

Five digital healthcare experts offer elevator insights on the state of digital pharma — the ups, the downs and how to get to the next level

# A work

**1**  
What has encouraged you most in the past 12 months in digital pharma? In what areas is progress being made?



**Michael Marino**  
Principal,  
Big Arrow Group

Last year's overarching theme was about value. It is no longer sufficient for pharma companies to sell products as drugs or devices: successful Pharma 2.0 brands deliver the whole disease management and improve the population health. In communications, this meant more digital pharma focus on the disease state in areas of education, adherence, persistence and support. Other areas of focus were cohesive, digitally integrated solutions for healthcare providers and market access.

**2**  
And what continues to frustrate you? Where are the major challenges and roadblocks, and what needs to be done to overcome them?

Navigating through the changes of healthcare reform often means fine-tuning strategy as we go. Sometimes it means having the courage to do what no one in the space has done before. The benefit is being the market leader; the downsides are poorly defined regulatory guidelines or no well-tested ROI. From idea to delivery process can be lengthy, so much so that by the time the deliverables are released they are not seen as innovative, and the "first to market" advantage is a missed opportunity.

**3**  
What will be the most important digital pharma trend(s) in the next 12 months?

No surprises here—as penetration and consumption of mobile media grow, smart marketers will identify and develop the value proposition touch points among brands, HCPs and consumers on mobile devices. User experience and content creation are still kings. Pharma-initiated conversations about disease states will grow louder. Personalized marketing will grow alongside personalized medicine advances. Mobile-powered and time-squeezed physicians will see better diagnostic tools, especially in the area of rare diseases.



**Ron Scalici**  
Chief innovations  
officer,  
Group DCA

Pharma is getting more comfortable with digital promotion and the associated approval process, which is allowing brands to expand its utilization and integration across all channels—personal and non-personal. It's gratifying to see multi-channel marketing teams becoming champions for breaking down the walls between sales and marketing, and that is opening doorways to engage physicians in ways that increase value and efficiency all the way around. This is very encouraging.

As an unapologetic advocate for great content, I continue to be frustrated by how content is created in some corners. The days of static websites are gone. Content needs to be refreshed frequently to maintain engagement. Budget is a roadblock, but is not the only one. There is also an element of risk that not all clients are comfortable taking, but while innovation or simple new ideas aren't guaranteed to work, what's important is to try new things, measure properly and learn.

We're seeing a lot of hype around EMR and how marketers can integrate within the workflow of the physician day. Although that seems like a natural segue in how to engage at the point of care, I think the jury is out on whether physicians are likely to engage in any branded activities or extended learning sessions that originate in an EMR or whether that crosses a line in terms of intrusiveness.

# in progress



**Jack Schember**

Senior director, marketing, Cegedim Relationship Management

The importance of online physician communities is undeniable, as almost 90% of doctors are members of a community and 65% of them engage at least once a week, according to our survey of HCPs. But what's more encouraging is that most of the doctors (84%) said they are likely to use a community that expands their ability to engage with life science companies.

HCPs are largely mobile employees, moving about from offices to exam rooms to surgery centers throughout the day. Their time online to engage in digital and social media is limited. Their participation and socialization are below that of other professionals. To break through and make a lasting impact requires compelling, relevant and highly targeted messaging.

The ability to consolidate fragmented digital content and present a one-stop-shop environment will be one of the most important trend goals during the next year. With the proliferation of digital media, HCP audiences have too many options and are frustrated with the requirement to bounce amongst different channels and offerings to satisfy their information needs.



**Leerom Segal**

Co-founder and CEO, Klick Health

We're definitely seeing a shift toward clients with an appetite for digital-first thinking and an appreciation for data analytics and measurement from what we did even a year ago. Whereas historically digital used to be an adjunct, it's now the primary driver of marketing programs. We believe this trend will only continue as it aligns with the push for stronger financial accountability.

As far as we've come in the area of data-driven marketing, there's still much work to be done. Digital is still seen as a tactic rather than a fundamental piece of the strategic planning approach. The industry needs to elevate its digital proficiency, starting in the planning stage, to unleash its full potential.

The FDA's latest draft guidance on Social Reporting is by far the most direct and informative guidance to date for marketers and regulatory groups who want to safely participate in social channels. The rules inside this guidance make it clear that user generated content (UGC) is the responsibility of the author rather than the property owner, within certain limitations.



**Paul Shawah**

VP, commercial strategy, Veeva

In a word... "speed." Pharma is generally perceived as slow-moving, but digital capabilities are rapidly emerging—and the industry's willingness to adopt these tools is growing. Companies are motivated to leverage digital innovations that enhance customer engagement. One example is personalized communications with HCPs using tools like email. Long considered taboo, email is an exciting capability companies are embracing thanks to solutions that remove the compliance risk.

Even with the industry's newfound willingness to test digital capabilities, learn and scale, there remain organizational barriers every step of the way. The "innovator's dilemma" is alive and well—it's hard to change processes and selling models that proved successful in the not-so-distant past. To fully go "digital" and successfully navigate through the increased pace of business that digital makes possible, organizational structure, processes and commercial models must be reinvented.

By far, the most important trend in digital for the life sciences industry will not be a new technology, but rather... a new mindset—a commitment to making digital communications an integrated part of the promotional mix. Optimal results only occur when digital is strategically combined and aligned with the activities of the field force. Next year, the industry will look for ways to identify and orchestrate the best promotional mix—digital, face-to-face, email—for each customer.