THIS CRASH COURSE includes insights and information that will help you navigate the sometimes-complicated world of Digital Pharmaceutical Marketing. From privacy and brand safety concerns to innovative audience targeting and proven media solutions, this comprehensive resource was designed to make planning your next digital campaign efficient and successful.
72% of healthcare marketers report marketing budget increases for the current year, versus only 14% reporting budget decreases.

PHARMA MARKETING: That was then, this is now.

As pharma marketers embrace the importance and effectiveness of online marketing, it’s important to understand how pharma marketing began, and where it’s going.

Historically, pharmaceutical sales reps sold primarily to physicians, ensuring that healthcare professionals would have full control over patient health. That all changed in 1981, when Merck Pharmaceuticals ran the first major Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) ad in Reader’s Digest. Pharma companies enjoyed a spike in sales, and the next 12 years saw an increase in DTC pharma marketing.

Then, in 1993, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requested to review the marketing and advertising materials that pharma companies targeted to patients and the general public. This is around the time that the FDA mandated that DTC marketing must include extensive patient information, like side effects and contraindications. This was in direct contradiction to a 1969 regulation that required companies to list all of a drug’s side effects and risks.

What is a Black Box Warning?

A black box warning is the strictest warning by the FDA regarding the labeling of prescription drugs or drug products. When there is reasonable evidence of a serious hazard with the drug, that information must be included either directly on the packaging or on the package inserts, surrounded by a black box.

Pharma Ad Spend Totals

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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>$1.2 Billion</td>
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DIGITAL MARKETING 101: Pharma Targeted Media Health
Some of you may remember when pharma companies weren't even allowed to advertise on TV and radio. That changed with the FDA’s 1997 ruling, which clarified some confusing regulations and opened the door to pharma ads on broadcast media.

The internet, too, has forever changed the paradigm of pharmaceutical marketing. Not only does it allow people to take a much more proactive and involved role in healthcare decisions, it gives pharma marketers unprecedented access to consumers.

And this is where the Digital Pharma 101 story begins.

Navigating the DIGITAL UNIVERSE

While online pharmaceutical marketing can seem filled with challenges, it’s important to know there are innovative solutions to navigate the rules and regulations.

CHALLENGE

Ad Space:
Like print and broadcast media ads, digital ads must include a brief summary of the drug, the benefits and risk factors, and a number and website to visit to report any negative side effects to the FDA.3

Solution:
Scrolling ISI (Important Safety Information) is a simple way to accommodate all the necessary patient information in your rich media digital ad placements, including on Facebook. Scrolling ISI appears as video attached to an existing ad, and works on desktop and mobile devices. Pharma marketers have also had success with unbranded ads, reaching consumers in a more subtle way. They’re designed to educate consumers about specific conditions for which the advertiser sells a treatment.
Navigating the Digital Universe

**CHALLENGE**

/Strict Regulations:
Pharma advertising continues to be heavily regulated, to protect both patients and physicians. Some regulations include: truth of the ad, with no attempt to deceive; it has to present a fair balance of the risks and benefits; and also avoid the use of cookies.

**Solution:**
Pharma marketers can leverage HIPAA-compliant tactics and trusted partners, such as a Crossix, an industry-leading, consumer-centric healthcare data company, to ensure they’re complying with the most up-to-date regulations. Some of these options include strong data security to protect patient health information (PHI) and confidentiality.

**CHALLENGE**

/Consumer Skepticism:
As in many industries, consumers have a healthy skepticism when it comes to sharing health-related and personal issues. Trust must be built, with transparency, commitment to public safety, ethical business practices, and by being positive corporate citizens.

**Solution:**
Many pharma companies leverage social media and its immediate customer service response ability to build trust for their brand. It offers unprecedented opportunity for engagement, and to connect with consumers on a personal level, building trust and loyalty. Social media allows pharma marketers to reach their audiences in an open forum across the internet. It’s a great way for patients to discuss experiences, apps, and therapies throughout their health journey, allowing pharma companies to generate new insights into drugs and safety.

**CHALLENGE**

/Harnessing Big Data:
Due to privacy concerns, most pharma advertisers have always placed a high priority on data security. But these same companies are struggling to manage, and then leverage, the emerging data they have been able to collect.

**Solution:**
Technology is making it easier for people to take an increasingly active role in their health and wellness, from exhaustive online symptom research to downloading exercise-tracking apps. All this activity means increased data and information, which is why Consumer Relationship Management (CRM) targeted campaigns have proven successful for many pharma brands. CRM tools give marketers comprehensive profiles of consumers, which helps anticipate consumers’ needs and build trusted relationships. They can also be used to create look-alike profiles, to effectively reach consumers who behave like a brand’s best prospects.

**What are Cookies?**
Cookies are small text files that are stored on your computer, designed to observe your movements on cookie-enabled websites. Cookies hold a small amount of data about you, the websites you visit, and your actions while on those sites. For consumers, they’re how web pages remember what’s in your shopping cart, your login information, preferences, auto–fill forms, etc. They usually expire within 30 to 60 days.

For marketers, cookies make advertising more personal and effective. They’re essential for implementing many targeting tactics, including behavioral targeting, contextual targeting, retargeting, and more. But pharma marketers need to be judicious in the kind of information they collect using cookies, because consumer privacy remains paramount and companies cannot collect health-related information. For example, retargeting a consumer based on condition-specific internet searches they’ve conducted is not permitted.
Digital’s multiple touchpoints allow us to reach patients and physicians and engage with them on a more personal level. Cross-device targeting is an effective approach, and new technologies, such as data, social, mobile, and programmatic, help marketers reach qualified audiences across different channels.

/Data Mining
Companies like IBM and Apple are beginning to capture user data to deliver more targeted and personalized messaging. Wearables such as the FitBit and Apple Watch make it easier for healthcare marketers and pharmaceutical companies to collect and gather health information. According to eMarketer, 77% of respondents feel wearables help them engage with their own health, and 69% feel it helps patient-physician communication.

Collecting data helps brands personalize their messaging and makes their ads more relevant and valuable to consumers. Personalized ads are more welcomed. Marketers need to create value from their rapidly expanding amounts of data, as a majority of this data is unanalyzed, leading to inefficiency within health systems and loss of value from big data. By analyzing data and putting it to work, marketers can begin to reach patients and physicians on a truly one-to-one level.

/Mobile
Mobile devices are changing the way patients and healthcare professionals access the internet and find health information. As patients become less dependent on their healthcare professionals for advice, it is important they are provided accurate information in a safe environment. New technologies allow marketers to geo-fence locations, using video assets, text messaging, and more, to reach audiences while they are in doctors’ offices or near drug stores. This allows marketers and pharmaceutical companies to speak directly to consumers to drive adherence, awareness, and purchase consideration.

What is Geo-Fencing?
Geo-fencing uses global positioning system (GPS) technology and radio frequency identification (RFID) to draw virtual boundaries around specific geographies/locations. When GPS-enabled devices enter (or exit) the defined geo-fence, they can be served a text, email alert, app notification, or ad. This hyper-location targeting is ideal for pharma marketers, as they can reach health-focused audiences by creating their geo-fence around specific hospitals, health centers, doctors’ offices, and more. It’s also a highly effective way for pharma marketers to reach healthcare providers, by geo-fencing specific events and trade shows.
Programmatic advertising (the automated buying and selling of ads) is an excellent way to reach patients and physicians through targeted multi-platform ads, but pharmaceutical marketers should tread carefully while setting up automatic campaigns. A roadblock some marketers may hit is remaining HIPAA-compliant while targeting consumers. A couple of options to remain HIPAA-compliant include targeting consumers on medical websites such as WebMD or Medscape, or indirectly targeting consumers through related content (contextual targeting).

Aside from compliance laws, marketers must also be aware of the ‘Big Brother is Watching’ feeling that may happen while retargeting consumers. By taking responsibility for their programmatic campaigns, marketers can ensure that their ads are not too invasive.

Brand Safety — A Programmatic Must

Without the proper safety protocols in place, programmatic advertising can place brands on websites that can damage their image. Poor brand image in pharma can result in a violation of government regulations. HIPAA laws mandate that pharma companies cannot use first-party data to link identifiable individuals to their medical conditions. Marketers are also limited by how they track people on the web; many forms of retargeting can result in violations of regulations identifying users by their conditions. Here are some ways to remain compliant, and also reach your target audience:

- **Focus on contextual targeting**, in lieu of overlaying audience data. When targeting someone, you are not allowed to target the user but you are allowed to target content.
- **Use third-party data** to indirectly target users with similar or often-associated/ related conditions.
- **Leverage native advertising** solutions to tell your brand story in the voice and tone of a trusted publisher.

What is Contextual Targeting?

Contextual targeting is an advertising tactic that matches ads to relevant online content using keywords, topics, and more. Contextual targeting is appealing to consumers, because it’s related to the information that they’re currently consuming. It’s useful for pharma marketers because it targets topics, not people, so there are no privacy concerns. For example, pharma marketers who offer heart-healthy medications can ensure that their ads only appear on pages with content related to heart health.
Facebook and Instagram offer the perfect combination of reach and scale to generate engagement for pharmaceutical products and services. Facebook reaches 1.8 billion users around the world every month, and can reach one billion people daily on their mobile phones. As healthcare marketers look for new ways to reach their target audiences, they should consider social platforms. For example, Melanoma through Instagram, an Australian organization, used an algorithm to reach people who posted from the beach. Then, they used location data and hashtags to reply to public Instagram posts as “Melanoma,” to generate awareness about sun exposure.
Facebook is able to target users by gender, age, and device, as well as interests and locations. It can data mine to develop segments based on user profiles. By creating frequent traffic and targeting channels, marketers can reach select health- and wellness-focused audiences when they’re in a receptive mindset, searching for healthcare information and advice. Facebook is also optimized for search and for video, compliant to all regulations, and can repurpose print and TV ads to accommodate pharma.

For example, many parents and caregivers are very active on Facebook, turning to social media to vent about challenges they’re experiencing, to look for solutions, and to seek support. By advertising on social media platforms, marketers are able to place their ads in peoples’ news feeds without disrupting the user experience.

Regulatory agencies have struggled to come up with rules governing promotion of prescription drugs through social media. In 2014, the FDA introduced voluntary guidelines for companies on how to present the risks and benefits of a product online, even with a character limit. One option is to include hyperlinks that can direct people to a more detailed listing of side effects. There is still no official guidance for doctors on social media. To date, the only social media campaign that has had their hand slapped was for the morning-sickness drug Diclegis, which featured Kim Kardashian prominently holding a prescription bottle in an Instagram post. Unfortunately, the ad overstated claims and omitted all risks, and Diclegis and Kardashian were reprimanded and forced to retract their post. Even though the post was liked more than 450K times and Diclegis received more than a 500% increase in digital buzz surrounding the controversy, it didn’t help the profits-over-people skepticism from consumers.

/The Privacy Part

Data collection is paramount for marketing teams in every industry, including pharma. Of course, no conversation can be had about pharma-related consumer data mining without talking about the privacy laws that are in place to protect consumers. Data mining for pharma comes with rules and regulations that other industries don’t have to worry about.

Online consumer data includes what sites they visit, what subjects they search for, what media they respond to (video or photos), their location, and, of course, their product-browsing behavior. Federal regulations for pharma advertising are vague, and leave a lot of room for interpretation. When data is tied to cookies or other digital identifiers, the legal and ethical permissibility varies case by case.
The following government agencies are responsible for regulating prescription drug advertising:

**Food and Drug Administration (FDA).** The FDA regulates all prescription drug advertising. They work to protect the public’s health by assuring the safety, effectiveness, and security of prescription drugs and remedies.12

**Office of Prescription Drug Promotion (OPDP),** a division of the FDA, the OPDP ensures pharmaceutical companies provide information that is truthful, balanced, and accurate. They oversee all prescription drug advertising activities, and take action against advertisers who violate the laws. They also educate the industry about advertising laws, and encourage better communication of promotional information provided to healthcare professionals and patients.11

**The Federal Trade Commission (FTC).** The FTC reviews all ads for Over-the-Counter drugs. They regulate all help-seeking ads, or unbranded ads, which describe specific conditions but do not endorse a particular drug or remedy.12

**HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996)** is a piece of U.S. legislation that provides data privacy and security provisions for safeguarding medical information.

Connected consumers are using every device at their disposal to take control of their health—there are countless apps and websites full of information and advice about every condition, and consumers investigate them all. All this searching for symptoms, conditions, and personal accounts represents a viable opportunity for pharma/healthcare marketers to collect big data through devices, the cloud, and advanced analytics, while presenting campaigns that adhere to government and industry regulations.
Healthcare marketers are beginning to embrace online advertising. Generally, they have been known to shy away from less-traditional advertising, as they're more comfortable advertising in a safe and familiar place. However, as the industry and technology evolve, it’s crucial for healthcare marketers to embrace the new places where consumers are spending their time. It’s easy to reach the audience you seek through comprehensive campaigns that target consumers on both traditional media like magazines, and via new and highly effective online options. **We excel at reaching healthcare/POC consumers and healthcare providers with multimedia solutions that get attention.**

The leader in patient-centric solutions, Targeted Media Health (TMH) connects brands with health- and wellness-focused consumers at the point-of-care and beyond. As a subsidiary of MNI Targeted Media Inc., a Time Inc. company, TMH’s portfolio of solutions are engaging, influential, and measurable. Magazine Cover Wraps, condition-specific guides, and effective digital and mobile targeting inspire action at the point-of-care and throughout the patient journey.
Sources