



Tough Demands to Galvanize Marketing Communications

2011 Brand Champions Will Possess Six Key Skills

With a constantly evolving media landscape, a demand for new standards has arisen. As a result, marketers must accelerate their skills in six key areas to separate their marketing communications and become brand champions.

BY ELLEN HOENIG-CARLSON

Working in an ever-changing world of new media, technologies and social platforms, coupled with increasingly powerful ePatient communities, begs for new abilities. Stepping into the second decade of the 21st century, demanding new standards will separate the champions from the also-rans.

Spurring brand and patient success requires building on wisdom from the past, while honing new abilities to educate, motivate and converse with patients and their families. Savvy marketers know that the 4P's [Product, Promotion, Place and Price] – including disciplined analysis, insight mining and positioning, strategy and objective setting, creative development and media planning – have never been more critical. In addi-

tion, 2011 brand champions are challenged to create “shared value,”¹ accelerating skills in six areas:

- 1) Dynamic listening and action;
- 2) Curating information and content marketing;
- 3) Pinpointing boundary-less consumers;
- 4) Communicating for an ADHD world;
- 5) Relinquishing the struggle for control;
- 6) Catalyzing growing teams of specialists.

Fair warning: these critical skills won't be best learned by reading a bestseller, taking in a webinar or delegating to a junior team member or vendor; they require ongoing experimenting and doing. As Malcolm Gladwell points out, it takes

10,000 hours of focused practice to become a consistently great performer.

Skill 1: Listen and engage

Dynamic listening and action, real-time. Not just in planned research settings, but in the real world – everyday. Identifying opportunities and learning from ePatients and their influencers. It's not enough to go to a meeting once a quarter to find out what has been said by your patient opinion leaders (POL's), ePatients and caregivers. Make dynamic engagement part of your daily regimen, so that your listening is real time and can enable actions to be planned and executed immediately – either by you or by the right specialists.

Astute marketers take dynamic listening seriously – they know who to listen to, where to listen, what's most important to take note of, and are eminently geared to take action by responding nimbly to new learning. Champion marketers know that listening without action is as dangerous as acting without listening. Insightful listening can bump up creative or messaging, clarify a product story that is not being fully understood, produce new ideas for product development and/or service improvements, address new sub-segments, or provide improved, real-time customer service.

With so many services at your fingertips, many free or low cost, don't risk being slack. Whether via something as simple as setting up a Google alert or a hash tag search on Twitter, or purchasing services such as Radian6 or Nielsen BuzzMetrics, stay on top of important brands, programs or topics.

Skill 2: Curating information for content

Curating information and content marketing to deliver value to patients, families and their communities. It's true, with the growth of the Internet and search engines, copious amounts of health information abound. But today's champion marketer must be able to scan the Web, determine what information will be most helpful to high-value targets and bring it to their core customers in an easy-to-digest format.

Consumers don't need more information, but the right information, at the right time, for their particular need. Curating the right information isn't easy – and takes time – but can be well worth the effort by being invaluable to patients and their families.

Be vigilant: curating and content marketing require a different mindset than traditional copy writing. The first is more educational in nature and the second, designed to get the reader to take a specific action, is inherently more “salesy.” Both are critical for successful marketers today; both can help the other work harder. Each may beg for different media vehicles and platforms to work best.

Skill 3: Pinpointing consumers

Reaching boundary-less consumers, where they are – and at that critical moment of truth – when they are



in need or curious to learn. This requires understanding how to reach target consumers practically and emotionally: assessing their media channel and platform preferences, technology acumen, where they are along the treatment pathway, and their most pressing needs.

It doesn't necessarily mean dropping TV or print from your media mix, but reconsidering how to perfectly mesh creative and media mix, branded and unbranded education, awareness and response, traditional off-line and Web media with new social media and mobile platforms.

Media planning used to mean allocating spending between a few mass market vehicles – a relatively easy exercise between reach, frequency and cost effectiveness. Adapting the creative was almost as easy. Now, just to reach a core segment of target consumers, it's necessary to address a more complex mix of online and off-line media and platforms – each with distinct creative and technical needs – without an easy formula.

Should you be actively considering mobile health technologies? Consider: while Web 2.0 continues to spur the ePatient movement, 85 percent of U.S. consumers have cell phones (93 percent of young adults aged 18-29) and this number is growing. [This compares to only 66 percent of Americans who have broadband access.]

More than 200 million mHealth applications are in use today, and that number is expected to increase threefold by 2012, according to a new report from Pyramid Research. Given the number of healthcare solutions possible via mobile technologies and platforms, mHealth represents a new frontier.

Further, the aging of tech-savvy baby boomers who want to retain control over their lives will lead to greater adoption of wireless and mobile health products, helping to reposition healthcare around patients, according to a new report by MIT Enterprise Forum's Northwest chapter.

While connected health and health monitoring services will fast become our future, still called for is perspective. There are still hurdles ahead before mobile usage for healthcare will be

widespread, including regulation, reimbursement questions, and consumer behavior that prioritize face-to-face connections for the majority of their healthcare questions.

How will you surround and support your key patients? How will you help patients and their families better manage their health? How will you help patients better communicate with their circle of healthcare influencers? Consumers' technology choices will continue to change. Make sure you stay up with the changes and embrace the right ones quickly.

Skill 4: Succinct, meaningful communications

Communicating for an ADHD-like world. People want one-second sound bites before they commit to investing more time. Growing addiction to new technology is further feeding the consumer experience of being barraged 24/7. *Is the Internet Changing the Way You Think?* edited by John Brockman, shows a continual theme among both enthusiasts and skeptics: the Internet isn't changing the way we think, it is exacerbating the deceptively simple challenge of "attention management"...the new Darwinian imperative may be "the survival of the focused."

Stimulating patient and caregiver curiosity, learning and action, staying aware of the onslaught of messaging and communications is not easy. Cut through the cacophony by helping customers focus on what's important. Speak in their language, learn how they listen, absorb and want to interact. This begs for marketers to know targets even more deeply, prioritize ever more accurately, and make hard choices to keep it simple and to the point! [KISS] This is the way to be part of the solution and not part of the noise. Your patients will thank you and maybe even connect with you.

Skill 5: Turn control over to consumers

Relinquish the struggle for control. Controlled customer communication is a dream from the past. One result of the Internet revolution is that "the people formerly known as the patients/audience" became publishers and broadcasters – and pundits and critics.²

Who owns a brand anyway? Turns out that customers are the primary force – not the manufacturer. Remember new



Sanofi-Aventis' effort is a multi-channel, multi-platform approach, designed to meet consumers where they are.

Coke? New Tropicana carton? Motrin IB "baby-wearing" campaign? Today's brand champions must respond quickly, integrating new learning while the train is moving.

Build trust by stepping into real-time with consumers. Don't wait for FDA social media regulations; join the many that are starting to take simple steps. Let some conversations flow; respond to some conversations. Encourage co-creation where possible. Bump up value-add marketing and support – consistently and genuinely. In addition to keeping your ears in great shape, adopt a language and voice of authenticity, and consistently deliver education, support, compassion, and customer care for the patient and the community.

Provide as much personalization and two-way conversation as possible – that's what consumers want, and that's what they trust.

Skill 6: Keeping everything in lockstep

Catalyzing growing teams of specialists, fostering focused collaboration, while seeking new partnerships to grow your brands. It used to be hard enough to integrate seamless execution across professional, consumer, and PR agency partners across media channels of awareness, off-line and online relationship marketing, Web SEO, SEM and Web campaigns, IVR, and database management. Now it's all of this, plus staying current with emerging specialties, and devel-

oping and executing programs across the multitude of shifting social and mobile health applications.

Keeping a brand, its specialists and partners in lockstep takes new facilitation and remote-coordination skills. It also requires traditional integration and team-building skills ramped up to an entirely new level to insure seamless delivery and a focused brand message, look and feel.

While it used to be relatively easy to find the required experts, now, as technologies and platforms evolve at lightning speed, identifying the real experts in each is no small task. Too many specialists and agencies too easily call themselves “expert” – i.e., “social media expert;” look for the ones that are really partaking and have been doing so consistently and effectively over time.

One company that seems to be accelerating the use of these six skills, innovating, listening and acting consistently more than others in pharma is Sanofi-Aventis with their multi-channel, multi-platform, branded and unbranded work for diabetes. Recently they launched discussdiabetes.com, a blog to improve listening, dialogue, and support of the diabetes community. [Time will tell how much real-time learning and action is spread throughout the organization in response to their community listening.] Their diabetes effort is multi-channel, multi-platform, designed to meet consumers where they are – whether a patient prefers YouTube or watching video,

Twitter, Facebook, blogs, using the GoMeals free app or visiting branded and unbranded websites, such as [Cooking with the Sorvinos](http://CookingwiththeSorvinos.com), WhyInsulin.com, a1cchampions.com, STANDforDiabetes.org [Start Taking Action Now for Diabetes] or Lantus.com. Interestingly, Novo Nordisk, Roche and others are also doing more vs. less to reach out to patients with diabetes. Credit the strong diabetes patient community for spurring innovation.

Champions know that there’s nothing new about upgrading and honing new skills – it’s the practice of a lifetime. For DTC marketers, the task gets more complex every year. Choosing what to learn, where to focus, when to bring in new expertise will be a big part of what boosts the champs over the finish. **DTC**

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Endnotes

- 1 HBR January-February 2011, Michael E. Porter, The Big Idea: Creating Shared Value
- 2 Lee Rainie, Director, Pew Internet Project *Online Health Seeking*, 10/2010



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