

POVs from five sector pros on harmonizing healthcare campaigns in today's complex marketing world

Crossing Channels



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What are the hurdles that healthcare brands face in implementing their multichannel engagement strategies?

Corporate budgets and perceptions of multichannel engagement. Budgets are always challenging but — philosophically speaking — convincing executives that you have to hit several different stakeholders on various channels in our fragmented media landscape, while tailoring messages appropriately for each audience and channel, is also challenging.

All marketers face challenges in enacting multichannel engagement. Within healthcare, there is a confluence of factors, including regulatory constraints, restricting how completely we can engage across all venues. Healthcare is tied to the mind-set that human capital is needed to achieve long-term growth. So healthcare brands overprioritize sales force communications while underutilizing the full range of available communications channels.

It's a mistake to think about multichannel as a new thing; it's just an evolved version of what we've been living with for the past couple of decades. In pharma, the old world was very simple: Buy a heap of TV spots, hire hundreds of reps, take a nap. Now it's far more complex and people are neither trained for it nor resourced to handle it. So people need a way of managing a much more complex marketing world to work together harmoniously.

Orchestrating a multichannel strategy takes time and resources, both of which are at a premium for today's pharma marketing staffs. Despite that, many are making impressive strides in this area because they are concentrating on the factors that matter most: targeting messages to people when they are most attentive, focusing on healthcare channels, and justifying investments through analytical measurement.

Marketing in the 21st century requires an ability to understand your customer and engage on his or her terms. To do that you need the right platforms, data, and messages. Implementing new technologies and aligning the appropriate people with the capabilities are key to that engagement and also where you can encounter your challenges.

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What successes have you seen in terms of brands building meaningful two-way relationships with patients, physicians, and payers?

Connection on sentiment is the sweet spot, pulled through the various audience strains of prescriber, patient and caregiver, and payer. RA commercials often key in on how the disease affects the activities of daily living — not just pain — and thus prepare physicians for a productive dialogue with patients during office visits.

The most successful two-way relationships occur when we have clearly articulated what the brand stands for. It is much more important to foster dialogue with customers than to push messaging out to them. Specifically, in therapeutic areas like diabetes, where the support system for the patient is as critical as the medication, relevant content in the context of the customer's journey will catalyze a two-way conversation.

As is always the case in this industry, I am generally not permitted to talk specifically about any work that is not publicly available. But we have a biotech client, Xenoport's Horizant, for whom we manage all channels from a single strategic POV. We combine print, digital, TV, and sales force efforts as an integrated insight-based strategy having a single strategic POV that is deployed harmoniously across all channels.

In the pharmacy channel we have seen excellent results in terms of patient follow-through with a brand, as measured by analysis of actual prescription data. The nature of multichannel campaigns can make it difficult to attribute consumer response to any one channel, but that is exactly what needs to happen. Marketers who emphasize data-based results will find the most success.

Many of the successes we see are still in the patient and corporate PR space, although there have been some successes within speaker communities at a smaller scale. With only draft guidance available from the FDA, starting and maintaining two-way conversations with our customers is still a risky proposition.

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What multichannel opportunities hold the best chance of helping healthcare brands create better experiences and engage audiences in the most efficient way possible?

Condition-specific patient diary apps can provide clinical and commercial benefits. Clinical algorithms built into a handheld device provide physicians not only with qualitative and quantitative insight into adherence but also can help guide patients more effectively. They can also slow Rx attrition, because often the reason a drug isn't working as it should is because the patient isn't taking it as directed.

Integration is the best path both to efficiency and efficacy. The ability to deliver coherent communications across media types (text, video, audio) and platforms is paramount. Delivering the right message at the right time across all coordinated channels drives brand value; business reputations are built on the type and quality of these engagements. Every chance to make an impression, at every intersection of the journey, is an enormous opportunity for healthcare brands.

"Multichannelness" is most meaningful when audiences are dynamic. You need to reach people whose attention is divided among many devices who are very likely to take a hands-on approach to their healthcare. Think about reaching them at their desktop, remind them about your product during *Modern Family*, offer them a coupon on mobile in the pharmacy, and then, once they are on therapy, send them a series of emails or text messages to encourage adherence.

Considering the number of media choices that are available to healthcare consumers today, marketers need to focus on using channels that will reach people when they are actively looking for solutions, likely to be receptive to the healthcare message, and motivated to take action. It is equally critical to be able to quantifiably measure success and draw a straight line from the channel to the result.

The industry has evolved quickly from this perspective. Multiple third-party vendors now provide "journeys" for customers. We are no longer tied to a mentality of one message in every channel, but can actually continue the "conversation" with customers by leveraging the technology within these platforms. Understanding which channels customers are using and the content they are searching for are keys to providing a more efficient, engaging, and relevant customer experience.