



Healthcare Marketing White Paper



THE NEW MEDIA PARADIGM

HOW DIGITAL CHANNELS AND
CONSUMER HABITS ARE CHANGING
HEALTHCARE MARKETING



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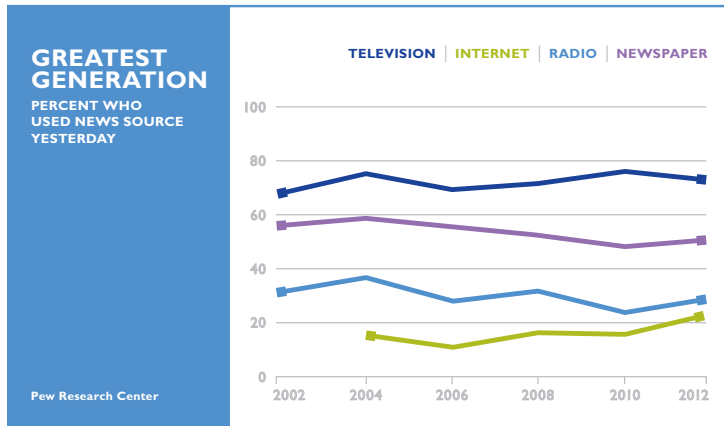
The healthcare industry is seeing major changes, from the Affordable Care Act, to the rise of healthcare consumers. This change in how patients seek care, compounded with the rapid advancements in technology and increasing healthcare costs, has resulted in marketers needing to find inexpensive ways to reach niche audiences and provide them with the information they need to make informed decisions. Due to this, there is an overarching trend to pull away from paid media, and increase efforts in owned and earned media.

In this white paper, we will cover the difference in media consumption among the four generations, opportunities to target key audiences with new media channels, how to leverage owned and earned media, and how to reallocate media budgets to reflect these marketing trends.

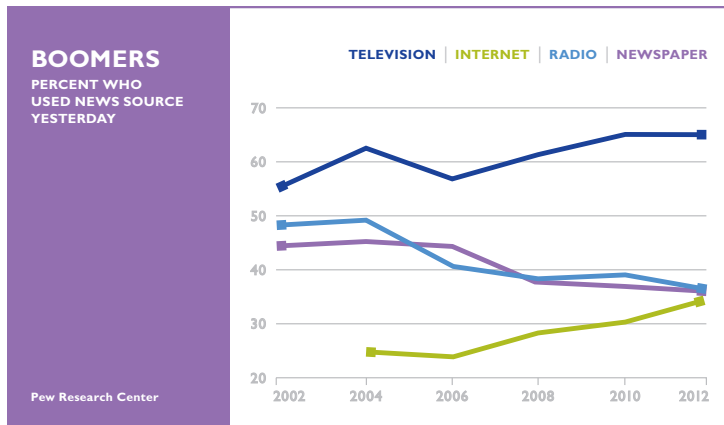
THE CHANGING MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Over the last ten years, the ways that Americans get their news has changed drastically due to new technologies and lifestyle changes. According to a study conducted by [Pew Research Center in 2012](#), television, radio, and newspaper news consumption has been on a steady decline since 1991, whereas online and digital news consumption has increased rapidly since 2006.

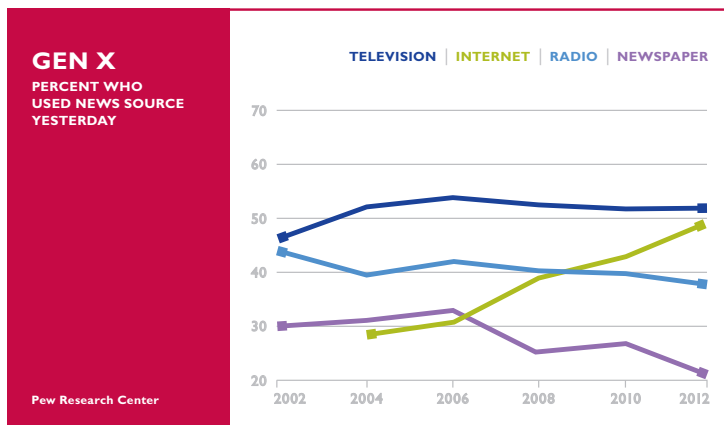
These trends can in part be attributed to generational differences. Looking at news media consumption from the Greatest Generation to Millennials shows a flip flop of sources.



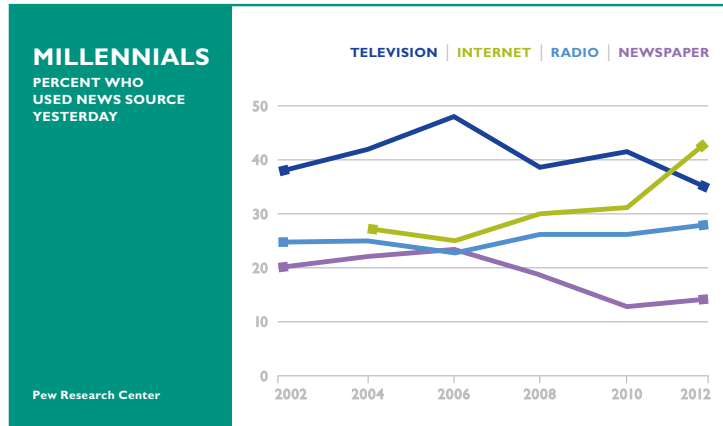
The Greatest Generation has remained steady from 2002 through 2012 with their first news source being television, followed by newspapers, radio, and lastly, internet.



The number one news source for Baby Boomers remains television by nearly 30 percent, but over the time of the study, both newspaper and radio news consumption have steadily declined, and internet news consumption has steadily increased, coming within one percent of radio and newspaper in 2012.



Generation X follows the trend of the Greatest Generation and Baby Boomers with television being their number one news source, but internet has gone from the least popular news source in 2004, to coming within three percent of television to take the number two spot in 2012. Radio has declined slightly over time, falling from 45% to 38%, and newspaper has all but fallen off the map in dead last.



Not surprisingly, the Internet starts off in the number two spot for Millennials in 2004, and surpasses television to become the number one news source in 2012. Radio has increased slightly over the period of the study, and newspapers have decreased, holding the fourth place spot all ten years.

While none of the findings are uncharacteristic of the different generations, it shows an overarching trend that extends further than this study. Patients are changing the way that they consume information, and healthcare marketers need to adjust accordingly. Aside from television, the other three news sources (newspaper, radio, and internet) are inverse from the Greatest Generation to Millennials, and it is unlikely that this trend will change as we move forward.

The above study indicates that as members of Gen X and Millennials matured, they did not become more likely to turn to newspapers or television for news; in fact, they are less likely to turn to those news sources. In direct correlation, members of Gen X and Millennials are increasingly turning to the internet for news as they get older. And this trend is rubbing off on Baby Boomers and members of the Greatest Generation as well.

In [April 2012](#), the Pew Research Center found, for the first time, that more than half of adults aged 65+ (members of the Greatest Generation) use the internet. In a report published in [April 2014](#), Pew Internet found that 59% of seniors go online, 47% have a high-speed broadband connection, and 77% have a cell phone. In addition, the report found that 46% of online seniors use social networking sites, such as Facebook.

So what does this mean for healthcare marketing? It means that hospitals and physician practices that aren't utilizing digital media channels to target their various audiences should consider rethinking their media spend to include new channels.

NEW CHANNELS TO TARGET AUDIENCES

With the rise of digital media consumption has come new digital marketing opportunities that help healthcare organizations target niche audiences. Below are some new media channels that have gained momentum over the past year and provide great opportunities to reach targeted audiences.

Search Ads/PPC

How do you find people within your demographic who are searching for a new physician? You place your marketing materials where they're searching: on Google. It is rare for patients of today to crack open a phone book and scan the yellow pages when they are in need of a new physician. They simply open a browser and type it into their search bar. If you don't have search ads popping up in the results, you're missing a huge opportunity to supply a physician to that prospective patient's query.

Search ads are no longer just a link to a website. There are a number of extensions you can attach to your ad that include: office location, office phone number, live chat with a receptionist or physician, and images of the office or physicians. By providing these different extensions, you're allowing patients to connect with the practice or hospital in a way that is convenient for them.

Social Media Marketing

Social media has become a self-publishing hub for hospitals and physician practices. Through social media platforms, organizations are able to share content with patients that is relevant to them. In addition, through social ads, healthcare organizations are able to target prospective patients in a way that looks like news content through Facebook Newsfeed ads, Twitter promoted tweets, and Instagram promoted posts.

And it seems to be working. According to [eMarketer](#), Facebook and Google display advertising spend have been neck and neck since 2009, with Facebook surpassing Google in 2013.

Mobile Marketing

There are a few ways healthcare marketers can reach patients through mobile channels. The first is through SMS messaging. Some hospitals and practices offer patients the ability to sign up for appointment reminders and updates via SMS/text messaging in lieu of post cards or phone calls.

The second is an extension of online advertising to serve search ads and display ads on a mobile phone browser. The great thing about mobile search ads is that they allow patients to click to call, instead of having to write the number down and dial on a house phone.

Lastly, many healthcare organizations are designing their own mobile apps for patients to learn information about the hospital or practice, request an appointment, see ER or urgent care wait times, find a new doctor, manage their health, get basic health information, and even become incentivized to lead healthy lifestyles through gamification. The possibilities are endless.

Digital Television & Video Streaming

More and more people are opting out of a traditional cable subscription, or simply watching television programs on their own time, through video streaming services such as Hulu+, Netflix, Aereo, widgets available through Apple TV and Roku, and network and broadcast station apps on phones and tablets. Due to these changes in television consumption, it's not a bad idea to take a portion of your television media spend and put it towards digital video streaming.

This can be done in a number of ways. You can get more mileage out of television spots by purchasing in-stream video or video pre-roll online through an ad network, or you could purchase it from specific services, such as Hulu+ or PBS. Either way allows you to set demographics and geo-targeting, but purchasing it from a specific service gives you more control over what type of programming your spots are in. Buying from a specific service also usually allows your spots to show up across different platforms, from a desktop computer, to a mobile phone, to shows streamed through Apple TV.

This is a great way to ensure you hit your complete audience — those who consume video content traditionally, and those who watch it on-the-go.

Facebook is also a relatively new outlet for video as they recently rolled out video Newsfeed ads. These are Facebook posts that appear in your newsfeed, but they include videos that viewers can click to watch. Simply posting your videos on your Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest pages are an organic way to supplement your paid video buy.

Internet Radio

Similar to television, people are changing the way they listen to the radio. Instead of flipping on a station in the car or at home, people are streaming music through apps on their phones, including Pandora, Spotify, iTunes Radio, and radio.com.

According to [a study](#) by TechCrunch and thenextweb.org, in 2013 there were 69.5 million active Pandora users and 24 million active Spotify users. In addition, news sites have their own audio players that allow for :10 spots or underwriting.

This provides an opportunity to reach patients on radio beyond local stations with targeted programming and an expansion of geographical reach. Also, these radio apps and online audio players often accompany audio ads with display ads, which allows listeners to immediately act on the ad instead of remembering and researching the product or service later.

Native Advertising

Native ads are commonly found on websites like BuzzFeed, Mashable, and The Atlantic, and they disguise advertisements as news stories. You may have also heard them referred to as advertorials.

Unlike a television commercial or a pop-up banner ad, native advertising is an ad that doesn't interrupt the user experience. Native advertising has evolved from public relations. Whereas before we had news releases and video news releases produced by companies, but injected seamlessly into the news as a journalistic story, we now have companies writing or sponsoring pieces of content online.

What started as revenue experimentation (to make up for the decline in advertising sales for newspapers), became one of the most popular trends in 2013 and is expected to be even more popular in 2014. Newspapers such as the New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Wall Street Journal are hiring journalists to head up new departments dedicated to this type of content creation/advertising.

It is hard to convey a story in a traditional newspaper ad or display advertisement. Sponsored content allows organizations to get more information out to consumers without the question of whether it will be published, as is the case with earned media. Patient education and wellness is a great topic for native advertising because it supplies the readers with information they will actually find useful, and a news story can share much more information than a headline in an ad could. Speak with local papers and television stations to see if they are interested in partnering with your hospital or practice to publish health-related content for their readers.

LEVERAGING OWNED & EARNED MEDIA

In addition to these new paid media channels, digital marketing is shifting towards owned and earned media tactics to positively influence consumers and build mutually beneficial relationships. One of the reasons behind this trend is Google's efforts to crack down on irrelevant and spammy content by changing algorithms that impact traditional SEO. Owned and earned media efforts, when applied to the digital world, are supportive of this new SEO and tie in nicely with the trend of content marketing.

Inbound Publishing

The "new SEO" rewards websites that consistently publish high-quality content that readers find useful and shareable. Inbound publishing combines content creation with media relations, events, corporate communications, blogger outreach, guest posts, and press releases to secure additional online and offline media coverage, build relationships, and increase company credibility.

In hand with rewarding this content, Google now penalizes aggressive link-building campaigns. As Gerald Heneghan stated in [an article on Marketing Profs](#), "Google wants its robots to behave more like a human when displaying search results. Accordingly, the general consensus among the experts is that more weight is being placed on factors such as inbound links and Google +1s."

Google is favoring quality over quantity. Rather than pushing out press releases packed with back links through distribution services, it is more effective to select a few reputable, relevant news sites or blogs and get your story or guest post published there. Carefully tailored releases to individual outlets also opens the door to interviews, events, and print coverage.

Brand Journalism

On the flip side, many companies are choosing to bypass media coverage and instead publish their own high-quality content that they then disseminate through social media channels and email marketing. This practice is called brand journalism and it is taking on a life of its own.

Brand journalism can include: white papers, newsletters, blog posts, infographics, and videos. What differentiates brand journalism from content marketing is the element of story telling. Brand journalism focuses more on human-interest pieces and news features by highlighting real customers or patients and their experience with the organization. It can also focus on the people who work at the organization to boost transparency.

A common goal between brand journalism and content marketing is to provide useful, relevant information to the organization's customers or patients, rather than to just be entertaining. People are usually online searching for answers, which presents the opportunity for healthcare organizations to position themselves as thought leaders and a credible source of information. This tactic will be rewarded both by Google and prospective patients.

Author Rank

Companies aren't the only ones who can benefit from constantly publishing content. Thanks to Google "author rank," individuals can now be rewarded for their byline. Author rank means that instead of site rankings being determined solely by keywords and quality of content, the author's history will also be taken into consideration. This means that if the author attached to a piece of content has a constant stream of original content, they will be rewarded over a first-time publisher. When author rank is set up, the author's byline and photo shows up next to his or her articles within a Google search.

In the world of healthcare, those who can really benefit from author rank are physicians. If physicians maintain blogs or websites with health information for patients, their content and photos will show up when prospective patients type their names into Google. Having all of this content can help to drown out the less credible, hit-or-miss pages of physician review sites and help to establish themselves as an authority in their area of medicine.

RETHINKING YOUR MEDIA SPEND

Due to these trends of inbound publishing, brand journalism, and author rank, many organizations are reducing their paid media advertising budgets and increasing their owned and earned media budgets. This is the first time we have seen a decreased reliance on paid media, and an increased dependence on owned media.

Hospitals and physician practices should consider doing the same. This switch could come in the form of hiring an agency for content creation and SEO services in addition to traditional advertising tactics, or it could come in the form of hiring an internal staff of journalists and copywriters to keep up a steady flow of content. If neither of these routes are options, consider allocating a portion of physicians' and nurses' time to generating content, or sitting down for interviews so members of the marketing team can produce content for them.

To balance out this movement of money to owned and earned media, it's more important than ever for healthcare organizations to plan their paid media strategically. Focus on highly targeted, low-cost media channels, such as paid search, mobile advertising, and social ads. These media channels can make a big impact on niche audiences and provide measurable results.

Conversely, mass media channels such as newspaper, radio, direct mail, and television do as the name suggests and push messages out to the masses, and in result are very expensive. As the Pew Research Study from 2012 reported, news consumption in newspapers, radio, and television are on the decline. In response to this, allocate print media dollars to online news sources, since more and more people are getting their news there and it has a cheaper CPM, and to native advertising. Talk with your local papers about sponsoring a health column written by your physicians or a wellness education event.

While television news consumption is on the decline, television viewership overall remains strong. Rethink your television buy by focusing on popular prime time shows, sporting events, and cherry picking cable programming that appeals to the target demo of the healthcare message in lieu of local news programming. Also consider taking a portion of your television buy and putting it towards online television streaming and pre-roll video to target younger audiences and catch members of your audience across multiple platforms.

Whatever media mix you deem most appropriate for any given campaign, it's important to make sure the creative is integrated across channels. For example, a television spot or an outdoor board may not singlehandedly make patients call to schedule an appointment, but it helps to boost your reach and frequency. When those same patients come across a banner or search ad, they will already be familiar with the campaign and will be more likely to respond. Integrated offline and online campaigns help keep your brand top of mind as people move about their days.

THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE MEDIA

The days of local television news and print newspapers will soon be behind us. The savvy patients of today are searching for health information on their own time, and they're looking for authoritative and trustworthy sources for their second and third opinions.

This shift away from paid media, and the movement towards owned and earned media is not only essential to obtain new patients, but also to the fiscal health of hospitals and physician practices. Low-cost media channels that target specific audiences who are in the market for healthcare services will be a more efficient use of media dollars than relying solely on expensive, mass media channels. However, to make it work, your campaigns need to be fully integrated to catch patients across platforms.

Does your hospital have a new media marketing plan? ■

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