



# Multichannel Matures

Most healthcare marketers understand the need for their programs to live in a range of channels. Now comes the hard part: Balancing their efforts across the multichannel spectrum. Michael Spitz offers some advice to marketers who get the “why” but need some help with the “how”

By 2015 we were supposed to have flying cars and vacation homes on the moon. Alas, few prognosticators other than Arthur C. Clarke understood that the actual technological revolution would come in the form of communications: satellites far above, cables deep below and microcomputers in our pockets connecting billions of people with information and one another.

The incredible power placed into the hands of consumers has profoundly disrupted verticals from marketing to music, from publishing to production. Indeed, entirely new business models have evolved centered around dynamic two-way communication between brands and audiences. As hyperpersonalized touch points have become ubiquitous, our brave new digital tools and devices have colonized one of the areas where it can potentially count the most: healthcare. The “creative destruction of medicine”—as envisioned by Eric Topol and brought about by the digitization of health around the quantified self—reverberates through health IT, genomics, connected health, personalized and telemedicine, gamification, wearables and biometrics. Digital health leads the way from treatment to management to prediction to prevention.

Fittingly, digital health now leads the way for healthcare marketing as well. Professionals, patients and caregivers have the same expectations in health as in other verticals, and the industry is slowly but

steadfastly starting to meet expectations. The challenges are abundant due to a fragmented IT landscape—not to mention understandable regulatory and privacy concerns. Fresh multichannel opportunities nonetheless abound, centered on big data and smart strategy.

## Eyes on the audiences

Historically, the approach to multichannel marketing has been discontinuous and fragmented. That’s not surprising considering how new channels have entered the media mix at various times and with varied degrees of success: Print, broadcast, e-mail, websites, display ads, SEM, geo-targeting, apps, social—each channel has its own strategy, content, success metrics and specialty vendors, creating quite the cacophony for brand stewards herding these many media cats.

The inevitable result has been inefficiencies through redundancy and lost opportunities in terms of maximizing the pharma or healthcare brand’s relationship with its audiences. But healthcare audiences naturally access information and interact across countless touch points and numerous devices. Taking an audience-centric point of view is foundational for every effective multichannel campaign.

Not unlike a solid digital health strategy, a powerful multichannel campaign begins by understanding your own brand goals and audience behaviors across every milestone of the health and wellness

trajectory. The classic journey from symptoms to diagnosis to treatment to adherence to advocacy must be mapped to patients’ communication habits and ultimately tied back to preset goals, driving their overall experience—and the experiences of their physician and other influencers—throughout the campaign.

## Go with the user flow

Starting with user flows for each segment helps identify all available touch points and best integrates all the otherwise-disparate campaign components. For example, 77% of online health seekers begin their Web session at a search engine. Based on their queries, patients and caregivers are then pointed toward specialized health portals, information sites and social platforms. The objective for multichannel marketers should be embedding contextually relevant and compelling content that ultimately drives patients to an informed point-of-care conversation with their physicians.

On the HCP side, the challenge is twofold: providing authoritative and useful clinical information while somehow supplementing and often replacing personal promotion in this era of the sales-rep-barring physician. By engaging HCPs with relevant content and offering value-added personalized support in the form of everything from clinical resources to patient education and reimbursement materials, a multichannel campaign transforms into a lasting high-value brand relationship.

Connecting the dots and harmonizing the many HCP/patient/caregiver touch points is similarly essential. The piecemeal method of developing tactics for each segment and channel in isolation must give way to a holistic approach that acknowledges the countless dependencies and organic flow between audiences and their preferred forms of engagement. From search to e-mail to specialized sites, brand teams need a single contact, a “person behind the curtain” to strategize and manage their otherwise-chaotic Digital Oz.

## Data and digital fingerprints

To continue the analogy, the Wizard’s power is all in the data. Measurement opportunities abound and proven analytics tools help identify users, where they are coming from, what they do and ultimately the desired shift in their mind-set. Creating and driving targets toward a singular and simple call to action heightens engagement and determines overall campaign effectiveness.

By integrating every channel in a multichannel campaign on the back end, brands can begin to create a digital fingerprint of their targets in aggregate and, in some cases, on the individual-user level. With help from customized metrics, analytics and reporting programs, data sets shift from rows of numbers on a spreadsheet to dynamic profiles of actual-user behaviors. The result is actionable intelligence that goes beyond “time on site,” instead revealing a consumer’s actual engagement with a brand in the multichannel environment.

That shift in focus—from media tactic to patient benefit—infuses the best multichannel campaigns with digital-health might. Under-

standing the relationships between touch point and tactic along the patient journey also optimizes the overall mix and customizes experiences at each milestone based on specific segment needs, behaviors and ever-evolving expectations. Such an approach also elevates a healthcare or pharmaceutical campaign to the level of other campaigns in other, often far less important verticals.

## The step-by-step plan

- 1. Create actionable brand goals:** A multichannel marketer’s ultimate goal within healthcare is to match patient with treatment. You might need to educate audiences about the disease, symptoms, diagnosis and your particular solution. You might also need to provide support, encourage adherence or build advocacy. Regardless of the end goal, however, your call to action for any campaign should be straightforward for the target and discretely measurable.
- 2. Map the audience journeys:** After you determine where you want your audiences to go and what you want them to do, your next step is to thoroughly understand where they’ve already gone and what they’ve already done. The traditional Field of Dreams belief—“build it and they will come”—has now succumbed to “build it where they are.” This augments their legacy behaviors and allows for the multichannel marketer to further embed relevant content.
- 3. Build tactics from the inside out:** Combine brand goals with audience behaviors to build tactics based on the needs of your targets rather than on those of your vendors. Track your audience trajectories from search to platform to page to program to app to advocacy and then retrofit your tactics to help guide users to your customized content and dynamic calls to action.
- 4. Begin and end with data and analytics:** Be sure that each tactic is designed to be measured, and measured by design. Learn everything you can about your audience at each touch point and integrate your tactics so that the output of one experience becomes the input of the next, enabling profiling, dynamic content creation and customized experiences. Routinely analyze the success of each element and the campaign overall to optimize and refine targeting.
- 5. Incessantly explore new tactics:** Welcome to the digital-health version of *Through the Looking-Glass*, in which our protagonist chases after the Red Queen who runs in place just to be sure she can stand still. The emerging tech of this month becomes the must-do channel of the next—so pay close attention to meaningful use and EHR integration, prescription apps and wearables. Today’s frisky new start-ups could be tomorrow’s Masters of the Universe.
- 6. Keep your ultimate end users in mind:** Patients! As they interact with our multichannel content, we get to know them better—and as we get to know them better, we provide them, their caregivers and their physicians with increasingly personalized experiences designed to improve and extend life. Talk about closing the loop on a noble mission! ■

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## SkillSets

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