

Digital Media and the OTC Marketer

What's the most effective – and most appropriate – means of using digital media to reach consumers in today's fast-moving and quick-changing marketing world? This was one of the issues expounded on by the experts at this year's OTC National Conference in Philadelphia. Following is a report on the media discussion segment from the two-day event.

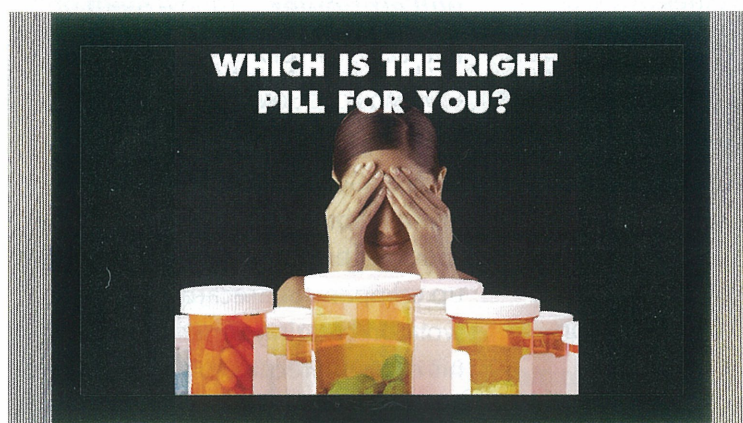
BY AMANDA EHRLICH

» Digital media is a term so often heard on the lips of marketers and agency executives today. However, often little consideration is given to how digital media is actually relevant to the brand and what type of digital media is best to reach the consumer. Between mobile, social media, search, digital outdoor and banner ads, to name just a few options, the decision to invite digital media into the marketing mix is not an easy one.

At the OTC National Conference, held earlier this year in Philadelphia, attendees were presented with a wide variety of expert opinions on digital media, including online trade marketing, digital medical education, and a panel on the merits of digital media. Together, these speakers helped to shed light on the ubiquitous term: digital media.

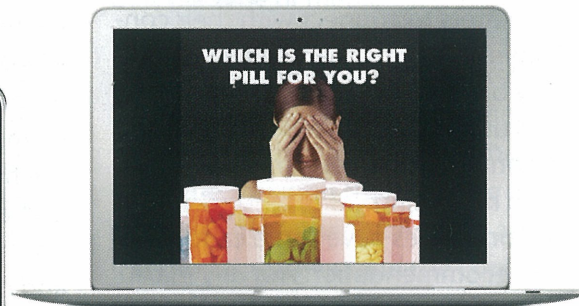
THE EMERGENCE OF ONLINE TRADE MARKETING

"People aren't just sharing reviews for high-ticket items anymore," Desmonique Bonet, a senior account executive at Google, told attendees. While many marketers may believe that online reviews of goods are limited to big-ticket items such as cars, vacations and electronics, Bonet made it clear that OTC products are being widely reviewed



around the Web, also. In fact, Bonet noted that 83 percent of consumers currently research consumer-packaged-goods (CPG products) prior to entering stores such as CVS, Walgreens and Walmart.

So what does this mean for marketers? With consumers using the Internet to garner more information prior to a purchase, they are likely utilizing search engines such as Google and Yahoo!, also. Marketers can capitalize on this knowledge by making sure that their product website appears first in the search. However, the product website cannot be the boring HTML 1.0 of 10



years ago, with recycled information from product labels. The content must be "contextually relevant, rich information that will empower the consumer," Bonet said.

The best way to create content that is empowering to the consumer is to provide online coupons. Particularly in this lackluster and recession-like economy that is impacting purchasing patterns of most shoppers, demand for coupons is on the rise. And while these coupons provide an incentive for consumers to purchase the product, Bonet

noted that coupons also provide the marketer with some real-time tracking tools for the purchase behavior of their consumers. Additionally, coupons can be updated in real time and can be geo-targeted, so that certain coupons can be limited to specific towns and cities.

Bonet advised marketers to share their online coupons with consumers by partnering with a retail partner's site. So, for example, create a "designated landing page" for the brand on Walmart.com, CVS.com or Target.com. This landing page also will appear in Google searches and will strengthen a brand's relationship with the retailer.

The best aspect of utilizing online trade marketing is the ability for marketers to connect with their consumers for more than 30 seconds. Any brand messages the marketer was unable to convey via more traditional media, they can relay via Web marketing.

Bonet does have some cautionary recommendations for any marketer interested in taking their OTC brand campaign to the web. She recommended that any information and brand messaging that appears online should mirror the messaging in more traditional media. She also recommended mirroring in-store trade calendars with online trade calendars. "Having continuity is extremely important in the battle against private label," she cautioned.

IT'S TIME FOR A RENAISSANCE OF CONSUMER MEDICAL EDUCATION

While many speakers at the OTC National Conference spoke of utilizing existing online media outlets

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such as Google and Facebook to leverage brands online, Jeff Arnold, the chief executive of online start-up company Sharecare, spoke of his work on creating a media outlet of his own: Sharecare.com.

Though Arnold already has developed numerous online giants, including the popular Internet sites WebMD and Howstuffworks.com, his new venture Sharecare is the culmination of his experience in the medical field and his expertise in the online space. WebMD was a successful merger of technology and medical information. However, when it was developed, there was a lack of participation from doctors and medical professionals. Arnold warned the marketers and media executives at the OTC National that, "Technology is great but without good patient communication it falls down."

Today, only one-third of doctors are communicating with their patients online, while Arnold points to research that indicates that 95 percent of adult consumers want to email with their doctors. To capitalize on the growing demands of doctors to get more digital, Arnold

created Sharecare, where doctors and hospitals can have their own pages, almost like Facebook, where patients can ask questions and others can see the questions and answers on the doctor's/hospital's page.

While Sharecare had yet to officially launch at the time of the OTC National meeting, attendees were able to see a peak at the website. Early partners of Sharecare include the well-known medical advisers Dr. Mehmet Oz, Dr. Michael Roizen, the Cleveland Clinic, Deepak Chopra, Oprah's Harpo Inc, and Johns Hopkins University. Each of these partners has their own pages, complete with relevant and current medical information.

The interest for OTC marketers in Sharecare is the ability to develop their own page for the site, such as Dove, which already has partnered with the site. Its Sharecare page features standard product information, but more importantly has Q&As relevant to skincare. Thus, consumers can ask skincare questions to Dove and receive helpful tips and Dove product recommendations. Sharecare will provide OTC marketers with another, more inter-

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— MIKE RUTSTEIN OF STRIKEFORCE



active venue to reach consumers with brand messaging.

Arnold said that industries should have a voice and help to build a collective medical IQ. Sharecare will help eliminate the “ping pong” consumers have to go through, bouncing from site to site to find the current, relevant medical information for which they are searching.

**A POTPOURRI OF OPINIONS
VOICED ON MIXED-MEDIA PANEL**

The culmination of digital marketing discussion at the 2010 OTC National was a spirited mixed-media panel featuring Joshua Palau, vice president, search engine marketing, at Razorfish; Mike Rutstein, a founder and president of Strikeforce Communications; Mary Haskin, a vice president of marketing and sales development at Time Inc.; Patricia McWilliams, head of health-care sales and operations at Google; and Debbie Reichig, a senior vice president of business development and marketing at Clear Channel Outdoor. The moderator of this panel was David Grueneberg, a former director of advertising resources at Bristol-Myers Squibb. Each panelist brought a differing perspective to the discussion.

The main topic of discussion of the panel was digital media and the role it should play in the media mix for OTC marketers. McWilliams of Google told attendees that she has definitely noticed increased ad spend going to the online space. With this increased spend, she noted, OTC marketers are turning once formulaic and basic product websites into engaging, interactive brand experiences.

Palau of Razorfish agreed, noting that the “consumer changed,” moving over to the digital space. This move has increased business for digital agency Razorfish. He cautioned marketers not to be wary of digital media. “Consumers are going to go there whether you go there or not,” he said.

Even the more traditional medium, outdoor, has made the move to digital. “[Clear Channel] has changed in response to the industry,” Reichig told attendees. “We’ve developed new metrics so that we can provide advertisers with information in the same language that people are used to measuring media with... We have digital billboards and posters across the country that you can change the messaging on the fly.”

While most of the panel was enthusiastic about the move to the digital space, Rutstein of Strikeforce Communications cautioned marketers “not too get wrapped around all the talk about online content, social media... In reality, while there’s a lot of conversation around it, often digital is not the place to go.” Rutstein continued, “There’s a reason traditional channels have built some of the most powerful brands out there today.”

Rutstein told attendees that digital could play a role in the media mix, but there should be no overarching goal to put money towards digital media. He reminded marketers, “It’s important to remember who the consumer is, what they are trying to achieve, and where you are going with the brand” before the marketer makes media decisions.

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– MARY HASKIN OF TIME INC.

Mary Haskin of Time agreed with Rutstein, calling consumers “situational media users” and noting that the type of media used should depend on the brand and the particular type of consumer the marketer is trying to engage. She explained, “People will choose a medium based upon the situation that they are in. It’s not about either or. As long as the story is relevant and the content is relevant, all media have a place.”

Thus, while digital media is an exciting addition to the media mix, it need not be the only medium utilized by marketers. Used in conjunction with traditional media, digital media can be a great way to convey information directly to consumers, allowing the consumer more time to engage with brand messaging. However, any digital media strategy, be it online trade marketing, social media or mobile, must mirror brand messaging already being conveyed in traditional forms such as television, print and radio. <<