



Pharmacy Marketing

Tapping into in-store opportunities

Marketers can make a lasting connection with consumers in the pharmacy by taking advantage of in-store marketing opportunities. Considered by many as the “hub” of healthcare marketing, the community pharmacy plays an important role in the medical care of Americans across the nation.

By Kathleen Bonetti

Patients have always listened to their pharmacists. After all, they’re educated, credentialed and considered experts in their field. But, now as the landscape of DTC communication continues to evolve, there’s one more voice consumers are listening to in the pharmacy.... yours.

People are paying more and more attention every day to the information within their local pharmacy, and that includes messages from marketers. Whether it’s perusing materials while they wait for their prescriptions or searching the aisles to find the remedies they need, they’re hungry for knowledge surrounding their medical conditions. More than ever before, consumers are searching out answers from a variety of sources.

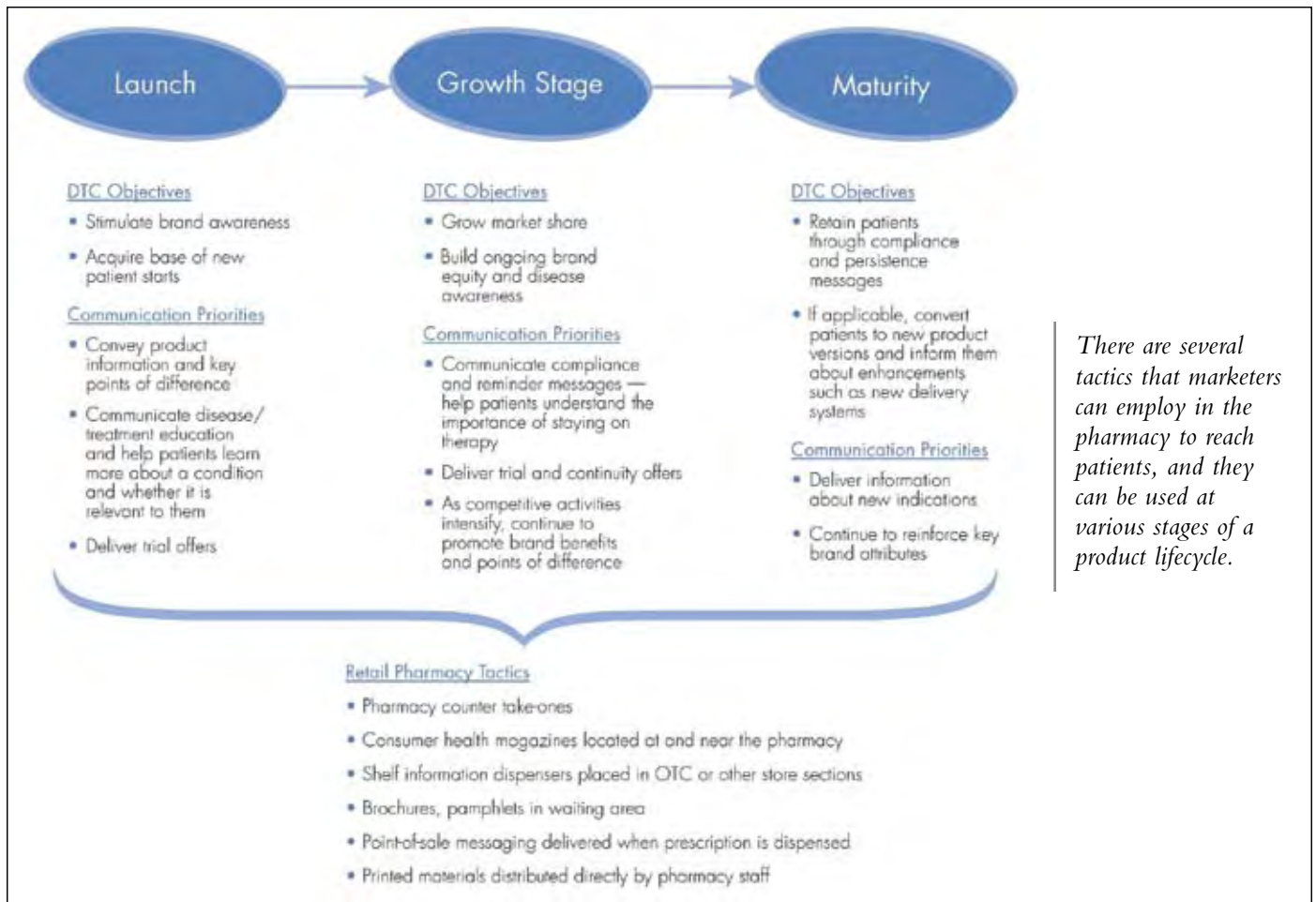
Considered by many as the “hub” of healthcare marketing, the community pharmacy plays an important role in the medical care of Americans from coast to coast. A powerful channel in sheer size and traffic alone, retail pharmacies now see close to 24 million people pass through their doors each day and account for 80 percent of total retail prescription

sales. This is yet another indicator that people are becoming more proactive in monitoring and managing their health.

Perhaps one of the reasons for the success of retail pharmacies, including traditional drugstore chains, mass retail outlets and even supermarket pharmacies, is their unique ability to address people at every stage of their healthcare management. From information-gathering at the pharmacy counter to reading signage throughout the retail space, marketers have the opportunity to reach customers in the pre-diagnosis phase, at initial treatment, and through the compliance and persistency period.

Strategically deploying a message

According to the 2007 Pharmacy Satisfaction Digest, 50 percent of those surveyed said they read pharmacy brochures to get drug information. That’s a significant number of people being educated about medical conditions, therapy alternatives and the resources that are at their



There are several tactics that marketers can employ in the pharmacy to reach patients, and they can be used at various stages of a product lifecycle.

disposal. What's more, there is evidence that consumers are connecting with marketing messages in increasing numbers.

A Harris Interactive Communications consumer study in 2007 explored the effect of point-of-care media on patient engagement. The research encompassed physician's office wall displays, in-office TV, product brochures, prescription pamphlets and retail pharmacy shelf-talkers. The findings showed how point-of-care media drive specific actions that prepare patients to make a brand request at a greater

rate than general DTC media. One of the reasons in-store pharma marketing seems to tip the scales is its ability to be strategically deployed at every phase of the product lifecycle, helping brands reach their full potential and build lasting credibility with patients.

In an average week, 4,150 transactions take place in a drugstore and 1,204 prescriptions are dispensed. That's literally thousands of opportunities weekly to build lasting relationships with patients that extend beyond the pharmacy walls. The more that a message or a brand connects directly with consumers, the more influence and consideration consumers will give it – a fact that pharma marketers know well.

Independent research shows that in-store promotions of pharmaceutical brands yield an average prescription sales lift of nearly 10 percent across a range of therapeutic categories. Patient recall and action is more apparent when marketers reinforce their messaging with retail pharmacy initiatives that trigger interest and potentially sales.

One of the most popular ways to reach people while they scour the pharmacy aisles in search of OTC remedies is

Perhaps one of the reasons for the success of retail pharmacies is their unique ability to address people at every stage of their healthcare management.

Independent research shows that in-store promotions of pharmaceutical brands yield an average prescription sales lift of nearly 10 percent across a range of therapeutic categories.

literally on the pharmacy shelf itself. One of the biggest benefits of this channel is the opportunity to reach consumers during every aspect of their shopping experience. For example, if a patient is searching for a remedy for heartburn they could find a shelf dispenser with information in the corresponding OTC aisle or additionally could spot messaging at the pharmacy counter when picking up a prescription. These are relevant points-of-interest to a patient with this condition, and are choice locations to stay top-of-mind for a brand.

Looking at educational options

But successful messaging doesn't begin and end on the shelf – it continues throughout the retail pharmacy environment. Other opportunities to maintain communication with consumers include information kiosks, targeted messaging delivered when the prescription is dispensed, customized magazines at the pharmacy counter and much more. The possibilities extend to educational options as well, with the pharmacist playing a key role in brand communication.

If a pharmacist becomes active in messaging then options can successfully include direct mail, sponsorships of continuing education programs or hand deliverables at the time of prescription pick up. The opportunities are endless and so is the return on investment for marketers.

In addition to reaching patients at every point in their decision making, having an in-pharmacy presence can drive brand awareness throughout a product's lifecycle as well. From launch to growth to maturity, in-pharmacy messaging can differentiate products, drive communication between the pharmacist and consumer and ultimately play into decision making. What's more, relevant messaging can inform about product enhancements and work to educate patients on symptoms, disease management and health care therapies available.

So, we know that a retail pharmacy component adds power to any DTC campaign. Now, how does it measure up really?

This is where in-store really shines. The retail pharmacy lends itself well to measurement because many efforts can be evaluated using the industry standard, matched-panel research. Actual script data is supplied by the retailer, so results can be reliably measured and validated. The effect on longer-term volume related to compliance can also be measured.

In fact, the sales lift data can even be easily converted into a manufacturer's incremental revenue for an accurate ROI analysis. But, the final and most relevant proof comes in the fact that an average script lift of 9 percent occurs and ROI's range from \$3 to \$7 for every dollar invested. That is a payoff everyone can understand!

Every healthcare marketer wants to meaningfully connect with the right consumers. It's the driving force behind every action taken and every marketing dollar spent. In the world of DTC communication, nothing makes that connection happen as quickly or with as much point-of-sale impact as in-pharmacy promotional support. Put the power of the pharmacy behind your communication plan and help to educate, inspire and connect with patients every day. ■

Kathleen Bonetti is the vice president of marketing for Rx EDGE, Hoffman Estates, Ill. Rx EDGE delivers pharmaceutical marketing solutions in a nationwide network of retail pharmacies. For more information, visit rx-edge.com. Bonetti can be reached by e-mail at kathleen.bonetti@rx-edge.com or by telephone at (847) 879-6036.

