



Healthcare Marketing White Paper



HEALTHCARE MARKETING'S TOP TRENDS FOR 2014

STRATEGIES, MEDIA AND MESSAGING
TRENDS FOR HOSPITALS AND
PHYSICIAN PRACTICES



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In the competitive marketplace of 2014, the goal of healthcare organizations will be to engage a new breed of care seekers; consumers who are as informed and self directed in their care decisions as any retail shopper. This white paper looks at the trends that are influencing their strategies, media choices and messaging tactics as healthcare marketers compete for the attention and loyalty of the new healthcare consumer.

To accomplish this task, healthcare marketers will be challenged to translate their brand messaging to make it relevant to these brand-sensitive consumers, and appropriate for the individual's decision stage. They will push out the boundaries of the new marketing frontier, delving deeper into social networks and new digital media technologies to target elusive online communities. And they will implement some of the most narrowly targeted and carefully integrated marketing campaigns ever created.

ENGAGING HEALTHCARE CONSUMERS

ADAPTING MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR A NEW BREED OF PATIENT

The way patients make care decisions has changed, and continues to change, fueled by a more competitive market, greater information access and higher stakes for payees. In 2014, care providers will continue to adapt their marketing strategies to deliver information where and when patients seek it, and to tailor the message in a way that's relevant to brand-sensitive consumers. This trend has had significant influence on the entire marketing process, and is at the heart of more than half of the topics on this list.

How consumers are changing our marketing tactics:

- The search for information: Consumers are using online resources to research medical conditions, treatments and care providers. Marketers need solid content strategies, search optimization and inbound marketing capabilities to attract and engage the active consumer.

“From positioning and messaging to media selection and staff alignment, healthcare providers are rethinking every marketing discipline to attract and engage these consumers.”

- Reliance on new media channels: Younger patients are only moderately responsive to traditional healthcare advertising, favoring TV and in-office messages above other media. They have a natural tendency to consult online information sources, however, so integrated online, mobile and offline messaging that drives to web are proving effective to connect with the Baby Boomers, Gen X and Millennial consumers.

- A preference for brands: Because younger consumers relate to healthcare brands, marketing strategies that focus on reputation building, competitive positioning, brand messages and positive patient experiences are gaining traction with consumers.

- They value the customer experience: Younger generations value prior experiences and often consults social networks when making care decisions. Defining the patient experience, and aligning internal staff and physicians to deliver consistent positive experiences is integral in attracting and engaging healthcare consumers.

- Self-directed decisions: Physician referral initiatives and marketing to physicians can still be effective in engaging consumers (especially the Greatest and Silent Generations), but promises diminishing returns with younger audiences who tend to make their own care decisions.

INFLUENCING THE HEALTHCARE DECISION

SEARCH OPTIMIZATION & CONTENT MARKETING

In 2014, digital platforms will be a top resource for health information and care decisions. Already this decade we've seen steady increases in the volume of web searches for health topics, treatments and care providers. Hospital marketers will be challenged to get their messages where the consumers look for information: online.

With healthcare consumers so reliant on the internet for health information, it has become imperative for hospital brands to create engaging content and use search optimization so their audiences can find it easily. Because younger consumers respond to reputation claims, branded content carries greater influence on the healthcare decision.



According to Pew Research, 59% of U.S. adults have looked online for health information in the past year.

One in three Americans has gone online specifically to try to figure out what medical condition they or someone else might have. Most begin at search engines such as Google, Bing or Yahoo; others start at health sites such as WebMD. Their search topics include information about specific conditions or diseases, treatment options and doctors or care providers.

When surveyed about their decision process, a vast majority of patients who booked appointments reported using digital content. Most visited hospital websites prior to making an appointment, while smaller segments of this group used health information sites, health insurance company sites and user-generated reviews.

Web videos are another growing source of healthcare information. A study published on Google Think reports that one in eight patients watched online videos on either hospital websites, insurance sites, health information sites or on YouTube. Online videos are ubiquitous and today's mobile and broadband technology now makes video almost a necessity for hospital marketers who want to reach younger audiences.

ENHANCED SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING

GOOGLE BRIDGES SOCIAL, ADS AND PLATFORMS

There will be a few new additions to SEM in 2014, including Sponsored Endorsements, Estimated Total Conversions, and Ad Extensions.

Sponsored Endorsements will sound eerily familiar to Facebook's Sponsored Stories. Sponsored Endorsements will publish users' name, photos and comments that they have made on Google services, such as Google Plus and YouTube, in ads on Google's display advertising network. For example, if a patient follows your hospital on Google Plus or commented on a video your hospital posted on YouTube, that patient's name, photo and endorsement could appear on display ads across the Web.

Estimated Total Conversions is a new service of Google AdWords that shows companies or organizations their total number of conversions that started with online advertising. The first component of this is estimated cross-device conversions, which shows how consumers move across screens from computers to mobile devices throughout the day. These analytics could show a conversion that began on a desktop computer when a prospective patient clicked on a search ad for cardiac care in the morning, but ended on that patient's mobile phone later that evening when they went directly to the cardiac page on your hospital's website to request an appointment.

Lastly, varieties of ad extensions are increasing to include: location, phone, live chat, and image. These extensions make the search ads more relevant to patients and increase the ways that patients can connect with them, which makes them more likely to convert.

EMBRACING DIGITAL CHANGE

INVESTING IN DIGITAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES

A major trend for 2014 is the ongoing transformation of healthcare marketing brought on by digital media technologies. Marketers have been forced to develop new competencies in social media, search, mobile technologies and targeted online advertising. This year we'll see these media more fully integrated and implemented with greater sophistication and success than ever before. And we'll see and report measurable returns on our digital investments.

- **Social media:** While popular social media platforms such as Facebook, and Twitter will still be essential, marketers will need to establish a presence on Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram and others to continue to build audiences.
- **SEO/SEM:** Search and paid search have become an integral part of our inbound marketing strategies, bolstering web traffic and driving patients to online content to satisfy their appetite for information.
- **Mobile:** With an estimated 75% of the world's population using mobile phones, healthcare marketers must adapt content to the mobile market with messaging, site layout and content appropriate to the consumer's stage in the decision process.
- **Targeted online ads:** Online display and ad retargeting will increase visibility on the web, and help maximize marketing budgets to reach younger, connected audiences.

DESIGNING FOR MOBILE CONSUMERS

IMPLEMENTING RESPONSIVE DESIGN & MOBILE APPS

The use of mobile devices and apps continues to grow, with a large percentage of users searching for health information and tracking their health with mobile apps. Healthcare marketers who respond to this trend in 2014 will be positioned to engage proactive patients with mobile-friendly websites and health-tracking applications.

Patients are using mobile devices to find health information where and when they need it most. A research study titled, "The Digital Journey to Wellness: Hospital Selection," reported that 61% of patients used their mobile device while at home; 27% at work; 20% while out of town and 16% while in the doctor's office. And of those who found information about a hospital on their mobile device, 44% scheduled an appointment. (<http://www.google.com/think/research-studies/the-digital-journey-to-wellness-hospital-selection.html>) Not only do healthcare websites need to be viewed on multiple kinds of devices, the content should be relevant to the patient's stage in the decision process.

The use of mobile health apps will continue to grow in 2014. According to Pew Internet, seven in ten adults in the US have tracked a health indicator using a mobile device. Some of these people are tracking health indicators for others, or will share the findings with another person. This is another opportunity for hospitals and physician practices to connect with patients using branded content and services delivered over mobile devices.

OFFLINE IN SUPPORT OF ONLINE MARKETING

INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA

2014 promises to be the year that online and digital marketing take center stage in an integrated healthcare marketing plan. Though the effectiveness of traditional media continues to decline, there is still an important place for offline marketing channels to support online efforts.

In "The Digital Journey to Wellness: Hospital Selection," a research study on Google Think, it was reported that 84% of patients use both online and offline sources for research. Audiences are still tuning in to traditional media – 32% of patients use TV for research, 20% of patients use magazines and 18% of patients use newspapers – you just have to play to the strengths of the medium. (In contrast, 77% of patients use search engines, 76% of patients use hospital sites and 52% of patients referenced health information sites.)

The high cost of mass media real estate means that in most formats, there simply isn't time or space to deliver deep, informative content that consumers want. However, offline advertising can be highly effective in building traffic and audiences for your online inbound marketing content. By using short URLs, or links to campaign landing pages, healthcare marketers can use mass media channels to drive consumers to websites or social channels.

REVITALIZING SOCIAL MEDIA

EXPLORING NEW PLATFORMS AND USER-GENERATED CONTENT

In 2014, we will see an increase in user-generated content contests. Brands are looking for co-created content to feature on social media channels, such as Instagram, Vine, and Twitter. This can include, photos, videos, or even caption contests. User-generated content offers mutual benefits - consumers want to participate to win something and see their photo or video shared with the company's hundreds, thousands, or even millions of followers, and businesses like it because it gets followers engaged and lessens the load of content creation. It is a win-win situation.

"The cocktail party of social media has, up until now, been a Facebook bash," said social media marketer Jim Tobin. "That party is definitely not over, but if you look carefully you'll see that some of the cool people are getting their coats and saying their goodbyes."

From 2009 until now, we were able to reach every demographic on Facebook, but now the younger demographics are leaving Facebook and moving to other social media channels, such as Instagram, Kik, and Snapchat. While this isn't a big deal for hospitals and other healthcare organizations because their main demographics are 35-75, 2014 will likely show a Facebook backlash. We will likely see more organizations creating social media strategies for Instagram, Snapchat, and the next big social media platform.

IMAGES & VIDEO GAIN IN SOCIAL CHANNELS

SHORT, SHAREABLE CONTENT ON THE RISE

While hospitals have begun to embrace inbound marketing and sophisticated content strategies, there is a parallel trend for concise, easily shared visual content as well. Social applications such as Vine (Twitter's 6-second mobile video app), Instagram and Pinterest have grown in popularity for delivering quick, easy-to-digest images and video content. This format of content fits the busy lifestyles of young healthcare consumers and is well suited to sharing on mobile devices.

A 2013 study by the Pew Research Center's Internet Project shows that 54% of internet users have posted original photos or videos to websites and 47% share photos or videos they found elsewhere online. <http://www.pewinternet.org/Press-Releases/2013/Photo-and-Video-Sharing-Grow-Online.aspx>

Healthcare marketers will benefit by integrating images and short video into their social marketing strategy in 2014. But what makes visual content compelling and shareable?

The most memorable, shareable images and videos are:

- Funny (really funny)
- Emotional
- Dramatic or Surprising
- Short (2 minutes or less for video)
- Thought provoking
- Able to make us smile



STORYTELLING WITH BRAND JOURNALISM

CORPORATE MEDIA TRUMPS THE PRESS RELEASE

Brand Journalism, or Corporate Media, became a buzz word in 2013 and will continue to gain momentum in 2014. Us marketing folks refer to it as content marketing, but brand journalism is taking on a life of its own. While content marketing can include newsletters, white papers, and statistics, brand journalism focuses more on storytelling, features, human-interest pieces, and real-life examples. By companies and hospitals covering their own stories, and distributing it to their audiences via their website and social media platforms, brand journalism is replacing the press release. In fact, some think that by 2015, the press release will be a thing of the past.

Brand Journalism places an emphasis on the audience - who they are and what they are looking for. Hospitals should aim to help the audience(s) by creating content that is valuable and relevant. In the past, the goal of content was to be funny or entertaining, but now people want to benefit from what they are reading. To be successful, you need to research what problems your patients have and present solutions in your content.

Because of this trend towards brand journalism, organizations are reducing the amount of money they are spending on advertising, and increasing their budgets for content creation and promotion. In some cases, this includes expanding internal staff with content creators and in-house journalists. For the first time we are seeing a decreased reliance on paid media, and a higher utilization of owned and earned media.

REWARDING CONTENT CREATORS

AUTHOR BYLINES BOOST GOOGLE SEARCH RANKINGS

Something to consider when planning 2014 content marketing strategies is Google "author rank," which rewards content creators by their byline. Unlike in the past, author rank puts value on a history of consistent quality content, instead of just the use of keywords identified by an algorithm. This also means that curating other people's content isn't enough; Google is looking for original content published by a trusted source.

In addition to high-quality content published by a credible author, author rank is placing a higher value on long-format content. This means that having a social media presence won't be enough in 2014. Organizations will need to move beyond 140-character snippets of information and back to the blog to publish longer posts rich with information relevant to patients. ■



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