

Digital marketing: *the road to*



Digital marketing in the pharmaceutical & healthcare industry is reaching boiling point. After six or seven years of interest, it's going mainstream and instead of "Should we go digital?", pharma & healthcare companies are now asking "How do we do it successfully?". We think the next seven years, leading up to 2020, will be crucial in this endeavour.

Featuring the views and experiences of industry experts from inside and outside of pharma & healthcare, this series of four white papers from PharmiWeb Solutions looks at how pharma can make the right decisions about the technologies, devices and skills necessary to develop effective and measurable digital strategies. This will be the key to gaining competitive advantage – from now, to 2020, and beyond.

Five tips for successful digital marketing in pharma: the role of internal sponsorship, systems and processes

Executive summary

Underpinning every successful digital marketing strategy are skillfully managed systems, processes and relationships that hold everything together and without which your digital strategy simply will not achieve the results you require.

Key to managing systems, processes and relationships are the following:

1. Win high level support and getting experts on your side
2. Empower reps: Give the appropriate content and accountability
3. Capture insights and demonstrate value
4. Plan for the right technologies, techniques and pace
5. Make it business as usual

Support from the top: gain internal sponsorship

Achieving buy-in for digital marketing at a high level isn't just essential for securing the requisite budget - it also sends a powerful message to the whole organisation that 'we're doing this, it's going to happen'. In pharma and healthcare, in particular, where there is a culture of caution, senior level sponsorship is key to helping create the momentum for change.

"Moving an oil tanker from left to right is not a swift move," says **Ian Lapsley of Phillips**. "There needs to be a group of people who pioneer the direction and create a compelling vision. Running trials will also help gain the trust and confidence of the board. And the pharmaceutical industry is used to trialing!"

It's crucial that this senior management support is also sustained and wholehearted to really optimize the chances of an initiative's longer term success. Half-hearted attempts lead to partial implementation that fails to get results. **"That's when you end up with 'told you so', the 'not invented here' syndrome, and people covering their backs with 'well, it wasn't my idea',"** warns **Paul Hartigan, Chief Executive of PharmiWeb Solutions**. "It's very hard to move forward from that."

This is a view shared by Ian Lapsley, who states "Once the decision is made, management must support and continue to invest in that decision as an ultimate goal," adds **Ian Lapsley**. "If you're going to do it, you should sign up as an organisation and drive it through by resourcing it both in terms of finance and people's capabilities.

Dabbling in it and then pulling out is a waste of time and money."

A decorative graphic at the top of the page consists of several 3D cubes arranged in a grid. Most cubes are light blue, but one cube in the center is a vibrant orange, making it stand out. The cubes are set against a light blue background that fades into white.

Driving momentum on digital initiatives will not only come from sponsorship from the top but also advocacy, at an early stage, from experts within key functions like digital and medical-legal. With their expertise they can potentially help identify any potential barriers and what's feasible and what's not.

Identifying 'unblockers' is something that is working well for **Angus Evans, Senior Brand and Customer Manager at Merck**, as he explains:

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The medical legal process is there for a good reason but its appetite for risk, or what they perceive to be risk, is very low. I've got an advocate who knows the SOP like the back of their hand, and they challenge and help me drive through proposals in peer discussion with the medical legal team. ”

Angus Evans, Senior Brand and Customer Manager at Merck

Having experts on your team who can participate in discussions about digital activities is essential for both informed influencing and to inject some fresh thinking.

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We need people with knowledge in terms of just what is possible. I always involve the medic right from the concept stage. It helps us get the medical team's buy-in, because it's more than just the medical director involved and because they can see it progressing they feel engaged. If something is particularly contentious you discuss that one thing at the time rather than five things being contentious at the end when you're excited about what you have in front of you and the medic says 'no you can't do that'. ”

Carolyne Dyson, UK Marketing Director of Archimedes Pharma

Empower your reps: give them appropriate content and hold them accountable

Currently a lot of the focus in digital marketing in pharma is on optimising field force effectiveness. A big driver of success here lies with the quality of rep training, support and measurement of sales rep effectiveness to foster greater accountability.

Carolyne Dyson emphasises the importance of remembering that not everyone is comfortable with technology. “You can train them but what they actually do on a call is down to them,” she says. “It’s up to the individual to get used to that technology and how to use it to interact with customers. Gaining trust and buy-in from team members who aren’t ‘turned on’ by technology is about training, supporting, setting expectations and then measuring against them.” There are ways to find out what parts of the technology are being used and for how long, for example, which is a little bit ‘Big Brother’ but important.

“Expect it to take longer for those team members to get up to speed. Think about taking away the old aids so they have nothing to go back to. At Archimedes we may have made a mistake by saying that for the first month our reps could use both.”

Equipping reps with the tools they need means keeping them up to date with information, in the context of the company’s strategy. **“All our face-to-face promotional materials are now communicated to customers using iPads,”** says **Chris Wilkinson, National Sales Manager of Galderma UK**. “Our main priority is ensuring we keep the reps furnished with the very latest data and product details and the messages we’re trying to get across, so they are speaking from our strategy.”

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But you do need to strike a balance – they only get so much time with the customer, so too much granularity, too much detail and you’ll lose your message ”

Chris Wilkinson, *National Sales Manager of Galderma UK*.



Capture insights and demonstrate value



Paul Hartigan explains how the insights reps gather on calls should be linked back into the company database and CRM systems and used, claiming, “...the technology is the glue that holds it all together, enabling pharma to create cost-effective, customer-centric models and demonstrate them.” Not only does integration help close the loop and allow refining of strategy and messaging but it also helps isolate the impact of digital marketing and demonstrate ROI. Specifically, it can help secure senior buy-in and unlock the resources needed to push forward with initiatives.

Companies need to measure in such a way that they can prove that digital marketing is adding value using a combination of hard and soft metrics. The challenge is identifying which results are due to digital initiatives. As **James Wintermann** puts it: “Are the reps doing a better job with the message, or is the doctor simply into technology and therefore finds it more interesting?” For **Paul Hartigan** you can see the impact of digital versus traditional techniques and measure ROI “by tracking the sales data or prescription rates over time and looking at these figures against the cost of the programme per brand or period.”

“Most companies probably just use the basic metrics, like the number of hits on a website, or following patient blogs.” admits **Carolyn Dyson**. “Others are taking evaluation further. For example, there is software available for iPads that tells you which pages were used, and for how long, and where the conversation went next.”

Using the number of hits on the website as a metric is unreliable in terms of gathering solid, meaningful data. “If you have a sales team of 20 and they are on the website three times a day, you can’t separate external hits from internal hits, or tell who were patients and who were professionals,” points out **Carolyn Dyson**.

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The other angle is qualitative research of the customer base – what do they think? What do they want more of, and what’s missing? You can monitor by media consumption and checking where customers saw your messaging and how they received it, comparing traditional and digital media. ”

To measure impact, you need to analyse the right data and derive insight from this.

“Knowing that a doctor spends more time with a certain patient means what?” says **James Wintermann**. “A peer whose sales force uses iPads recently told me it’s making a difference because the reps get more time with the customer but they haven’t fully understood whether that translates to better results. They have all the data, but it’s hard to prove definitively that as a result of using a different technology the rep got more time with a customer which led to better message retention, for example. And if it did, does that translate to a behaviour change?”

Have a plan for the right technologies, techniques and pace

Rushing the implementation of a digital strategy to keep up with peers is not a prescription for success. It's better to take time selecting an approach that's right for the organisation and its customers, and execute it at a pace the business is comfortable with.

Ian Lapsley recalls a conversation with a peer in another industry whose company was 'always a little bit later in doing things than most' but, Ian says, "When they make the decision they see it through and make sure it's a success. Are you really in it to win it? Or are you in it to see whether you like it and then get out if the pool is too cold?"

Carolyn Dyson agrees: "You need enough resource to do it properly. I could have put our sales force on iPads several months ago, for example, but I would never want to devalue it like that. I would rather wait and do it properly."

There is also virtue in deciding to apply existing formats rather than innovating. **"You can be a pioneer and try to change the world, which is difficult and expensive and holds no guarantees to success, or you can build your future longer term strategy with your key partners and the end user using the framework and structures already in place,"** says Ian Lapsley. **"If a major organisation tries to pioneer something, there's a high level of risk, not least because customer acceptance might not be there. Applying tried and tested formats to your business model is probably the most sensible route for manufacturers and suppliers transcending from the traditional trading patterns to a hybrid or, ultimately, new trading pattern."**



Make digital 'business as usual'

Digital marketing is more likely to be accepted and used successfully by an organisation if it isn't seen as a 'weird new geeky thing'. "It needs to be made normal - just another way of doing sales, marketing, and customer support," according to **Paul Hartigan**.

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Don't make too much of a deal of it, then it's not really such a big change. It's actually the same data from the same clinical trials you've been talking about, but just demonstrated in a different way. ”

Carolyne Dyson, UK Marketing Director, Archimedes Pharma

Paul Hartigan recommends innovating at a business process level, to make digital marketing part of the 'way we do things here' and adds, "digital strategies for major brands and new products should also be built into the sales and marketing plan from day one".

Final thoughts

How robust are the systems and processes underlying your digital marketing strategy? All the sexy devices and engaging customer experiences in the world won't achieve the value the digital strategy was designed to achieve without a solid foundation of systems and processes. You may have got high level buy-in, for example, but you then need to keep up the momentum. You may have decided to make the transition to digital, but you need to consider whether the time is right.

The successful implementation of a digital marketing strategy is directly related to the extent to which these five key systems and process areas have been addressed and how sustained these efforts are.

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**Thinking outside the industry:
use digital internally to improve process efficiency**

Carolyne Dyson, Archimedes Pharma

We use digital technology to underpin better localisation by efficiently and cost-effectively sharing knowledge between countries, enabling us to quickly fine-tune messages and approaches. In the early 90s we used to fly all over the globe to marketing meetings but today nobody has the time or money for that. We have global SharePoints and blogs based around specific brands, allowing all of us to see materials being used in different countries and it's definitely effective. Sharing information digitally allows us to overcome different challenges, for example, tailoring a presentation to what's permissible in a particular country. ”

In the next white paper we discuss:

- The technology and strategic decisions that will play the biggest role between now and 2020
- The key actions every company should be implementing right now
- The importance of collaboration
- How to keep the patient at the centre



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