10 ways to enhance your multi-media programme

A practical guide by James McNulty

A multi-media programme is a powerful tool that can inspire customers, via education and involvement, to understand your brand values, so, making a positive contribution to the way your brand is perceived and used. It works on many levels – it allows the representative a great degree of flexibility in communicating in any face-to-face situation; can be given directly to customers as a distance-learning tool; or for them to use as a teaching aid.

The most important thing your multi-media offering must do is gain and maintain the viewer’s attention, encouraging the viewer to actively learn, ie, continue to progress through the programme by enticing them to see what is available and how the information is cross-referenced within the programme, so, building a rounded picture confirming that it is not just a ready reference source but something that enhances the experience of actually ‘gaining’ knowledge. It must have content that interests them.
## 1. PREPARATION

The first, and probably the most important step is preparation. Done well, it makes the whole process run more effectively and produces a better end programme. Sadly, because of the multidisciplinary nature of these projects, there is a tendency to start with a committee – try to avoid that at this stage.

The brand manager, being led by the marketing plan, should prepare a comprehensive brief and collect any support materials that may be required (eg, detail aid, clinical papers, market research, campaign tactical elements, field intelligence). The programmer will ultimately want a complete set (otherwise time is lost chasing colleagues for copies later) so you may as well get into the discipline right from the start!

The original set may be added to as other specialists contribute, but it is better to establish clear goals as to what is to be achieved rather than add-in ideas later. A sound framework allows for clarity of evaluation of future suggestions, which if not in line with the original goals can be rejected without causing offence. It is easy to spend a lot of time in later meetings because a clear brief was not thought through at the beginning, but colleagues are going to be helpful so direct that helpfulness to planned goals.

Understand and communicate the true nature of the programme – why are we really doing this, and will the viewer see value in the content? This consideration will determine not only content, but who should contribute, complexity, time to be taken, cost, and even who should attend the briefing.

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### 2. RESOURCES

Before writing the actual brief, you need to have a reality check on the resources available, or to be acquired, to address the planning issues you have identified (see table, page 3). This is going to require consideration and accepted or rejected. Now you can write the final brief with clarity of thought and purpose. Whilst this is receiving internal approval and buy-in to provide the required support, consider who should be present at the briefing meeting. Who attends to give and receive the brief will depend on the true nature of the programme, in particular, its complexity in terms of content and usage. Generally, the brand manager and the agency personnel who will be directly responsible are a minimum requirement, but consider the potential for having representation from medical, or sales training, or a KOL, as appropriate, to add value and depth to the discussion.

Confirm a date and venue for the briefing meeting, but don’t do it as part of something else – give it the space and value it demands. Collect all existing content, eg, campaign materials, clinical papers, and video footage all as far as possible, electronically. Confirm new content to be created (this is not a think tank meeting, you have already rejected some ideas). Objectives, requirements, budget and timelines should all be specific to the demanded outcome of the programme.

In regards to the presentation of the brief itself, you have your own personal style as to how these things are done, so play to your communication strengths. Set the tone of the programme and inspire your audience. But whatever else you do, a written brief is mandatory. There will be people not at the briefing who will become involved – they need to know what is and what isn’t required, unless you enjoy repeating discussions that you had at the earlier stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The keys to preparation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Which elements in the marketing brief are to be supported – marketing, sales, communication objectives?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What are the goals of the programme? What data needs to be presented? Can the data be prioritised?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Which elements of the SWOT analysis are to be supported/addressed?</td>
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<td>• Who do you want to influence and what outcome is required?</td>
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<td>• What are the ‘insights’ you have from market intelligence that will influence the audiences’ expectations and reactions to the programme?</td>
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<td>• How do you want the programme to be used – by the representative or by the HCP themselves?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What is the true nature of the programme – sales support, education, training, for use by who and how will they use it?</td>
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<td>• Collect copies of all existing materials that will be the basis for the programme</td>
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<td>• Consider what new content may be required, eg, video from an upcoming satellite symposia</td>
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<td>• What does your customer expect to gain from the programme, ie, are you clear on how the content should achieve this?</td>
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<td>• Is the budget appropriate for the tasks you are planning?</td>
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<td>• Develop a delivery date and a draft timeline to give an idea, at this stage, of what you would like</td>
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<td>• Write an outline brief and get your managers input, so you can move to the next stage with confidence.</td>
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### 3. BRIEFING

The input you have received will allow for the first or draft brief to be augmented, the marketing goals confirmed, budget agreed, and the whole subjected to management approval. New content will have been created (this is not a think tank meeting, you have already rejected some ideas). Objectives, requirements, budget and timelines should all be specific to the demanded outcome of the programme.

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### Done well, preparation makes the whole process run more effectively and produces a better end programme

### Your multi-media offering must gain and maintain the viewer’s attention, encouraging them to actively learn
4. NAVIGATION PLANNING
The key to keeping interest and progression throughout the programme and giving the representative and/or HCP a rewarding experience is to create an architecture and navigation plan that allows ease of transfer to related thoughts as the learning progresses, and ensures any section is easily referred to, whether next in line or cross-referencing to an earlier section.

The produced programme will act as a tool for your sales representative to assist in delivering the brand messages. The sales representative should have immediate access to all the data contained in the programme, with minimal interaction. Allowing immediate access to all the content will ensure the presenter can adapt to any questions that may arise during the meeting. The navigation contained in the programme should be intuitive to ensure ease of use. If possible, the messages that must be presented should be arranged to form a ‘critical path’ within the programme. The presenter can navigate along this to deliver all the key messages for the brand/product. Additional navigational branches can be added at specific points in the programme if more detailed data is required.

The first stage in the creative response to the brief is to produce a storyboard. This demonstrates the plan of the multi-media, confirming all tactical elements will be included in their proper place and be easy to find (intuitively linked is best, but logically will do). This acts as the first reality check that the team who will create it has understood the brief and true nature of the programme. Feedback and clarification on communication issues will save time later.

Consider that there may be data that is shared by several sections – make sure they can all share it to make updates that bit easier.

5. CONTENT
This is the king of any programme. Content must answer the viewer’s fundamental question – ‘what’s in it for me?’ Content can be translated as the visual element, its integration into the programme and the text to be used.

In today’s environment we expect to see information presented on a computer screen – we tend to trust it, and we expect to be able to access data from a variety of sources immediately (eg, clinical trials, KOLs current thinking, patient case histories and, of course, brand campaign visuals and claims).

That is both a strength and a weakness, because we absorb information using different attention spans for electronic vs. paper-based media. This arises from the ‘internet experience’ where we tend to surf the information and store relevant items for future retrieval. It’s human nature – knowledge comes in two forms, you either know the answer, or you know where to look for it. Customers cannot carry their books and paper records around with them, so much is committed to memory. Electronic storage devices allow large reference works to be easily retained and used. Creation of good copy and video will define the personality of the programme. Do not be afraid to re-write existing copy, because you will be using several sources that were originally separate – they must now all be part of one whole.

Once all the messages that need to be delivered have been identified, it is a good idea to prioritise them. This will enable you to allocate appropriate budget and decide which techniques are best suited for delivering each point. For example, creating a ‘top five’ list of messages that you want the audience to remember (above all others) will focus the time spent on the production of these areas.

6. DESIGN
Multi-media is a televisual experience – think cable TV, not a book. Sections can be switched as fast as channels – hotlinks bring complementary information to the attention of the viewer much more easily than referring to an index (or in this case, menu bars). The aim is to entice the viewer to participate in the programme through design. Flow and movement are essential, whether video or animated graphics.

Consider which sections or individual pages are complementary and if colour coding enhances the perception of the programme. Hotlinks – consider whether they are appropriate within body copy (in some contexts they can look ugly). Is it best to provide menus or hot buttons that list suggested related information? A key point is that if a viewer takes advantage of a link they must always be able to return to the exact page they originally diverted from without having to use the menu bars.

The look and feel should complement the campaign style – whether it is the same or more subtle in the use of colour and typeface, both of which are predicated by the initial planning about usage and end-user benefit.

The existing brand identity of a product is an ideal starting point when producing the design for the multi-media programme. This ensures consistency across all the different
media used. A clean, professional design will engage the audience and help deliver the messages. Subtle animation effects can be used, but avoid anything that will detract from the content. A short, high impact introduction is a useful technique to grab the audience’s attention and prepare them for the presentation itself.

Security levels must also be planned, as being appropriate to usage, eg, selling aids may need to be more secure than teaching aids. Discs can always be copied, but if you want to ensure that only your brand disc would actually play, there are techniques that can be employed – ask your IT people.

Look and feel – it should be user-friendly, approachable and practical.

7. VISUALS
A multi-media programme is, above all, a dynamic visual medium. Include video or annotated images and graphics wherever possible. However, use movement within backgrounds with care, because the message is more important.

If you include video from symposia of KOLs, consider including a brief view of your exhibition stand/surrounding city – the viewer may not have been to the meeting and might like to get a feel for the ambiance. The specific visual techniques used to communicate can be videos, animations, graphics and charts to best suit the programme content and style.

The produced programme will act as a tool for your sales representative to assist in delivering brand messages

8. TEST DRIVE
In the final stage of approval, allow time for a test drive. This can be via an advisory board, market research interviews, asking a regional manager to field-test (to gather comments on practical usage) and customer response. Consider the responses gained, and fine tune the programme before final medical sign-off.

Collect FAQs to study the programme to see that it answers them effectively, as it should from your earlier preparation – but this stage is also of value when making your presentation to the salesforce, because you can quote real-life situations where customer questions/concerns have been answered using the programme in a way that would have been more complex with a paper-based response.

9. PLAN FOR UPDATES
Once the programme exists, keep an open mind regarding new content. Enhancing existing information for each sales cycle can be a very economical way of refreshing the sales push. Consider adding a new KOL video from the latest symposia and new graphics from published papers. Have you ever seen a brand manager talking directly to customers?

Set up a positive feedback mechanism, so that field experience can be acted upon providing updates that mitigate concerns, or better still, actively address arising opportunities. Updates demonstrate the dynamic nature of the brand – it’s exciting and people are talking about it.

10. INSPIRE THE SALES FORCE
Your programme now has to be put in front of customers – you are not going to do it, other colleagues are, so your final task is to inspire them to communicate your vision of the brand qualities.

Four areas suggest themselves:
• Regional managers buy-in
• Quality training
• Professional presentation at sales conference
• Regular update on success stories (email programme).

Do not simply walk through the presentation and leave it for them to work out – you’ve lived and breathed this programme for months, so share that knowledge. With each group and in each setting, demonstration of content should be followed by identifying FAQs and showing how they can be answered. Invite questions from the audience and answer them and provide tips (from the test drive) on sales techniques/approaches that work in practice.

Get feedback directly from the representatives and use field letters to communicate good ideas in different settings, eg, detailing, exhibition stands and groups. These make the programme live and breath in the minds of your colleagues.

Multi-media is a powerful tool, yet one which is difficult to do well. But remember, it should be fun and not a chore, so when used, it will inspire.

Maintain interest by creating a navigation that allows ease of transfer to related thoughts as the learning progresses

Remember what inspiration feels like?
So do we.

It’s partnering with people who share your energy and enthusiasm.

It’s the thrill of exploring endless possibilities with others who match your imagination and vigour.

It’s people who inspire people to reach higher and achieve more – together.

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