HEALTHCARE MARKETING 2018:

Guide to Meeting New Priorities in a Shifting Environment

The healthcare industry is experiencing a digital evolution. Emerging technologies from telehealth to AI are impacting healthcare delivery and patient engagement, and health tech start-ups are increasing the competition. Research shows that patients are ready and waiting for more technology in healthcare, and the industry is responding: a recent HIMSS survey revealed that 90% of physicians are already using mobile devices to engage patients, and 52% of hospitals currently use three or more connected health technologies.

Marketers, in turn, also need to evolve. The question is: how do they stay one step ahead as the healthcare space continues to transform?

To get a sense of what marketers experienced this year, how they're adapting to changes in the industry, and what they're focused on looking ahead, we interviewed a panel of senior marketers from healthcare and life sciences organizations including Pfizer, Phoenix Children's Hospital, Illumina, MDxHealth and others. Read ahead for their insights, as well as tips for how to meet shifting marketing priorities in this new environment.

THE LANDSCAPE AS MARKETERS SEE IT

Marketing & PR Priorities

This year and heading into 2018, marketers are becoming hyper-focused – drilling down on their customer segments, on metrics and on revenue. Content is also a top priority: it must be highly customized in order to resonate.

"What are your top marketing & PR priorities this year and heading into 2018?"

- Tie PR or marketing more closely to business/financial metrics
- Better segment and target our key audiences
- Create more customized content for target audiences
- Leverage new/emerging technologies to better communicate with stakeholders

Some of these priorities are actually different than they were a year or two ago. When we asked, "What is the biggest difference between your marketing/PR priorities today vs. two years ago?", here's what we found:

1. **Crystallizing customer segments is more important than ever.** Nearly all marketers we spoke with want to be more targeted, focus on buyer journeys, nurture leads, and work toward very specific goals with their customers. This was important to marketers at all kinds of organizations including health insurers, hospitals, diagnostics companies and more, and regardless of whether their business was B2B or B2C.

2. **The marketing mix is shifting to digital.** There is a bigger focus on technology enablement, with more social media included in the mix in order to meet the needs of target audiences. Some marketers said social media is now treated as a stand-alone process – whereas it used to be disregarded or included as an afterthought, it now has its own workflow. While this means there are more chances for disconnect among marketing, PR and sales, it also means more opportunities for audience engagement.

3. **Educating through content is top priority.** Creating custom content was key for all marketers. Some panelists said they are using content to create awareness, educate influencers and ultimately increase adoption of products, while for others the goal is simpler – to build up owned content in order to scale back paid media.

> "There is an increased focus on consumer engagement and content marketing through social channels"
>
> – Deborah Radcliffe, Consultant, Former Director, Consumer Marketing, Digital Strategy and Innovation at Pfizer

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

According to the marketers we spoke with, the #1 thing impacting healthcare marketing and PR heading into 2018 is technology. They see the role of the CMO and senior marketing executives changing over the coming year as they adapt to technology's impact on the industry. Some say marketing will soon own as much technology as IT, and be as tech driven as the CTO or CIO.

> "The CMO must not only be a communicator, but also extremely tech savvy".
>
> – Merrilyn Datta, Head of Business Operations, Illumina

Most of the marketers on our panel are embracing the tech trend – leveraging emerging technologies like AI to transform big data into actionable insights and getting onboard with automation platforms to support marketing on the back-end. However, while leveraging emerging tech to communicate with target audiences was listed as a top priority, only about half of the marketers we spoke with said they are starting to use immersive technologies like augmented or virtual reality in their marketing programs right now.

MEETING NEW PRIORITIES: 5 ESSENTIALS FOR HEALTHCARE MARKETING

Healthcare marketers will continue to face challenges brought on by shifts in the industry and the need to adapt to evolving technologies and consumer needs. However, these changes also provide new opportunities to better engage target audiences and position your brand as a resource and leader in the space. In order to capitalize on the opportunities, every PR & marketing plan should include these five essentials:

1. **Advanced Social Media:** According to Shalon Roth, EVP of Corporate Communications & Public Affairs at MDxHealth, "Harnessing social media to drive awareness and loyalty" is the biggest opportunity for healthcare marketers in 2018. Now that we've moved past the stage of regulatory confusion and concern

around social media, healthcare organizations have a bigger presence on social. However, this is the year to take social a step further; it can't just be about sharing information – it needs to be about better engaging with your target audiences, and using all the tools available to do so. Don't be afraid to try something new if it will create a relationship with your target audience.

2. **Targeted Content + Promotion:** Creating customized content was a top priority for all marketers we spoke with, but it's sometimes easier said than done. The first step is identifying and understanding your target audiences. Research the types of content they consume: What information do they consider valuable and informative? What do they share with their friends and business network? Where and how are they consuming most of their content? Answering these questions will help you develop content that gets noticed and drives engagement. And don't be too promotional. Offer insights and let your expertise speak for itself. Remember the 80/20 rule: 80% independent content, and 20% company and product messages.

> "We started live video streaming, we began a series of Facebook Live Q&A videos with hospital stakeholders, and we were the first children's hospital to Periscope a surgery."
>
> – Jared Johnson, Manager, Marketing Technology & Analytics at Phoenix Children's Hospital

Content distribution is just as important as development, and a strong promotional strategy includes earned, social and paid media. According to eMarketer, the healthcare and pharma industry spends less on paid online and mobile media than any other industry. Sponsored content is becoming a more important vehicle - not only does it enable you to control the message and better reach your target audience, it has metrics built in, so you can more accurately tie PR efforts back to business results. This is one to consider adding to your strategy.

3. **Creative Media Relations:** The majority of marketers we spoke with said that PR efforts have been more challenging over the last year given the political climate and news cycle, and there's ongoing pressure to do more with less in a competitive and saturated media environment. However, they also said that media relations have had a big impact on their marketing programs, and will continue to play a key role moving into 2018. Thus, organizations need to get creative to stay top of mind in the media.

The good news is, with the right storylines, any organization can be a trendsetter. The most important thing you can do is keep abreast of industry trends and insert your point of view into relevant breaking news stories (we call this Trend Intervention & Story Hijacking). One of the hottest trends in healthcare media right now is tech disruption – but few healthcare organizations are speaking up about the impact of tech on the industry. For some tips on how to incorporate tech storytelling into your PR efforts, check out: Healthcare Organizations Need a Strong Tech Narrative.

4. **Emerging Tech Campaigns:** It's time to seriously take a look at using emerging and immersive tech platforms in 2018. Augmented reality, virtual reality, AI, voice applications – these technologies are being explored within healthcare delivery, but have opportunities for healthcare marketing as well. Whether it's

giving your tradeshow booth a "wow factor" or using VR to give tours of facilities or immersive product experiences, even just dipping your toes into emerging tech can give your patient engagement or B2B marketing program a boost.

5. **Business-Oriented Metrics:** Tying PR and marketing efforts more closely to business/financial metrics was listed as a top priority for marketers. However, measurement has been talked about for years by marketers and PR executives, yet this important exercise often falls by the wayside when it comes time for execution. Make 2018 the year you really make it happen. Create true metrics for all your PR and marketing programs so you can demonstrate that the work has real value for the business, and pivot if you find out that it doesn't.

When creating metrics, consider what truly matters to the organization and C-suite and measure accordingly. Metrics could include:

PR/MARKETING METRICS
- Share of Voice
- Customer / Patient Engagement
- Traffic to Website
- Downloads
- Registrations
- Lead Gen

BUSINESS METRICS
- Market Penetration (New Vertical)
- Market Leadership (Over Competition)
- Market Share (%)
- Sales/Revenue
- Cost Savings
- Brand Loyalty

READY TO GET STARTED?
Need some support developing your marketing plan, crafting great storylines or content, or creating the right metrics? Affect can help. Get in touch with us to collaborate on your program:

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