

» MARKETING: UNBRANDED PROMOTION

UNBRANDED STRATEGIES

MOVE FROM THE BACK SEAT TO THE DRIVER'S POSITION

In the future, the use and the value of unbranded promotion and messaging will continue to grow.

**Leigh Householder***GSW Worldwide*

"The second biggest metric in pharma — behind sales — is sustained behavioral change, which means inspiring people to adopt healthier behaviors and adhere to treatment."

We reported earlier this year (May 2010) that the unbranded message is making a comeback; our experts say this movement is being driven by more stringent regulations, increased FDA scrutiny, and new online communicating opportunities. Looking toward the future, thought leaders predict that the use and the value of unbranded strategies will grow.

"Unbranded category-connected messages are making a comeback," says Nick Colucci, president and CEO, Publicis Healthcare Communications Group.

According to Mr. Colucci, volume and share of non-branded ads increased in 2009 from 2008; driven by increased regulation, FDA scrutiny and new online communication opportunities.

"With relationship marketing gaining in popularity, more marketers will realize the return of unbranded efforts as a way to begin the dialogue and enhance the problem/solution category dialogue and educate customers," he says.

In a world of well-differentiated

**Dave Ormesher***closerlook*

"To create trusted relationships, pharma will invest more in providing value to patients through unbranded communications."

products, experts say unbranded strategies become more important and useful to patients and the pharma companies sponsoring them.

With increasing governmental scrutiny to provide economical healthcare, pharmaceutical marketers will be increasingly held to providing more for their consumers, beyond simply the drug/product itself.

"Unbranded marketing strategies are going to be huge," says Todd LaRoche, executive VP, managing director of creative, Palio.

**R.J. Lewis**

e-Healthcare Solutions Premium Advertising Network

"The content and offerings found on unbranded sites often speak more directly to the patient's needs and offer more value."

"In short, the more a product can 'own' the disease state for which it is made, the more the brand will occupy the minds of consumers, from providers to physicians to patients."

R.J. Lewis, president and CEO of e-Healthcare Solutions Premium Advertising Network, reports that unbranded educational disease sites are very popular online in large part because so much more can be communicated.

"The content and offerings found on unbranded sites often speak more directly to the patient's needs and offer more value," Mr. Lewis says. "This trend will continue and strengthen."

Unbranded efforts will become a much more important component in the overall strategy for pharma, predicts David Ormsher, CEO of Closerlook Inc.

"The rise of 'participatory medicine' means that engaged patients want a trusted and comprehensive source of health information, not just approved branded messaging," he says. "To create trusted relationships, pharma will invest more in providing value to patients through unbranded communications."

The second biggest metric in pharma — behind sales — is sustained behavioral change, which means inspiring people to adopt healthier behaviors and adhere to treatment, according to Leigh Householder, digital strategist, GSW Worldwide.

"This won't be accomplished through branded sites and tools that are abandoned after launch," she says. "Instead, it will happen by spreading information and inspiration throughout our lives in sustained, unbranded communications and tools."

One of the big challenges with unbranded strategies is determining ROI, says Ken Ribotsky, president and CEO, The Core Nation. Unbranded messages will definitely be in the mix for quite some time, but ROIs will undergo closer scrutiny.

For good reason, Mr. Ribotsky adds, as brands that are third or later to market in their category will not find unbranded messaging viable.

On the other hand, for brands that are — or aspire to be — market leaders, the use of unbranded advertising is an excellent path

that allows marketers to connect with their customers, says Jay Bigelow, CEO, MicroMass Communications.

"With the rising tide of consumerism and social media, customers are looking for brands that are authentic and stand for something more than selling a product," Mr. Bigelow says. "Disease education, social movements and causes, charity events, online social communities, and the like all help create awareness among general and specialized populations, and in turn, enhance the image of a brand that supports them."

Consumers these days are looking for relevant information, not marketing messages, and any marketer worth his or her salt will provide good content over sales pitches, says Elizabeth Estes, executive VP and chief strategy officer, GA Communication Group.

"The most successful companies will realize that consumers, which include our physicians, nurses, office managers, decision makers, and patients, do not join social networking sites to be inundated with selling messages from brands," she says. "It's about

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creating relevant and engaging content for the audiences, not them."

Additionally, as expected, people don't live in a vacuum or silo their experiences from online to offline — authenticity and transparency will be paramount to success in both places, she adds.

Unbranded efforts allow for greater creative flexibility and unbranded patient communications will continue to play an important role in driving disease state awareness and the overall disease category. ♦

PharmaVOICE welcomes comments about this article. E-mail us at feedback@pharmavoices.com.

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