestions. Think that might change outcomes?

We have an opportunity to redefine who we are — from selling pills to creating new treatment paradigms, medications alongside with tools for compliance, education and interaction calibrated and targeted to fit each individual's circumstances. Customer service is the new marketing.

Our success is going to be judged not based on a share of voice or how many pills we sell, but on the degree to which our audiences are engaging with our brand, the degree to which they are motivated by those interactions, and how healthy they are as a result.

Creating a Tapestry of a Customer Experience

Every marketer wants to be Don Draper and come up with an immortalizing stroke of genius. But Don belonged in a different century, when the toolbox was limited and expectations were simple. Today, marketing is as much science as art, and raw creativity isn't enough. It's still important, but it takes a new

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kind of skill to create the perfect tapestry of customer experience.

Our skills are tested to the limit trying to keep up with the infinite combinations of human circumstance. But in this new paradigm, we have an opportunity to offer each person his or her own concierge brand experience and improve their health outcomes. How great is that?

Weaving a perfect brand tapestry is more challenging than coming up with one “big idea,” no doubt. One human, after all, is far more complex than any tagline can encompass. But for anyone who got into this business to improve lives, the age of the tapestry of experiences offers an exponentially greater chance to do so. The payoff is well worth it — one individual at a time. **PV**

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