

Healthcare eMarketing Demystified: 3 KEY STRATEGIES FOR OPTIMIZING ROI ONLINE



Current Trends and Imperatives

Life science companies are positioned to be among the best sources of web-based healthcare information. This is a huge responsibility, as more than 116 million Americans seek online health information¹. Because of the ability to reach niche markets, close monitoring by federal agencies, and the need to communicate differentiated service offerings, more life science companies are taking advantage of the opportunity presented by Internet marketing. The good news is spreading fast. Sixty-eight percent of pharmaceutical executives reported that they planned to increase the marketing dollars spent toward improving website content, building micro sites, and providing email campaigns².

Not only does the Internet provide opportunities to demonstrate loyalty with patients and caregivers, it proves to be an effective communication channel through which to build a dialogue with healthcare professionals as over 99% of physicians use the Internet³. Patients and healthcare practitioners appreciate the Internet's ability to deliver immediate and in-depth information, accessible at their convenience.

Today's healthcare marketers likewise understand the value of the virtual channel as a flexible, effective, and efficient means to reach audiences with creative, customized interactive marketing messages. As web user behavior is primarily goal oriented, our challenge as marketers is to find ways to connect the goals of our audiences with our business objectives.

Analytic tools prove that the online channel delivers measurable results. Metrics and reporting not only document a high return on investment for healthcare marketers, but also serve as a guide for modifications and adjustments to ensure marketing goals are met.

To compete in this highly charged business environment and achieve an effective online presence, you will need to collaborate with a healthcare focused interactive marketing agency that must be able to do the following.

1. Create a compelling online brand experience:

- Be aware of your target audience – their mind-set, interests, concerns, priorities, demographics, potential disabilities, attitudes toward your brand, and needs for education and support
- Understand the information to be conveyed – medical/scientific knowledge, legal/governmental/insurance issues, current news, and topics to be avoided
- Provide a compelling user experience – using clearly and concisely written content, valuable insight filling in information gaps, logical navigation, and strong supporting design to leverage technology that best meets users' needs
- Take advantage of the web's unique features – interactivity, nimble responsiveness, flexibility, availability, and measurability
- Establish trust to assure relevance and credibility – make sure all information is accurate, current, and presented in a knowledgeable and professional manner with appropriate references

2. Draw target audiences to the online presence:

- Leverage the synergistic power of search engines by combining both organic search and paid search tactics, continuously monitoring search terms and modifying website content on an ongoing basis to raise search engine rankings
- Drive qualified site traffic through third party ePromotions to opt-in lists that match target demographics
- Develop linking strategies with related sites
- Cross-promote between events, print, and the web

3. Keep your audience engaged and convert them to regular users:

- Speak in language that conveys respect and understanding of your audiences' needs and concerns
- Send eCommunications (eNewsletters and email updates) to drive traffic to highlighted new content and support offerings
- Offer genuinely useful information and resources, and follow up on your promises
- Continuously update the program to offer new information and improve search positioning
- Guarantee the integrity and consistency of the program – ensure that information is consistent and that any change made in one part of the program is reflected throughout the program
- Constantly measure all online activity, build audience profiles for increased segmentation and personalization, monitor relevant social media, and utilize this intelligence to guide enhancements

Tactical Considerations

How do you, as a healthcare marketer, build a trusting and committed relationship with your audiences and maintain a compelling online presence? Partner with an agency specifically focused on delivering integrated web program management – the effective use of aligned offline and online mechanisms as acquisition tools to create awareness and demand, as well as to build and retain a qualified database of your target audience. Healthcare industry-specific acquisition tools include:

- Search engines
- Medical journals and publications
- Medical societies
- Patient advocacy groups and associations
- Online disease-state focused social networks
- Industry conferences
- Sales reps
- Direct mail campaigns

Once acquisition tools have been selected and implemented, retention is the next step to successful web program management. Retention allows you to educate your audience, keep your brand top-of-mind, and cross promote between online and offline channels, as well as with related websites.

The following mechanisms are essential to create retention strategies, build loyalty over time, and provide high return on investment:

- Websites
- ePromotions
- Webinars
- eDetailing programs
- eCommunications

Circle of CareSM Methodology for Effective Web Program Management

Siren Interactive has developed a proprietary process to help our clients identify opportunities and strategies for building relationships with customers and prospects by delivering online marketing programs that improve healthcare service and enhance patient care. The Circle of CareSM represents a mechanism for integrating all communications for optimal relationship building with both patients and healthcare professionals. It functions as part of an acquisition strategy – utilizing an array of offline tactics to attract target audiences into the circle, as well as a retention tool – to surround them with the information they are seeking in the online environment.

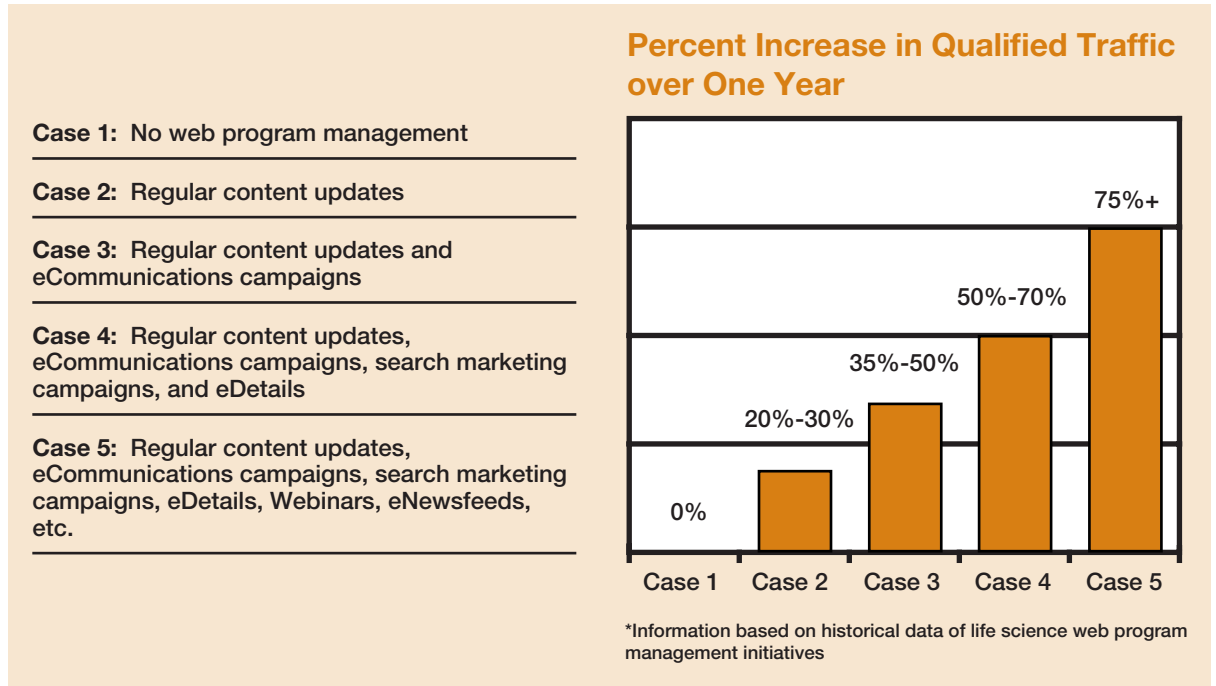


The acquisition of patients and healthcare professionals who have opted into the circle – encouraged by the value and benefits of something they have received – opens opportunities to provide additional services, while reinforcing messages through new channels. At the core of the circle is your database of customers. As you communicate with them you learn more about them, building profiles that allow you to better meet their needs, and understand their motivations.

Impact of Web Program Management

Once you have established a compelling and effective online presence, the impact will provide measurable results, increase brand recognition and loyalty among your target audience, as well as generate a great return on investment. As the chart below shows, with the combination of the right tools, the online channel can quickly, easily, and accurately measure and optimize site performance.

Siren Clients' Website Performance



The results of individual web program management tactics have been well documented in numerous reports and studies:

- 58% of physicians report prescribing more of the featured drug after participating in an eDetail and 67% reported ordering samples. ⁴
- 63% of Internet users have searched online for information about a specific disease or medical problem, 47% for a certain medical treatment or procedure, and 34% for prescription or OTC drugs. ⁵
- 61% of consumers who search online for health information visited or planned to visit their doctors after their search. 71% of those that did had detailed conversations with their physicians about medications and brands. ⁶
- Over half of visitors think that prescription drug sites are a good source of information about medications and two-thirds believe that drug information is a good fit for the online format. ⁷
- Many of the newly diagnosed and family members of patients give themselves a crash course on specific medical conditions, research all available treatment options – not just those recommended by their doctors, and sign up for eNewsletters and clinical trials. ⁸
- Patients say that the Internet is an important (87%), trustworthy (79%), and relevant (71%) way to find out more about a health condition ⁹
- Female baby boomers are active caregivers and the most frequent visitors to health websites. They make appointments and trips to the doctor with loved ones and keep up with medication reminders and dosage. 58% consider the Internet the most important source of information. ¹⁰
- Niche online communities share information on treatment and support groups in blogs, message boards, and chat rooms. Social networking sites are being used to share links to reliable health information. ¹¹

- Email marketing has proven to be the fastest and most responsive medium available. 80% of responses are received within 48 hours at rates that can average 10% or more, versus 1% for direct mail, at a significantly lower cost.¹²

When the dots are connected between all of these online tactics and target audiences as part of a coordinated and well orchestrated strategy, the ROI impact is dramatic and can enable even a small brand to level the competitive playing field.

Tips for Selecting an Agency Partner

According to a study conducted by Nielsen/NetRatings, the Internet ranks as the second most trusted source of health advice after doctors, making it vital to position your brand as the industry leader in the interactive realm. It is also imperative to select the right agency partner that has the experience and capability to leverage all the tools available through the Internet channel.

- Look for an agency with expertise in medical/scientific content development, user experience and scenario design, search engine optimization and marketing, database creation and management, web analytics, and a command of the full range of web-based media
- In working with multiple agencies, involve both online and offline partners in strategic sessions – all major marketing initiatives should have an Internet component that must be planned for in advance, not added as an afterthought
- Clearly define your business goals and objectives so the agency can develop appropriate metrics to evaluate success
- Be willing to experiment with new media tactics as long as they are in compliance with the regulatory environment and respect the privacy, enhance the trust, and serve the needs of your target audience
- Choose a partner who can help you use the web to demonstrate your leadership, to build community, loyalty, and reputation, and to create immersive brand experiences for your customers

Summary

The overall benefits of effective web program management to leverage the power of the Internet channel for life science marketers are enormous. For growing numbers of healthcare professionals and patients, the online channel is the preferred source of information. The audience actually seeks you and good content captures these searchers. Information can be targeted to each audience's needs, directly and efficiently, without wasting their time or your money. Content can be continually updated and combined with eCommunications to entice visitors back again and again. Dollars spent for online communication provide double or triple value and enhance all of your other marketing efforts.

What are you waiting for?

End Notes

¹ (2006, November 13). 116 Million Consumers Online for Health; Multi-Channel Marketing Opportunities Surge. Retrieved from <http://www.pharmalive.com/News/index.cfm?articleid=391162&categoryid=22>

² Phillips, L. (2004, August) Pharmaceuticals Online: Direct-to-Patient Becomes Reality. *eMarketer*

³ (2007) Taking the Pulse® v7.0 . *Manhattan Research*

⁴ Boehm, E. (2003, June 24) Pharma eDetails Work: Doctors Prescribe More. *Forrester Research*

⁵ Fox, S. (2003, November 17) Opportunities and Challenges: Using the Internet for Prevention. *Pew Internet & American Life*

⁶ (2006, July 24) Hints for Pharma About Online Consumers. Retrieved from <http://www.eyeforpharma.com/print.asp?news=51889>

⁷ Boehm, E. (2005, March 21) Which Rx Takers Visit Rx Sites. *Forrester Research*

⁸ Fox, S. (2003, July 16) Internet Health Resources. *Pew Internet & American Life*

⁹ (2006, July 24) Hints for Pharma About Online Consumers. Retrieved from <http://www.eyeforpharma.com/print.asp?news=51889>

¹⁰ Phillips, L. (2004, August) Pharmaceuticals Online: Direct-to-Patient Becomes Reality. *eMarketer*

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² (2003) Harnessing the Power of Email, *McKinsey & Company*

About Siren Interactive

Siren Interactive is focused on delivering effective eMarketing brand solutions. With more than eight years specializing in the healthcare and life sciences industry, Siren will work with your team to accomplish your marketing goals and help you succeed in the online arena with timely, relevant, and respectful communications to professional, patient, and caregiver customers.

With extensive experience in creating relevant web-based content and compelling user experiences that help marketers attract new customers, increase brand loyalty and maximize their return on investment, Siren will create and maintain an effective online presence for your brand.

For more information, visit www.sireninteractive.com.