
Life is but



If you still crave the comfort of referring to mobile, social media and other digital components as “channels,” then at least consider renaming them “human channels.”

James Chase reports

Digital advancement is no longer defined by the marvel of technology itself, it's no longer a measure of possibility, of what technology might be able to do for *us*. Now it's about what we, as human beings, choose to do with *it*. Each of us has a unique set of traits, preferences and needs that defines our daily patterns of behavior as we ritualistically switch between multiple digital screens.

As users, we base the success of these interactions on the speed, reliability and efficiency with which we are able to achieve the tasks we set out to do; on their perceived value to us; and on whether or not the experience lives up to our expectations. (Make no mistake, we have become a tough crowd.) So where does this leave marketers? Well, a piece of content that is sharp enough to compete for a spot in these daunting multi-screen schedules might be as good as it gets from now on.

“It's not really about the technologies, it's about behaviors,” asserted Badri Rengarajan, MD, VP, medical affairs and strategic consulting at Evidera, in a panel session at the recent ePharma Summit in New York. “So we have to give patients, physicians, payers, etcetera, a reason to do something.”

Representing the interface and epicenter of every interaction is a digital screen. It's where the magic happens and it's what defines this digital revolution as a human, not a technological, phenomenon.

a Screen

“Forget about devices,” declared David Blair, head of industry, health, Google at a recent Digital Health Coalition meeting in New York. “The world is screen-based.”

Consumer Digital Behavior

As expected, the march of mobile is continuing unabated. The number of Americans using mobile phones to access health information or tools in 2013 rose significantly once more—up 27% to 95 million—according to Manhattan Research’s (mR) Cybercitizen Health US 2013 study. Furthermore, 38% of online smartphone users agreed that their devices were “essential” for finding health and medical information. The same study also found that 45% of online US adults with a chronic disease said the internet was essential to managing their conditions.

Meanwhile, mR’s ePharma Consumer 2013 study showed that among US consumers who own a smartphone and access prescription drug information, 35% used their devices for this purpose in 2013—up 52% over a period of just two years. And the number of corresponding tablet owners from this group that had used their tablets to look up prescription drug information had tripled from just 8% two years ago. Conversely, prescription drug research via desktops and/or laptops by those that owned them had dipped from 91% to 84% over the same two-year period.

With mobile use continuing to climb and desktop at the start of a decline, there is clearly an even greater emphasis on the importance of offering a true mobile experience online. However, after reviewing 160 pharma-owned websites, mR found that a woeful 28% had been mobile-optimized.

Physician Digital Behavior

It’s no secret that the introduction of the tablet, specifically the iPad, breathed new life into the industry’s increasingly weathered sales-force operations. However, it seems there is plenty of room for improvement in providing healthcare professionals

Good, bad and ugly

95M Americans used mobile phones for health information or tools in 2013, up 27% from 2012*

50% of Digital Health Coalition member companies admit to looking at digital as an isolated channel†

\$2M is the estimated wastage for every 10 pharma brands marketed, due to misalignment between the commercial and compliance functions‡

31% of Digital Health Coalition member companies cite “ROI concerns” as the primary hurdle to social media adoption††

28% of pharma-owned websites are not yet mobile-optimized††

56% of Digital Health Coalition member companies report having a centralized digital group working across the organization††

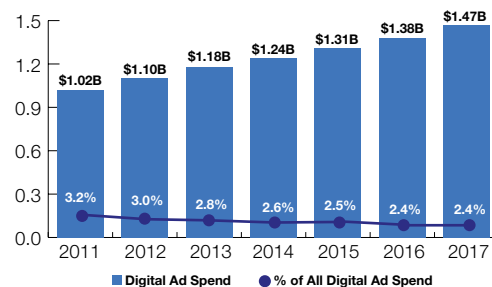
Sources:
*Manhattan Research, Cybercitizen Health US 2013
** Digital Health Coalition/Google Q4 2013 Executive Landscape Study
† Center for Compliance Communication
†† Manhattan Research, ePharma Competitive Analysis Series

with memorable and engaging experiences. Last year, mR’s ePharma Physician study found that while 54% of physicians agreed that tablets make meetings with reps more valuable than those without the devices, reps are not always utilizing the full potential of the devices.

“In the three years since the iPad’s debut, pharmaceutical firms have put tablets in the hands of nearly all of their sales representatives,” said Monique Levy, VP research, mR, just after the study was published.

US Healthcare and Pharma Industry Digital Ad Spending, 2011-2017

Includes advertising that appears on desktop and laptop computers, as well as mobile phones and tablets, and includes all the various formats of advertising on those platforms. Data through 2012 is derived from IAB/PWC data.



Source: eMarketer, Aug 2013

“The challenge now lies in creating compelling content and crystallizing learning moments that physicians expect and at which the devices excel.”

The Innovator’s Dilemma

Overall, it’s fair to say that pharma has come a long way in a relatively short period of time (short in pharma years, that is) but when you consider some of the black marks that continue to tarnish many digital report cards across the industry—such as the well-documented lack of progress with mobile optimization—it sometimes feels as if organizations

Overview



“We talk about customer centricity, but you look at our structures and we are still organized largely around funds”

—Craig DeLarge
global leader,
multichannel
marketing strategy and
innovation, Merck

are not pulling together in the same direction.

Many industry commentators attribute this to pharma’s long tradition of siloed structures, relentless pursuit of revenue and inherently conservative cultures, suggesting these factors are hindering true innovation and digital progression.

In his opening remarks at the recent Digital Health Coalition (DHC) meeting, Mark Bard, co-founder of Digital Insights Group, challenged industry to break out of its historical conditioning: “It’s 2014,” he said. “What’s stopping you from realizing innovation this year?”

Bard doesn’t truly buy into the organizational-structures excuse. A recent survey of DHC members (in association with Google) revealed that 56% of companies already deploy a centralized digital center of excellence to work across the organization. As for culture, “it’s really bizarre when you think about pharma versus other industries,” he said. “Imagine an entertainment company pondering how to ‘manage change’ and ‘fuel digital innovation through culture’ in 2014?”

Bard is also tough on using regulatory issues as an excuse to stymie innovation. “Why spend three years trying to figure out how to use Twitter to promote a brand when you have 50 other tools you can use with no real compliance issues?” he asked. “Focus on what you can do today to support the overarching brand strategy.”

The DHC/Google Q4 2013 Executive Landscape Study returned plenty of other good insights. One rather disappointing one was the fact that 50% of companies admitted that they still look at digital in isolation.

When it came to the greatest perceived benefits from digital communications, the top answer was “Enhanced ability to market and sell product” (94%), followed by “Opportunity to achieve a competitive advantage” (69%), “Cost of doing business today” (50%) and “Improve image and reputation for organization/brands” (38%).

The biggest reported hurdle to social media adoption was perhaps surprisingly “ROI concerns” (31%), but this was followed closely by both “Regulatory concerns” (27%) and “Legal concerns” (15%), so it’s pretty clear where the biggest concerns lie.

Almost two-thirds cited “Legal and regulatory concerns” (63%) as a barrier to greater use of digital communications overall, with the next most popular responses forming a three-way tie between “Budget limitations,” “Risk aversion” and “A lack of knowledge and skills among key opinion leaders.” Regula-

Mind the innovation gap



Given the challenges and limitations of pharmaceutical marketing, it would be easy to focus on what technology is present today and then plan your strategy based on those current market trends. However, if you are planning for 2015 based on mainstream

2014, you will lag behind the market.

A vital part of the strategic and brand planning process is to step outside of pharma to understand what is happening in other industries, and then debate how, or if, the technology will impact the health industry.

And while it’s safe to say that the vast majority of folks won’t be uploading vital health stats to their doctors in 2015, an emerging market of consumers will be increasingly familiar with connected devices throughout the day, increasingly comfortable with embedded sensors tracking their locations (and health data points), and will be using different (and more) devices than they presently are.

So are you ready for the coming age of connected consumers, the Internet of Things, phablets, tablet hybrids, and low cost activity and health trackers?

Consumers are.

Mark Bard is co-founder of Digital Insights Group. The above insights are from a longer article that Mark wrote for MM&M’s website about his experiences attending the CES show in Las Vegas.

tory and ROI concerns figured strongly again, this time as hurdles to increased adoption of online video.

Customer Centricity

While Bard continues to take a tough line on excuses, others believe historical structures and attitudes have a profound effect on the industry’s ability to innovate. And often, the path of digital evolution is seen as being synonymous with the struggles of better serving the customer when it comes to a company’s flexibility and its readiness to innovate.

“We talk about customer centricity,” said Craig DeLarge, global leader, multichannel marketing strategy and innovation at Merck during a recent ePharma Summit panel, “but you look at our structures and we are still organized largely around funds.”

Arguably the toughest love of the entire ePharma program was dished out by Jeff Conklin, VP marketing and sales, HIV, at Bristol-Myers Squibb. “If [the industry] weren’t so egocentric, we’d reach out and partner a whole lot better,” he told delegates. “What frustrates me is that we talk about it and we talk about it, but we haven’t done a damn thing. And the first person to do that will win.” ■