

## MARKETING: SOCIAL MEDIA

## TO TWITTER AND BEYOND

Pharmaceutical marketing will include social media, but the verdict is still out on its ultimate impact on stakeholders.



For several years there has been much debate regarding whether pharma companies should even use social media as a means to communicate with its consumers. Our experts project that social media will move beyond Twitter and support many functions within marketing strategies, thus securing a permanent place in the industry's marketing channels.

Unquestionably the role of social media in healthcare has its place, says Mike Rutstein, president of StrikeForce Communications.

"In many ways it may offer significant long-term opportunities to generate a dialogue and provide relevant and motivating content for patients and their caregivers," he says. "However, used incorrectly, social media also brings about many risks, including losing control of the brand story and tarnishing the reputation of pharmaceutical companies as intervening in sacred spaces for commercial purposes."

The time has come to have less chatter about the channel and put more focus on the idea and messaging, Mr. Rutstein says.

#### Marc Ferrara

##### Jobson Medical Information

*"We foresee that social media will become a significant channel in the marketing mix for pharmaceutical and biotechnology organizations."*

"Brand managers want to communicate with key stakeholders with the fundamental building blocks in place and a sound planning strategy, but the role of social media, if any, should develop naturally," he says. "Only with time and careful consideration will we come to realize the full potential of social media, as well as its implications and effectiveness."

Elizabeth Estes, executive VP, chief strategy officer, GA Communication Group, believes the natural flow of social media in the industry will take the shape of more niche and targeted groups, including expanded disease communities.

"Patients now own the media and will increasingly share their experiences, both good and bad," Ms. Estes says. "Although the

#### A BREAKDOWN OF PHARMA SOCIAL MEDIA

Cegedem Relationship Management recently conducted an opinion survey among decision makers in the pharmaceutical industry regarding current trends and issues, including the use of social media. Below are some of the findings.

##### Social Media Use

- 59% of respondents reported using social media for marketing.
- 34% of respondents reported using social media for PR.
- 27% of respondents reported using social media for internal communications.
- 14% of respondents reported using social media for CRM.
- 11% of respondents reported using social media for human resources.
- 2% of respondents reported using social media for other functions.
- 3% of respondents reported they were not using social media.

##### Investment in Social Media

- 51% reported less than 5% of the budget was allocated to social media channels.
- 22% reported 5% to 10% of the budget was allocated to social media channels.
- 9% reported 11% to 20% of the budget was allocated to social media channels.
- 2% reported more than 20% of the budget was allocated to social media channels.
- 16% reported they didn't know what the budget allocation was.

Source: Cegedim Relationship Management. For more information, visit [cegedim.com](http://cegedim.com).

**Lisa Ebert**

*Medicus Life Brands*

*"As marketers we must resist the temptation to use social media as a platform for selling. Rather, we should focus on conversing, building communities, maintaining relationships, and promoting advocacy."*



**Jay Bigelow**

*MicroMass Communications*

*"Brand managers need to find ways to insert their brands into the conversation that will be accepted, instead of trying to control the conversation."*



FDA may disagree, this power will continue to disrupt the gatekeepers, and make it virtually impossible for brands and companies to ignore these conversations."

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND STAKEHOLDERS

As the industry moves into an era where the number of stakeholders is increasing and the impact of stakeholders is shifting, it will be important to leverage the channel of social media in the form of online social networks and the many interactions that they enable.

According to Terry Hisey, vice chairman, U.S. life sciences leader, Deloitte, social networking is playing an increasingly pivotal role in the dissemination, collection, and facilitation of interactions in the healthcare arena.

"Social networking is not just about technology but rather technology enabled strategies that lead to desired actions and behaviors that ultimately drive improved patient outcomes in the healthcare sector," Mr. Hisey says.

Marketers need to embrace the way in which social media is now making information acquisition and connectivity with others dramatically easier for everyone — patients, providers, physicians, etc.. This evolution will allow brand marketers to hit their targets with more than just interruptive promotional messages.

"Social media will blur the lines between advertising and content," says Todd LaRoche, executive VP, managing director of creative, Palio. "Advertising is becoming more about offering ways for patients and physicians to

take better care of themselves, and each other, than it is about selling."

According to Lisa Ebert, managing director, at Medicus Life Brands, the complex mix of stakeholders in the pharma industry demands a deep understanding of what motivates different individuals to share certain types of information in certain communities vs. others. With this deep understanding, engaging in social media — as part of an overall integrated communications plan — has the potential to help healthcare brands build relationships with customers via both branded and non-branded efforts from early market development through patent expiration.

"As marketers we must resist the temptation to use social media as a platform for selling," Ms. Ebert says. "Rather, we should focus on conversing, building communities, maintaining relationships, and promoting advocacy. Our measures will shift from looking at behaviors, such as page visits and click-throughs, to analyzing changes in stakeholder attitudes."

Pharma should look toward successful examples in other industries to learn how to adapt and implement the medium.

"Whether it's leveraging social media to improve customer-service effectiveness like Comcast has done, or using social media to develop new products, services, and customer-experience improvements like Dell and Starbucks have done, the ultimate opportunity that social media provides is to get a better understanding of customer wants, needs, and behaviors, and align business objectives with these insights," advises Ken Burbary, director

## SOCIAL NETWORKS GAIN POWER AROUND THE WORLD

SSI's study of more than 5,000 adults in the United States, Europe, and Japan demonstrates the growing power of social networks. Among 18 to 24 year olds in all countries studied, social network usage is high — more than 80%. The social network phenomenon, however, is not limited to the young. In the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and Spain, about half of all study respondents reported that they used social media within the last week. Even more surprising is the growing percentage of people older than 45 years participating in social networks — 40% in the U.S., 45% in the UK, and 50% in Spain.

Source: Survey Sampling International. For more information, visit [surveysampling.com](http://surveysampling.com).



**Mike Rutstein**

*StrikeForce Communications*

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of digital and social media, advisory services, Ernst & Young.

Participating in social media will require the industry to let go of old ideals, says Nancy Beesley, chief marketing officer, HC&B Healthcare Communications.

"The Internet and social media have essentially redefined the way we communicate with our target audiences," she says. "We gave patients and doctors information on our terms and told them what we wanted them to know about our products. Now, consumers are more in control of the conversation by talking among themselves through online communities and applications.