

Anywhere Health



Reinventing Healthcare Marketing in a Connected World

With emerging connections via technological advances, there is a confluence of health data and information widely available to consumers. Marketers who begin to engage in the anywhere health space will be positioned well ahead of the curve, reaching customers in new and engaging ways.

BY JIM WALKER

In a remote village outside of Nairobi, a healthcare worker walking to a makeshift clinic makes sure to bring her mobile phone along with a stethoscope so that patient vital signs can be immediately texted back to the hospital. Along the trails outside of Seattle, a runner training for a marathon glances at his watch and knows his exact location, heart rate, and body temperature. In Houston, a teenager uses her inhaler for an asthma attack, and her location is sent automatically to an online database. A physician in Philadelphia clicks on his iPad and has immediate access to CT scans from the ER. An elderly woman in Osaka flushes her toilet, and is alerted that her blood sugar is too high. An elderly man collapses at a church service in Atlanta and is revived by a portable defibrillator. A mother from New York posts a brief message about her son's illness on Facebook, and a few minutes later a friend alerts her that it's a serious condition. An overweight man steps on the scale in London and his weight and BMI are automatically sent to his iPhone where he can track his progress over time. He touches his phone and the data is made available to his physician. A mother in Chicago goes to the drugstore and uses her smartphone in the aisle to find coupons for children's pain medicine.

Each day around the world, scenes like these are occurring with increasing frequency as the combined impact of portable devices, wireless Internet access, and social networks revolutionize the ways by which patients are diagnosed, monitored, and treated. The common threads that link these stories – anywhere diagnosis, anywhere data, and anywhere delivery – are powerful and far-reaching, and together form the foundation for anywhere health.

Clearly this phenomenon is going to have a dramatic impact on both patients and HCPs, but what impact will this anywhere health revolution have on healthcare communications and marketing? Many marketing teams have already begun to address various channels such as mobile marketing, iPad development, and Facebook social marketing. However, the larger opportunity and challenge lies in creating integrated marketing programs that take into account the entire anywhere health landscape.

While all of these dynamic medical technologies will continue to evolve, some core principles are emerging that provide practical and ongoing guidance when formulating brand strategies and tactics in an anywhere health world.

Start with the patient

Up until very recently, tracking personal data and vital signs was the sole province of hospital units or elite athletic programs. However, that model is in the process of being completely overturned as low-cost devices and powerful data-tracking sites flood into the market, allowing for personal tracking at levels previously undreamed of. Today, devices and their accompanying websites can help individuals track fitness, health, sleep, mood, productivity, energy, location, money, social media patterns, learning and more! When the personal data and insights from these devices are then shared and discussed on social sites like Facebook or PatientsLikeMe, the resulting feedback loops can be powerful, if not transformative. Quite simply, the data-rich anywhere health environment is sparking an unprecedented rise in patient sophistication regarding his or her own particular condition, a trend that is only going to accelerate.

Healthcare marketers take note: as patient sophistication regarding anywhere health rises, the relative value and usefulness of basic disease education information declines in comparison with more nuanced and “advanced” disease education. Furthermore, patients will now have multiple sources to turn to when learning about medical products and procedures – making them less tied to branded messaging. In the face of these changes, marketing campaigns that simply revolve around producing a body of product-focused content may not be the most effective approach.

Follow the data

If the flood of medical data is making traditional marketing content less effective, that same data can also provide insights for evolving healthcare marketing. The patient journey is not static, nor is the data which is generated along that journey. To effectively reach patients along their journey requires a deep understanding of what particular triggers and data points mean – not just from a medical standpoint, but from a personal and emotional stand point. If the pollen count rises, or blood sugar levels drop, or BMI stays frustratingly high, all of these data points have medical implications as well as personal impact.

Effective health communications cannot succeed merely by transferring facts, but must engage in the narrative story that each individual patient is experiencing. Obviously medical writers play a critical role in the development of content – but does your marketing team have great storytellers who can empathize and speak *with* patients on this emotional level? Does your brand strategy *anticipate* the ways in which patients will be gathering their data, sharing their data, and how they will be progressing along their disease journey in a highly connected world? If your team can learn the patient story and imagine how critical patient data points will play out, your brand messaging will become a trusted voice in the conversation, instead of just another byte of information in the data flood.

This points to the true value of social media monitoring for healthcare – not in simply counting the number of mentions or calculating some type of overall tonality – but in providing incredible clarity into what real patients are thinking and feeling in the context of their overall journey. All of the focus groups in the world cannot match the ongoing stream of social media insights that can now be monitored.

Timing is everything

The anywhere health environment does not just connect patients between devices and data; it also connects patients and products in real-time *and* over time. Fundamentally, this combination of real-time conversation with long-term social connection might be the biggest challenge that marketing teams face in today’s anywhere health communications environment – how to work effectively in a real-time world with patients and professional customers who do not simply “move on” after interacting with a brand message.

This challenge is compounded by the regulated nature of most healthcare communications which limits not just what can be said but also *when* it can be said. Internal planning processes and staffing also conspire against working either in real-time or with a long-term perspective! As a result, most brand marketing ends up as a kind of leisurely but not overly committed “middle-ground” of quarterly or annual communications flow. The resulting subtext message that gets sent to patients and HCPs is, “We don’t really want to speak with you in real-time, and over the long-term everyone on the brand team is going to be rotated off in a year or two – so we’re not that interested in speaking with you in the long-term either.”

Ten years ago, in a less connected world, this approach may have been a workable sort of strategy. Moving forward though, brand marketers in the healthcare space need to think very clearly about both their real-time communications voice and their long-term customer relationship strategy.

Caregiver inclusion is no longer a “Nice to Do”

When a man comes home from a visit to the doctor and tells his wife that he has a heart condition, or elevated PSA, or high blood pressure, more often than not the wife will go online to do further research. In fact, according to a recent study, up to 91 percent of caregivers conduct their own research after receiving a healthcare provider recommendation for their loved one. Furthermore, the same study also found that more than half of these caregivers use social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. Pew Internet research has shown that for chronic and life-threatening conditions, online usage spikes even higher.

While immediate-level caregivers have always played an important role in the overall patient journey, the influence of extended-level caregivers has been amplified in the anywhere health environment. Now, through social networking sites like Facebook, “care circles” can easily include friends, distant relatives, and even patients with similar conditions.

patientslikeme

TistaCow shared a forum post

114,905 patients
500+ conditions

Who's like you?

Share your experience.
The more you share, the easier it will be to find patients like you. Start by adding a condition, symptom or treatment.

I have
Type at least 3 letters of a condition

I take
Type at least 3 letters of a treatment

You have questions about your disease — but you also have answers for others. Change your life while helping others change theirs.

By learning from other patients like you...

- In Forum Discussions
- Through Private Messages
- Four-Stroke Comments

and seeing the community experience...

- Review Symptom Reports
- Explore Treatment Reports
- Check out Treatment Evaluations

YOU can take control of your disease.

- Profile charts so you can track your symptoms affect your health over time.
- Doctor Visit Sheets help you improve your discussions with your doctors

So when immediate family members and these extended caregivers go online to start researching, what do they find? When your disease category is typed into Google, do you know what sites appear on the first page? What about YouTube? What is being said about your product on Facebook? In working with healthcare marketers, it is always surprising to find brand managers that have not considered these results from a caregiver perspective. What are the “first impressions” that your message is making towards caregivers in the online space? Is your message making any impression at all?! Caregiver testimonials, decision support tools that spur discussion between patient and caregiver, and doctor discussion guides can all be valuable ways to engage your caregiver audience.

End with action

In the anywhere health world, marketing should start with the patient and ultimately aim towards some type of measurable action. The level and type of action will vary depending on where patients are in their journey; so the type of action may often be something as simple as clicking on a link or answering a survey. Other times, the required action might be simply pointing patients and caregivers to a piece of information at the right time and in the right context (based on your knowledge of the patient journey). Higher level types of engagement, such as speaking with your physician (or loved one) about a course of treatment, are built upon these prior “smaller steps.” Not only should specific types of action be planned for, but a reliable way to track and measure customer activity should be developed before the campaign is launched, allowing for progress to be tracked on a consistent basis, and corrective changes to be made as certain tactics succeed or fail.

As the technology driving the anywhere health environment moves forward, patients, caregivers, HCPs and brand

teams will be ever more closely linked in a sea of real-time data and disease state information. Undoubtedly, these changes will bring tremendous opportunities and challenges. While it is difficult to predict all of the ways in which brand marketing will need to adapt to this new environment, some steps are already clear:

Move beyond the basics: In light of a wealth of online health information, brand teams need to provide more nuanced and “advanced” disease state information.

Engage on a personal level: As patients become more intimately aware of their own condition and progress, brand messaging needs to understand and speak to the patient journey on a personal level, not just relay information.

Listen to what patients are saying: Social media monitoring provides an unprecedented view into the patient journey. Use those insights to understand the patient journey and create points of meaningful engagement.

Think real-time and long-term: The anywhere health world is simultaneously real-time and long term, therefore brands need to engage both in the real-time conversation, as well as set in place infrastructure for ongoing customer relationships. Healthcare marketers have no choice but to engage.

Master the art of caregiver first impressions: The role of caregivers should be elevated in brand planning and in the overall communications mix, with special focus on how “first impressions” are made online. Caregivers as immediate family members, as well as those in newly extended circles of care, are here to stay!

Measure and track the small steps: Measurable actions should be planned for at the start of each campaign, with a clear way to measure and track success over time. Simple small actions can often lead to larger outcomes.

Plan for change: The old days of launching a campaign and then sitting back and remotely monitoring success are over. In the active and closely connected world of anywhere health, brand teams need to stay engaged and flexible, responding quickly and intelligently to market changes. **DTC**

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