

TAILOR MADE

Marketers need to personalise the message to maximise online opportunities

Healthcare stakeholders are online and marketers must develop new skills to keep up. Online detailing is demonstrating high ROI in Europe and managing and measuring online share of voice is a key success factor. Yet few companies have seriously experimented with alternatives to the traditional salesforce model.

Health 2.0

Marketers have been hit with a second wave of change as Web 2.0 applications are starting to dominate the internet and bring new ideas, vocabulary and actions (see box on page 34). The application of these technologies to healthcare - Health 2.0 - is growing rapidly. These technologies make the production of user-generated content easier. As a result, we are seeing the emergence of health-centric social networks.

Marketers can leverage Health 2.0 services to enhance their e-marketing strategies. This space offers a broad range of strategic and technological options.

Web 2.0 is characterised by individual initiative and by entrepreneurship. Those interested in medical issues are sharing knowledge and new companies are emerging to satisfy unmet needs.

Doctors are taking advantage of online continuing medical education (CME) programmes as they become available. They also blog about their work, their patients, health economics and ethics. They edit textbooks and CME training materials on wikis and share slides, bibliographies and medical images. They provide peers with second opinions and evaluate treatments in a secure social networking environment, financed by sponsors in need of market research data.

Patients also write blogs, participate in support groups and post their medical condition and treatment evaluations in online charts and searchable databases. They evaluate healthcare providers and establishments and actively lobby

for specific causes. Some surgeries provide their patients with a Wi-Fi electronic clipboard in the waiting room to fill in their own electronic medical record before speaking to the doctor.

Opportunities

Pharma marketers can approach Health 2.0 in four ways:

1. Measure the buzz. Use tools to measure and evaluate their company's image on the web. Determine what is being said about their company, products and concepts. Getting an intern to search and scan websites is no longer enough, as there are millions of pages to examine.

"Those interested in medical issues are sharing knowledge and new companies are emerging"

2. Join online conversations. Measuring the buzz makes sense only if marketers apply the data they find to reinforce their company's position online. Participating in online conversations means bringing new types of content and data to the attention of those in existing social networks.
3. Sponsor a community. Companies can associate their name with positive initiatives - quality services and communities. Sometimes this can be exchanged for access to resources such as survey participants and anonymous market data.
4. Integrate Web 2.0 tools. Managers can begin to incorporate these technologies into existing digital initiatives with evaluation and rating tools and moderated comment areas on their websites, creating social networking opportunities.

Case studies

Web 2 channels

A large pharma company with a blockbuster brand was criticised by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) about reimbursement issues. A trend line showed that the online share of voice for the drug was increasing exponentially in its category, but the keywords directly associated with it were extremely negative, affecting the reputations of the drug and the company.

The company hired Boomerang Pharmaceutical Communications to design a comprehensive online PR strategy. Boomerang strived to get the company's position heard on the same Web 2.0 channels that patients and advocacy groups used. They placed position papers on

influential patient blogs and created videos for YouTube. They also managed aggressive keyword campaigns to drive traffic directly to these sites.

The results exceeded expectations as more than 10,000 readers accessed the position papers and over 2,000 viewers saw the videos. As a result, the position papers were discussed in both print and online media. The drug's share of voice continued to increase, but with more neutral brand-related keywords.

Sponsorship

In France CME has been mandatory since 1996, and many doctors have found it difficult to comply. Pfizer France wanted to demonstrate its commitment to CME by proposing a blog platform to help physicians cooperate with one another on CME issues. Pfizer approached Basil Strategies, an e-health consultancy, and its partner Boomerang. Following an initial feasibility study, Basil and Boomerang proposed "BlogFMC.fr" - FMC being the French equivalent of CME. This was to be a multi-author blog with suggested topic categories and an easy-to-use 'back office'. Basil assumed content responsibility by designating a 'chief blogger' to develop an editorial platform and scan the web to attract doctors and CME associations. Boomerang also took on optimising BlogFMC's search engine and managing keyword campaigns based on CME terms to drive traffic.

After four months, the Alexa ranking of web traffic showed that the site had overtaken some that had been active on the internet for years - including doctors' union websites and the official French CME information portals. The site is now also certified by the Health On the Net (HON) Foundation and 27 French doctors are registered authors. HON is accredited to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and aims to ensure that online medical and health information is useful, reliable and appropriate. The French government has adopted the HON code, making the quality certification of health websites a legal requirement, other countries may follow suit.

e-detailing

Although e-detailing is not typically thought of as a Web 2.0 tool, it is taking off in parallel. A European brand had an important new message but the company gave it low priority and a limited salesforce allocation. Boomerang helped the company combine an interactive e-detail that challenged doctors on their knowledge of the issue while providing the new message through personalised communication between physicians and their sales reps.

Another brand had several messages to disseminate. Rather than simply distributing them through conventional channels, it opted for interactive e-details that allowed doctors to choose which information they needed most, based on their patients' concerns.

The ability to talk to physicians about a brand and answer their questions on site is what makes

Emarketing glossary

Back office – Part of a website that is invisible to the public and which enables a content manager with no IT background to modify content and webmaster the site.

Blogs – Short for web log, a website generally maintained by an individual, with regular entries of text or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order.

E-detail – Multimedia online presentation by a pharma company to a physician, with or without simultaneous accompaniment by a sales rep using a telephone and/or web conferencing tool.

Humanised web applications – Use of web technology to associate web content with a human being, by personalising the user experience and enriching interactivity.

Podcasts – Digital-media files which are distributed over the internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and computers.

Social bookmarks – A method for internet users to store, manage, and share bookmarks of web pages.

Tag clouds – A visual display of user-generated tags or keywords describing content of webpages.

User-generated applications – Web applications created by the users themselves and generally shared for free.

Wiki – Collaborative website designed so that users can modify and update pages.

→ sales rep visits so powerful. Time constraints and budget cuts mean face-to-face meetings no longer suffice. The use of e-detailing can be a valuable extension of that conversation, if it allows for true interaction, if the feedback loop is respected – particularly by the pharma company. To provide greatest possible value for the doctor and the company e-detailing must be a two-way channel.

Strategic implications

Rapid technical progress requires that key areas are addressed:

1. Based on the traditional patient-flow model, decide on the objective of the interaction and who the target audience is. Are you providing refill reminders for chronic disease patients or online CME for busy GPs, or information aimed at different audiences about mature products, special events or launches?
2. Consider how to address the target audience. Look at expanding beyond one-way to multiway interactions, and moving from static to dynamic or even humanised web applications. Explore chats, forums, video-detailing, podcasts, user-generated content and other Web 2.0 technologies.
3. Decide who needs to be involved to make the initiative a success. Sites can be fully developed by the pharma company alone or with partners, or entirely by third parties. Companies who specialise in e-health typically focus on content, commerce, connectivity or care and can act as competitors, suppliers or partners to pharma. Their experience can provide valuable insight into the marketing mix.

“The internet will open up strategic alternatives to the business model”

Integrate and interact

To maximise ROI investment, the use of the internet should be integrated across all promotional areas. Sales reps should use their visits to introduce doctors to websites and online resources and e-detailing should be linked in an electronic platform. Closed-loop marketing needs to be employed to monitor individual physician behaviour online.

The first internet wave in emerging markets, such as Russia, shows such integration can create strong first-mover advantage. This is intensified when the salesforce reinforces the benefits of online interaction between face-to-face calls – such as using interactive websites to request samples, CME material and article reprints.

Including the internet channel in the mix could create profitable opportunities to access hard-to-visit physicians or those with low sales potential, for whom traditional detailing may no longer be appropriate.

The internet will open up strategic alternatives to the business model. These are based mainly on four key dimensions, defined by the Roland Berger ‘Business model mixer’. Pharma companies can:

- Better exploit synergies between products across their portfolio for specific customer groups
- Leverage the internet to provide healthcare solutions based on their products – ideally charging for these services
- Directly address patients and their relatives, within the strictly regulated environment, and reach out beyond traditional prescribers
- Tailor new segment-specific strategies that rely less on sales-driven channels and more on the internet, as appropriate.

In the long term, medical and technical progress will provide more opportunities for moving to high-tech and personalised healthcare. In depth information can be generated about each patient. Interventions may be tailored to the individual.

Developments in online technology are already beginning to transform the healthcare sector. It will be interesting to see how pharma marketers continue to develop the business model in the light of ongoing market access pressures and tightening regulations. They will have to determine the best possible use of Web 2.0 for each particular product/brand opportunity within their markets.

The Authors

Aleksandar Ruzicic is a principal at Roland Berger Strategy Consultants, Zurich – aleksandar_ruzicic@ch.rolandberger.com

Denise Silber is president of Basil Strategies, Paris and president of the Association for the Quality of Internet in Health Care (AQIS) – Denise.Silber@basilstrategies.com

Emmanuel Bueb is CEO of Boomerang Pharmaceutical Communications – ebueb@boomerangpharma.com