

# The Seven-Step Process

## Telling Real Human Stories in a Regulatory Environment: Moving from HTML to Video

Shooting online video might seem intimidating, but if you follow the right steps, you can have real patients relating experiences with the benefits of your brand in a richer, more personal way. The author outlines seven steps to help marketers take advantage of the benefits of an online community.

By Alan Schulman

One of the greatest advantages the online environment offers DTC marketers is the opportunity to tell deeper, richer stories than traditional print media by leveraging the full sight, sound and motion of broadband video. Yet, for many marketers, the hurdles, checks and fair-balance requirements of the regulatory environment pose challenges that have them seeking the easy way out – settling for long copy, text-based HTML narratives that fill up their Web sites and fatigue their readers.

Fear not. Shooting online video might seem intimidating to some who aren't accustomed to having a video player on their brand site, but if you follow the right steps, you can have real patients, caregivers, key opinion leaders or healthcare professionals (HCP) relating authentic stories and experiences with the benefits of your brand in a richer, more personal way.

### Step 1: Listen to the consumer dialogue

If you listen closely, you're likely to find that you have brand advocates hiding in many more places than just a HCP's prescription database. Patients who respond to the DTC brands they are on don't just take them... they talk about them, blog about them, even brag about them. If you're like many smart DTC marketers, you are using a blog-scraping/data-mining service to monitor the positive, negative and neutral sentiments on your brand to gather consumer feedback. By mining for these insights from patients across the Web, you're likely to find six to 10 true advocates for your brand that have very compelling, real stories to tell about how your brand fits their lifestyle and condition. The key is to listen for insights before you start to create for impact.



### Step 2: Approaching the patient

Whether it's via patient letters, HCP recommendations or online brand advocates, approaching consumers to tell their stories is a very delicate task. Start with a phone call from customer care. Let them know their story intrigues you and might be of interest to others. Let them re-tell their story. Then, have customer care ask if they might be willing to tell that story on camera. If the prospect is receptive, have someone jot down notes about the story for consideration by the brand team. Then look to your agency to employ a gentle documentary film/video director to have a follow-up conversation with the prospective advocate. It's here where a good documentarian will be able to advise whether a patient has a compelling story to tell and will connect with viewers.

**CAUTION:** Avoid using actors. In the age of information transparency, nothing turns people off like putting words in other people's mouths. Your desire to control the

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message and delivery will be overshadowed by the lack of authenticity that comes through, should you conclude that it's easier or cheaper to have actors play the role of real patients. Think of the all the infomercials that people see right through when actors deliver a wooden line about how a product changed their life.

### *Step 3: Let the patient tell the story*

Videotape is cheap. Let the camera roll. Don't worry about trying to script the storyteller. Make sure you capture the whole story and ensure that your director has the points in hand that you wish to emphasize, but aren't interested in forcing into anyone's mouth. This way, the patient can still relate their experience in their own terms without misleading or forcing benefits or risks into the dialogue. Remember, these are lifestyle stories, not commercials.

### *Step 4: Transcribe the entire interview*

By transcribing the interview and highlighting the points that tell the brand story you are then ready to submit your interview for medical/regulatory approval. It's important to have transcripts of the interviews in hand and with all potential lines you may wish to use highlighted. Remember, these are stories told "in their own words" – so legal will be more inclined to allow a person's real sentiment, provided it isn't taken out of context. By highlighting all the sections of the interview you might wish to consider first, you can ensure that medical/regulatory has both the context and sentiment correctly identified.

Once they have read, watched, considered and approved the highlighted sections that meet fair balance, ISI and RC requirements, you're ready to begin your editing. Remember, if you try to script the talent or edit your ideal version of the interview and submit that to medical/regulatory BEFORE the entire transcript, you're likely to incur lots of costs going back and forth from rough cut to RC to revised cut to RC and on and on. What you end up with is an approved cut that sounds... well... not as real as you might have hoped.

### *Step 5: Edit from the approved sections*

After the editing, resubmit your fine cut video for final approval. Once copy clearance has been secured on sections

of your entire transcript, you're ready to edit your "fine cut." This refers to the version of the video that just needs final music and fair balance text/graphics added before posting to your site. If your editor pulls selected lines from the pre-approved copy-cleared sections, you can look at different options of placement and story arc to ensure the video is as compelling at delivering an authentic, honest human story as possible.

### *Step 6: Video player must run smoothly*

Choosing a video player platform for integration with the Web site is not well-suited to the brand marketing team. Turn this over to IT/IS platform staff who know best how to "stream" the video from your servers or a third-party streaming provider. Platforms like Brightcove offer you simple, user-friendly integration into your page environment. They also offer protected player environments that can be syndicated down the long tail of the Internet to the scores of text-only condition sites that are clamoring for rich media content, like video stories, that help educate consumers on conditions.

### *Step 7: Activate voucher/offers off the video*

Video stories are much more compelling than lengthy reads, but remember, this is INTERACTIVE media. Be sure you make it easy for interested viewers to interact with the deeper, richer stories you've just told. Video production is a lot more expensive than text, but research shows that conversion rates through rich media deployments are much higher than text-only conversions. Ask your agency media buyers for the exact numbers. In the meantime, here are some sites to check out that put authenticity and activation forward – without putting words in people's mouths.

- [Topamax's My Way With Migraines](#)
- [Cymbalta's Real Stories](#)
- [GlaxoSmithKline's A Positive Life](#)

Remember, medical/regulatory clearance doesn't have to get in the way of great story-telling. In this time-compressed age of Internet search and find, people are always seeking information. It's how you choose to serve it up that often makes the difference between a truly engaged consumer and another self-diagnosing surfer. Why keep cramming too much into a print ad? In the digital age, you can make deeper, richer stories available 24/7 by taking the right approach to leveraging broadband video. ■

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*Alan Schulman is a senior vice president and executive creative director at imc<sup>2</sup>, one of the nation's top 10 interactive agencies. A recognized leader in the development of advertising for new and emerging media, Schulman currently stewards interactive creative campaigns for such DTC marketers as GSK, Eli Lilly, Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer. He can be reached by e-mail at [alan.schulman@imc2.com](mailto:alan.schulman@imc2.com).*