

# Measure Once, CUT MANY TIMES

**I**n carpentry there's a saying: "measure twice, cut once." It's a cautionary tale of making sure you do it right the first time. In digital healthcare marketing, we're not carpenters; we can keep cutting.

In his February 2012 letter to potential investors Mark Zuckerberg introduced the world to Facebook's "Hacker Way," which involves continuous improvement and iteration.

Supporting the Hacker Way, Facebook's Analog Research Laboratory has come out with several posters with slogans that reinforce and drive this mentality. One of the posters, my favorite, reads, "done is better than perfect."

This concept, of course, is the opposite of how a carpenter would view the world. In carpentry you can cut a piece of wood too short to complete the job, but in marketing technology and innovation we're not carpenters and our medium is not wood.

In the digital world, the technology is constantly changing. There are new devices and operating systems and coding requirements. We are building apps and websites in a digital environment that could evolve and be profoundly different from when we started or even a year after we launch.

A house can stand on solid ground for 50 years. In digital we start on solid ground, but sometimes that ground moves during construction.

Don't believe me? Check out how many times you get updates to the apps on your iPhone. Is it because your app wasn't perfect when you got it? No. It's because technology changed and teams of technologists are trying to ensure that your 99-cent app is working perfectly on iOS7. All you have to do is accept the update.

## What Is Perfect?

Wikipedia was once compared to a "legitimate" encyclopedia. Several articles were chosen at random and analyzed for accuracy, completeness, and a few other traits. As you might have guessed, in the end, Wikipedia lost the comparison. But here's the catch. By the following day Wikipedia had fixed all the flaws in the comparison articles while the printed "legitimate" encyclopedia could not be changed. Wikipedia has since grown to 287 languages

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with over 4.3 million articles in the English version alone.

Pharmaceutical marketing and technology is a bit different though. There are things that we have to get right. Healthcare is not the place for shaky foundations.

Health apps must be accurate. Doctors and patients depend on the accuracy of medical app's and websites. A wrong decision based on shaky data can literally mean the difference between life and death. This is not the place for pretty good; it's the place for perfect. So let's articulate the line between done and perfect.

Core data and functionality must be perfect, nobody would argue with that. But should you hold up an app for weeks, months, or even years for a feature that is not core to the app's purpose? If it's accurate, helpful, and fills a need, how many people are you not helping by delaying the launch for something that can come in phase 2, or even phase 27?

Sounds crazy, right? Ever see a product come to market you thought of years ago but just never got around to building? Unfortunately, I've seen apps and websites sit in professional committees so long that the technology moves ahead.

Months can quickly blur into a year, as the brand team obsesses over pixels and features while the need goes unmet in the marketplace or, worse yet, is met by someone else.

Not too long ago, I saw a brand team lose a competitive advantage by endlessly tweaking their website. The data and information was fine, but the drop shadows weren't droppy or shadowy enough, so the site languished. Incidentally, the competitor wasn't winning any design awards, but they were serving the needs of their target HCPs.

## Move Fast and Break Things

So how have engineers solved this marketing dilemma? Again we look to Facebook for inspiration: "move fast and break things."

Paraphrasing Zuck's take on this: Moving fast enables us to build more and learn faster. However, as most companies grow, they slow down too much because they're more afraid of making mistakes than they are of losing opportunities. If you never break anything, you're probably not moving fast enough.

There are certain things you need to get right, particularly in the healthcare industry. Don't rush the important stuff, especially if someone's health depends on it.

Let me assure you of one thing, your app will never be perfect. Even if it launches pretty close to perfection, the digital landscape will inevitably change. The foundation under your perfect website will shift and settle. Perfect technology rarely stays perfect forever.

Your carpenter wouldn't install broken windows on a new house anymore than I would release something with broken health data.

Our digital process is iterative and focused on the important stuff. We measure, we cut, and we do it again because we are in the business of helping patients, caregivers, and HCPs, and failure to launch helps no one.

And don't worry about perfection in every single pixel and cramming in every feature. It's digital, you can push an update. Your consumers will be happy to see you care enough to keep updating and improving your stuff. **PV**

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