

Enter the Age of the E-READER

E-readers are the perfect device to deliver more engaging, emotionally connecting, or richly informative content to patients in the form of an e-book, short story, newsletter, or e-magazine.

According to a September 2011 poll¹, one in six Americans now uses an e-reader. And, of those who don't yet own one, one in six plans to buy one in the next six months. These trends mark a significant shift in the way we consume content, and represent new opportunities for health marketers looking to engage patients.

So What Is An E-Reader?

E-readers are everywhere. Included among the ranks are Amazon's Kindle, Barnes & Noble's Nook, and Apple's iPad tablet. These portable devices are designed primarily for downloading and reading books, newspapers, and magazines. Many e-reader owners say that owning the device has changed their reading habits for the better, helping them read more than ever before.

The e-reader is, at its core, a content distribution and consumption channel that mainstream publishers have already tapped to great success (and to help stem losses due to the decline of print). E-readers also represent new opportunities for the way healthcare brands will communicate with patients.

Tap Into the Patient Experience With E-Reader Content

The standard gamut of interactive marketing vehicles — websites, mobile apps, social media — typically provides opportunities to share in small bits and bites. Often consumers don't read the well-written content that gets posted to your websites. It's not an attention deficit. It's that PC and mobile screens just aren't made for easy-on-the-eye, long-term reading.



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But e-readers are different. These purpose-built devices reduce or eliminate eye strain. Plus they are light and portable enough to be held with one hand, just like a real book (with the possible exception of the iPad, depending on how much upper body strength you're packing). E-readers are the perfect device to deliver more engaging, emotionally connecting, or richly informative content to patients in the form of an e-book, short story, newsletter, or e-magazine.

The "patient experience" often involves a good deal of questioning, searching, and learning, from a manageable but life-changing diabetes diagnosis to facing a rare and terminal disease. These are patients who crave content, answers, and help — from lifestyle tips to emotional advice to disease and treat-

ment news. These are patients receptive to interesting, educational, and even entertaining information that's portable and accessible. This is exactly the type of content you can deliver through the e-reader.

Be There When They Need Your Content Most

You'll see patients reading content on their e-readers in waiting rooms, hospital beds, at home, at work, and just about anywhere they might have a free moment to spend learning about any aspect of their condition or treatment. Not producing content for e-readers means you're missing out on opportunities to reach patients at the exact times they're thinking most about their diagnosis or treatment.

Contributed by

Year-to-Date Change in Revenue by Category (May 2011)

Category	2011 YTD (\$M)	2010 YTD (\$M)	Percent Change
Adult Paperback	473.1	576.4	(17.9)
E-Books	389.7	149.8	160.1
Adult Hardcover	386.2	504.1	(23.4)
Religious Books	252.5	227.8	10.8
Children's/YA Hardcover	198.1	211.4	(6.3)
Adult Mass Market	185.1	264.8	(30.1)
Children's/YA Paperback	163.5	192.5	(15.1)
Downloaded Audiobooks	36.5	31.2	17.0

YA = young adult

Reference: Paperback and e-books rank #1, #2 in trade market while K-12 school curriculum market shows growth in

AAP Publishers'

May 2011 report. le Association of American Publishers Web site. <http://www.publishers.org/press/41/>; accessed October 18, 2011.

Here's an example: Consider Mary, a 45-year-old patient diagnosed with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (MS) 10 years ago. She doesn't let her treatment or diagnosis define who she is, but she's highly engaged, connected online, and looking for new information. She spends time learning about new advances in care, health tips, and inspiring patient stories. Would Mary download an e-magazine that offered content for patients with MS? Absolutely, because she can read it anywhere. She can even carry it into the waiting room on appointments with her doctor.

Planning and executing e-reader experiences requires some careful consideration to ensure the finished product is worthwhile and informative to patients.

Kiss the PDF Goodbye

When content was originally developed for electronic distribution, it was difficult to ensure that every user had the same experience. The portable document format (PDF) was a way of sending out files that worked on all kinds of computers. PDFs continue to be a useful and viable way of distributing everything from memos to newsletters.

Modern e-book readers can read PDFs...but it doesn't mean that they should. The PDF is a locked format that doesn't reflow properly for smaller screens. Try looking at a PDF on an iPhone. It gets tedious scrolling back and forth and zooming, right?

Many interactive campaigns offer PDF downloads for patient education materials and support that are accessed from the Web. But the time is right to start including certain content in more modern formats that are optimized for the modern e-reader screen. It's a richer and more meaningful experience for the

patient, and it provides ongoing engagement opportunities (especially if you've incorporated interactive features).

Newer formats will allow readers to dive deeply into the information and stories that matter to them. We write very short content for e-mail campaigns. This is the opposite approach. Instead of writing extremely short messages, we can articulate a more comprehensive idea or brand message. These devices make it easy to flick through the content (if it is formatted to flow properly). PDFs are not formatted for this kind of user experience.

Certain pharma assets like the PI may almost always be locked in a PDF. But other content may be appropriate for new formats like ePub. Your content and legal teams will need to get together and view content on iPads, Nooks, and Kindles.

Make Your Content Interactive

It's a mistake to think of an e-reader as simply a digital book reader that just duplicates the print experience in a digital format. Check out publications like *Wired* and you'll see what we mean by "make it interactive." *Wired's* iPad version builds interactive elements into the magazine layout, successfully creating a bridge between digital and print that makes their product more interesting to read. The same principles *Wired* has applied to its e-magazine can work within patient communications from healthcare brands too. You can include video, infographics, slideshows, links to web content, and other multimedia features in your patient e-magazine.

Respect the Patient's Time

It goes without saying that reading a

longer story or magazine requires more of a commitment on the part of a patient than, say, browsing a website. When we say "respect the patient's time," we don't mean keep things short and sweet. If that works for the story you're telling, go for it. But what we really mean is to offer value to the patient that's congruous with the amount of time they need to invest to consume your content.

If your e-book or magazine is long enough to take several sittings to get through, you'd better be offering content that's unique, useful, and connected. By investing the time required to produce content that's truly valuable, patients will be willing to invest the time required to hear your message and act on it.

Next Steps

This is a new channel for rich-media communications that will take some time to develop properly. For every well-executed magazine like *Wired*, there will be dozens of e-failures. Our industry tends to take a wait-and-see approach to new media channels, so we'll probably observe as mainstream publishers work out the details.

It is, however, the right time for you and your team to actively interact with e-reader devices. That's right, you need iPads, Kindles, and Nooks. These devices will soon define a new content delivery channel, so you need to understand the experience.

So share this with your senior leaders and put in a request for iPads. Tell them it is part of your long-term strategy to deliver rich-media content to mobile devices. It'll enable you to reach both consumer and professional readers in a unique and engaging way.

And when you get your iPad, Nook, or Kindle? Drop us a line. We'll help you get started with some engaging e-reading materials. PV

(Editor's Note: 1. Harris Interactive Poll

<http://www.harrisinteractive.com/NewsRoom/HarrisPolls/tabid/447/mid/1508/articleId/864/cnl/ReadCustom%20Default/Default.aspx>)

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