



Bridge Worldwide White Paper Series

The Digital Rules to Keep Your Brand Healthy

A new study from eMarketer reports that **online advertising will make up 10 percent of U.S. advertising spending in 2009**, amounting to \$30B¹. The arrival of this critical milestone won't come as a surprise to many pharma marketers, who likely have watched their share of online spending increase in the recent past.

As digital grows from a budding, experimental tool in many companies to a mature and heavily relied upon channel, more emphasis will be placed on maximizing return on investment. This scrutiny will be similar to every other channel, from sales representatives to direct-to-consumer (DTC) television. After years of highly effective offline marketing programs, most organizations and brand managers have developed a list of tried-and-true principles they can apply to ensure the success of the next program. However, because digital is such a new channel for many companies and because most lack a strong history, **no one has developed a comprehensive list of principles for this emergent channel.**

While these principles don't exist at most pharma companies, where experimentation in digital has been limited, consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies fighting in an ultra-competitive marketplace with small profit margins have had to be innovators in finding new ways to communicate their messages to their customers. They have led much of the innovation in digital (online) brand promotion including websites, search engine optimization (SEO), e-newsletter programs, mobile, and tailored, individualized messaging.

For a number of reasons, the pharma industry has lagged behind CPG and has been slow to adopt many of the best practices these companies have relied on for years. Applying all of the lessons learned through years of experience in CPG marketing to pharma can give an immediate advantage to the first companies willing to truly embrace these new principles. If pharma can effectively implement these principles, it has potentially even more to gain than CPG companies. Because their products have much higher margins, a similar investment yields much better returns. So, where CPG must carefully manage spending on a program to maximize the small lifetime value of a customer, pharma can deliver an even richer experience, because this lifetime value is far greater.

Of course, simply copying every digital program created for CPG isn't going to work. Regulatory issues between CPG and pharma aren't comparable. As everyone reading this article knows, pharma is, of course, one of the most regulated industries in the world. However, **there are ways to implement online programs that obey the regulatory rules and also respect the sensitive nature of DTC pharma marketing.** Maybe a series of comical YouTube videos isn't right for your brand, but completely discounting that channel isn't the answer either (However, Novartis did use YouTube very effectively in a campaign for FluSource.com—with more than 795,000 views of the contest rules video alone²).

If pharma companies are willing to embrace the 10 principles we've developed by working in both healthcare and CPG, we believe their **brands will be stronger and that they will see**



an immediate improvement in a number of measurable outcomes for all of their digital programs.

Industries such as CPG have developed some of the most cutting-edge digital programs and also have learned a lot of expensive lessons. A lot of this experience can be effectively (and legally) tailored to pharma. Those companies who get out front in this race are going to have a considerable advantage for a long time. The digital channel is expanding in importance and, as budgets become tighter senior managers are going to require that every program show value from day one. **Digital no longer gets a free pass.** However, before jumping in, make sure you know the digital rules to keep your brand healthy.

The 10 Digital Rules to Keep Your Brand Healthy: Interactive Marketing in Pharma

- 1. Show; Don't Tell:** A demonstration, picture, or video always beats never-ending pages with thousands of words. Make your content scannable (easy to read quickly), and make it memorable. KnowMenopause.com uses videos of both patients and healthcare professionals (HCPs) to deliver content, instead of using countless pages of text.
- 2. Build an Integrated Approach:** Do your website, e-newsletter, banners, AdWords, widgets, blog, emails (and so on...) all work together? Do they work in concert to drive action? And you've got to do all this before even considering your TV, radio, and print. While an over-the-counter (OTC) product, pharma could learn a lot from the marketing of alli, from GSK. The OTC version of the weight loss pill Xenical was launched with a large media campaign, but included several other unique consumer programs. Among these was a comprehensive starter kit with each bottle, which included a well-designed pill case, and a highly customizable website at myalli.com. What made the program stand out for me was the alli cookbook with special recipes that help you stick with a healthy diet and avoid foods likely to cause undesirable side effects. In-store efforts pulled all this together with excellent product placement strategies.
- 3. Deploy Rapid Segmentation:** With digital technologies you have no excuse for sending the same thing to everyone or for providing the same information to everyone. Find out what each visitor needs and provide it. Repeat. PurplePill.com, the Nexium branded site, does this well with its navigation. You can select whether you are just curious about symptoms, are suffering from symptoms, are ready to talk to a doctor, or are a current Nexium patient. Depending on what you select, you have immediate access to content tailored to your needs.
- 4. Create Value for Everyone, Not Just Your Brand:** If it just benefits the brand, people will reject it. No one trusts big pharma anymore, right? Instead, create something that helps the patient, and they'll help you. This is done successfully for a number of brands that use an unbranded site to truly educate patients and help them find the information they need. Roche has done this well with fluFACTS.com, including the first movie tie-in for a pharma product. This site offers some good, basic information about the flu and useful tools like a flu tracker all without pushing their flu product, Tamiflu. This approach has undoubtedly driven traffic and awareness of Tamiflu.
- 5. Structured, but Flexible:** While you don't need to include every feature ever conceived, you do need to give people the ability to make your stuff their own—whether



it be customized home pages, content they can borrow, or a section of your site that they alone own and manage. Once they make your site their own, they'll be more likely to return to it because they've already invested time and energy. This rule hasn't been fully embraced by any pharma companies, but brands throughout healthcare have effectively leveraged this rule for years. Consider an online program created by my company to support Glucerna and FreeStyle from Abbott Nutrition, Diabetes Control for Life (diabetescontrolforlife.com). All of the features of the site are completely individualized allowing users to select the tools most useful to them, customize meal plans and activities, and determine which news articles appear on their personalized site.

6. **Clinical Doesn't Mean Colorless:** Research shows that consumers find visually appealing sites more credible than their plain counterparts². Did you make your site look like an exam room? (Incidentally, in the same study, HCPs had the exact opposite reaction, preferring more plain-looking sites.)
7. **Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed:** Because imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, flatter. Learn from what's worked, and what hasn't. Don't stop at looking within your company or even within pharma. Apply lessons from other companies and industries. From this, create what's never been done before, but don't shy away from something because it's been tried before. If it's effective, then go with it.
8. **Simple, Cost Effective, and Scalable:** Just because you need to impact a lot of people to meet your goals it doesn't mean that spending more money is the answer. Find out what *your* patients want and deliver it. Create programs you can build over time in planned phases. As you get positive results and more funding, build on your successes and cut your losses. Resist the temptation to create more one-off campaigns that don't have a long life span.
9. **Don't Let Legal Run Your Program:** Yes, pharma and healthcare have their own unique set of regulatory hurdles, but this doesn't mean you have to ignore all of the new channels available to you. So, if the latest tools (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, widgets, etc.) aren't allowed, find smart people who can figure out how to take what patients love about those tools and distill it into something you and your legal team can agree on. Reckitt Benckiser is one of the few companies willing to reject the idea that MySpace and sites like it aren't a place for pharma. You can visit their MySpace page⁴ and become friends with "addiction411." This page links to their TurnToHelp.com site. The effective use of MySpace to help educate adolescents (a key demographic of MySpace) about the risks of and treatments for prescription painkiller addiction shows that just about any digital channel can be brought into regulatory compliance.
10. **The Patient Is the Boss:** With infinite choices online, you have seconds to show why you are genuinely different before your audience moves on to the next search result. If you obey all of the above principles but ignore this one, you might as well give up now.

Now that you know the rules, be sure to consider them before designing your next digital program or look for ways to enhance your existing programs. Tack them to your wall and look for ways to enforce the rules every day.





Citations for reference:

1. eMarketer (March 31, 2008). Online Heads for 10% of Total US Ad Spend. Retrieved March 31, 2008 from http://www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?id=1006100&src=article1_newsltr.
2. FluSource.com You Tube Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVefMW_Z4pQ.
3. Stanford, J., Tauber, E., Fogg, B.J., Marable, L. (October 2002). Experts vs. Online Consumers: A Comparative Credibility Study of Health and Finance Web Sites. Retrieved March 31, 2008 from <http://www.consumerwebwatch.org/pdfs/expert-vs-online-consumers.pdf>.
4. Addiction411 MySpace page: <http://www.myspace.com/addiction411>.

Contact Information:

Jonathan Richman
Director of Business Development
j.richman@bridgeworldwide.com
513.253.1295

Jay Woffington
President and CEO
j.woffington@bridgeworldwide.com
513.354.1967