

2010 Outlook: Doom and Gloom for DTC?



10 Points for Winning with Patients

Now is the time to re-think about DTC marketing in the 21st Century. With all of the new ways to engage with patients, the author suggests 10 prescriptions to help marketers improve their DTC efforts in 2010.

BY ELLEN HOENIG-CARLSON

Despite many gloomy predictions for DTC advertising and the pharma industry overall, there's never been a better time for marketers to forward their brands and consumers' lives with new thinking about patient marketing in the 21st Century (DTC 21). Ten prescriptions can improve focus and strengthen DTC efforts in 2010. Important media and technology trends are also “musts” to actively consider for those who want to bump impact and value. [See related sidebars.]

1 Adopt an updated definition of DTC

Consider the full picture of how patients and their families will interpret and interact with your brand TODAY. This calls for attention beyond “big bang” marketing spends, and begs for identifying meaningful levers to drive education and growth. DTC is no longer just an awareness or acquisition vehicle to move “eyeballs” through a linear marketing funnel; it's every influencer and touch needed to bring new information, convert, instill loyalty and inspire advocacy. To accom-

plish a fresh face to patients, it's essential that all touches and voices be consistent, aligned and integrated across media-savvy segments.

Competitive advantage awaits those who approach DTC 21 as an integrated totality of all touches and interactions, based on a brand's strategic core. It's a powerful discipline, and critical for pharma to attract, engage and bring value to patients and families. As such, DTC 21 spans all consumer touches – from TV and Web advertising to social media, to designing an innovative game for pro-active health. Even for small brands not contemplating traditional TV / print DTC, creating a clearly differentiated creative platform for consumer communication and engagement is a must.

2 Embrace the “long tail”

Web and social media are perfect for chasing and interacting with smaller / niche targets that were invisible years ago. Long tail marketing treats consumers as individuals with unique interests and needs.

3 Go where your consumers are

Surround them where they go to learn, socialize and engage. Today's consumer is busy as ever, multi-tasking more than ever, and not looking for marketing messages. Study after study points to both the growth of the Internet, and the fact that consumers get health information from multiple sources. Depending on your target, this suggests a mix of relevant touches and begs for the right combination of traditional and new media – increasing amounts of Web, adoption of social media to encourage dialogue and community, new mobile applications, video and games for health. This also means leveraging the unique potential of each emerging media environment as an engagement vehicle.

TV is by no means dead, and should be considered if it fulfills brand objectives and makes sense for the target, message and experience the brand wants to create. When TV is called for, execute with more entertainment, engagement and response. Brainstorm ways to use new interactive technologies to drive

consumers to your Web site for continued dialogue and learning. Additionally, for many pharma brands, the time has come for Web media and search to act as the media hub, with other media vehicles driving to the Web, and working to make the Internet platforms more efficient.

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The best media plans use multiple media to synergistically drive and reinforce each other. Additionally, platforms like Twitter offer opportunities for face-to-face “tweet-ups,” mobile brings opportunities for texting, real-time search, gaming and geo tracking. Pilot ideas...try new stuff. Leaders won't wait for the FDA to draft regulations for social media. Move forward, dip-your-toes, look toward balancing benefits and risks, and what adds genuine value for your brand and target customers.

10 Prescriptions for DTC Efforts in 2010

1. Adopt an updated definition for DTC that considers the full picture of how consumers will interpret and interact with a brand TODAY.
2. Consider “long-tail” marketing; don't be afraid to focus on smaller targets that matter.
3. Go to your consumer – surround them where they get their facts, learn, and socialize.
4. Move beyond selling to engaging and providing meaningful marketing.
5. Walk and talk “patient-centered” – consumers are finely tuned to what's valuable and authentic.
6. Keep your brand's strategic core strong and grounded, despite the onslaught of messages and tactics, and the speed with which they require action.
7. Insist on elegant solutions that do more with less. Smaller budgets don't negate innovation and may have just the opposite effect in spurring new thinking.
8. Don't overlook the details. While they may seem small and trivial, find out which are important to patients and their families.
9. Refresh brand metrics and measurement to drive current brand objectives and initiatives.
10. Listen with vigilance, and act on learning across the organization.

4 Consumers are less open to being sold

It may feel like this will result in a slower “sale,” but in today's market, engaging with meaning may actually result in greater sales and deeper loyalty. Look for new ways to extend patient value, support and a more positive experience along each and every touch point. A closer look at the use of personas along with behavioral segmentation may help to improve the patient experience across Web platforms. Consider a mix of branded and unbranded dialogue. Further, avoid taking consumers from a dynamic social experience to a static Web page; ensure Web site content is as dynamic as the initial contact. If the consumer is searching for a particular topic, provide a seamless transition – give them what they're looking for and not just your “brand sell.”

Engagement requires looking at each patient as a unique human being who, by the way, would “rather not be your customer.” (After all, who wants to have a chronic condition and take medication for the rest of their life, whether it be your brand or a competitor's?) Think hard how you might provide relevant value real-time, every time. This is what it takes to encourage patients and their families to help build your brand, become trusted loyalists and advocate on your behalf: Patient Sell vs. Brand Sell; Meaningful Marketing vs. “Tell and Sell” Advertising.

To improve brand engagement, 6 C's are crucial: 1) **Content** that is based on meaningful insights and provides important *context*; 2) **Customization** via new ways to personalize treatment, process or support; 3) **Conversation** is encouraged for better service, learning and sharing; 4) **Confidence** is built

2010 Media, Social Platforms and Technology Trends – Questions to Ask

1. Internet growth is not new, but does your consumer budget match the Web's growing consumption as a source for healthcare information gathering, engagement and community?
 - Take advantage of a mix of media and messaging to “surround consumer.”
2. Is organic and paid search optimized? Are you using “smart advertising” that incorporates behavioral insights? Is a plan in place to address Google Sidewikis?
3. Are you tapping into the growth of Web for entertainment? People are increasingly watching TV on the Internet via YouTube and Hulu.
4. Is a social media strategy in place that fits with current customer habits? Top platforms to consider: Viral Video, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, blogs – branded and unbranded, company and brand / condition specific. Keep it social, targeted and consider events-based marketing.
 - Online video is now an important way that U.S. consumers research healthcare and medications. YouTube ranks second in overall search volume. Ideally, content and creative should be designed for video and not just re-cut from existing creative elements. Tell a story, but don't exceed two or three minutes. Maximize video placement beyond YouTube, including product.com site.
 - Facebook now has 300MM active users. Twitter offers different expectations.
5. How are you leveraging mobile's tremendous opportunity for real-time, 24/7 communication and engagement? Text sells, apps amplify and use of quick response (QR) codes can simplify.
 - 60% of all mobile subscribers between the ages of 30-49 are text messaging.
 - Not only are smart phones growing exponentially among physicians, they're also growing among consumers.
 - Apple has already sold 2 billion iPhone apps; 82% of iPhone users download at least 6 apps.
6. Games for health?
 - Video games are not just for teen boys; the average gamer is 41 years old. Women are the fastest growing segment. Current largest game segments in health: exercise, brain exercise, condition education, advergaming, training and simulations.
 - Increasingly, games for health are showing hard results around health improvement.
7. Augmented reality? Use it to entertain, educate and engage.
8. Real-time listening in place? Or a panel established for on-going market research and learning, for example Communi-space?

with trust and transparency; 5) **Community Connectedness** – directly or indirectly – create your own, or better yet, tap into an existing one; and 6) **Consistent Commitment** is demonstrated to your customer base – no one shot deals here.

5 Consumer power is a fact of life
Winning brands will “walk and talk” patient-centered marketing. Pharma has no choice but to be patient-driven; consumers are not going to be fooled. This means putting the consumer in the center of decision making from the beginning of development and commercialization to the end. It means asking one simple question during decision making – over and over: *Will this bring meaningful value to our patients?* Importantly, DTC 21 must also encourage more patient responsibility and participation, and work to improve patient / physician dialogue and care.

6 Keep each brand's strategic core strong
Not easy to do with the barrage of messages and Web and social media tactics coming our way. A strong core requires a compelling and relevant brand promise that focuses every strategy and tactic so they're synergistic and supportive. While it's often challenging to stay centered, the payoff is staying on message by protecting the brand from chasing every new, cool digital and new media tactic being marketed.

7 We live in a 'less is more' world
Think about how to bring maximum benefit with the least amount of energy. Do you have a “stop doing” list? If your budget is smaller than last year, don't give up – innovation doesn't require big bucks – in fact, tough constraints often spur innovation.

8 Don't short change the details
 Little things can and do matter. It's a marketer's job to discover which ones mean a lot to patients and their families, and to insure perfect execution. This is the way to help instill better ROI for each program and higher customer loyalty and advocacy. Invest in thinking about how to make nifty new tactics and tried and true services really work well in the marketplace.

9 Define new ROI metrics
 Think beyond traditional reach and frequency measures; refresh metrics and measures to best match current brand goals and objectives. Ensure a flow of metrics from beginning to end of the patient "buying process" so there is active learning along each step. Monitor brand influencers, and devise new ways of measuring engagement and loyalty. Social media is not an excuse to walk away from ROI measurement. Consider pre- and post-measurements for harder to measure efforts. Remember too, delivering significant value in a differentiated and unique way helps drive greater WOM and ROI overall.

10 Excel at 'active listening'
 Be the best listeners in your category. Ask yourself, *what have we heard this past year and what have we*

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done about it? Be sure even-better listening is part of your 2010 plan. Hiring the social media service with the most bells and whistles isn't good enough. Make sure everyone on your team regularly takes the time to actively listen to customers and think about how to turn listening and learning to action. Most important, listening and what you do with your learning is the responsibility of the entire organization, from marketing to PR, customer service, sales, or clinical development. Be sure that each "tweet" or blog learning gets mapped back to an "owner" in the organization, where they can evaluate whether the feedback is consistent or not with prior learning. **DTC**

Ellen Hoenig-Carlson is founder of AdvanceMarketWoRx, a consulting firm known for powering consumer and healthcare brand growth, through traditional and non-traditional marketing, leveraging critical customer interpretations and insights at key points. She can be reached at her blog <http://blog.advancemarketworx.com>, twitter <http://twitter.com/ellenhoenig> or telephone at (609) 333-0549.

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