

The Creative Process



The impact of digital is raising the bar on today's creative process.



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MARC BENJAMIN
Convergence Point Media

By Robin Robinson

As challenging as creating a great piece of marketing is, over the years some pharma brands have still managed to nail it. According to a 2016 AdWeek CMO report, there are several examples of award-winning, but most importantly, memorable campaigns over the years that have successfully boosted brand recognition and as a result increased product lift. AdWeek's report highlighted several such memorable campaigns, including Pfizer's 2001 Zolofit campaign; Lilly's 2003 Cialis effort; and Take-da's 2007 Rozerem ads.

However, those campaigns were produced in a different environment, and in today's 2017 marketing world, the struggle to hit that one great idea out of the park is further complicated by the addition of digital channels, which add a layer of complexity — and effectiveness — to the creative design. Digital has evolved from an add-on channel to becoming incorporated into pharma campaigns from the get-go, and this new practice has greatly influenced the creative process.

In today's digital-first environment, the creative bar has been set much higher, says Phil Scherer, senior VP, group creative director, at JUICE.

"We've come a long way from thinking about campaigns as a static surface and a core visual aid because that simply doesn't reflect the reality of how our customers interact with a brand," he says. "They are busy, demanding people, and the way they experience branded communication is so much faster, so much more in their control, that the creative has to work harder than ever to engage, compete for, and earn attention. The creative has to be faster and more compelling. It needs to be memora-



Print vehicles can be used successfully as a platform to promote a brand's digital assets.

JULIE HOGREFE
Rx EDGE Pharmacy Networks

ble and identifiable to the brand. At the same time, it needs to get out of the way quickly once it's done its job, so customers can easily get real value from the communication before they move on."

For pharma advertisers, the emergence of digital as an elite channel introduced complexities that made it more challenging but also potentially more rewarding than offline channels, says Marc Benjamin, CEO, at Convergence Point Media.

"Back when digital was a value-add throw-in by ad-supported publishers, a brand's marketing assets took the form of an unruly amalgam of sales brochures, direct mail, old-school detailing materials, point-of-care materials and first-generation websites, many derided as 'online brochures,'" he says. "Because digital creative can and should be integrated

with a central online repository of key brand data living on its website and other digital hubs, the opportunities for alignment of audience members, ad messaging and destination touchpoints give rise to strategic opportunities for integration. Harvesting these opportunities calls for deeper segmentation and a wider array of creative versioning."

A digital strategy has also become a much more important player early in the process, providing big input into the brief.

"If the team has the strategy front-of-mind as it generates creative, amazing ideas for digital tactics come directly out of the work," Mr. Scherer says. "It's really exciting for the team when great creative is conceived in tandem with a digital tactic or program and then you get to bring that to life. There's a two-way street — the creative ideas for initiatives and tactics become an input for the strategy team as they continue developing the plan."

In order to maximize the value of digital content, the creative idea must incorporate content that can and will be shared online. For example, in 2015, GSK Consumer Healthcare began using more digital content to promote Flonase. The storyline featured the popular social media Eh Bee family on an allergy-free vacation, which included guest appearances by country star Kellie Pickler. Viewers could follow the adventure online, while adding their own photos to Instagram. The campaign garnered 108 million Instagram likes. The abundant online sharing of its creative content resulted in Flonase becoming the No. 1 allergy remedy sold on Amazon, according to AdWeek. Building a cohesive approach across all media, GSK used TV commercials to spark awareness, which

Keeping Creative Alive

The pressure to create consumer-engaging, regulatory-compliant and memorable campaigns in today's multichannel overcluttered environment is not only daunting, but could actually put the brakes on any out-of-the-box thinking required to bring a product to life. Our experts provide tips on how today's marketers can stay inspired enough to create rare and innovative approaches and not fall back on safe, tried-and-true creative.



MARC BENJAMIN
CEO, Convergence
Point Media

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

The first step toward creative inspiration in a pharma context is knowing the ground rules inside and out, including best practices for search, social media, and websites. At a minimum, it behooves marketers to educate themselves with technical 101-level understanding of the mechanics of smart digital ads that draw dynamically on different creative elements and display destination urls. Too many pharma marketers understand more about what they can't do than how to play successfully by the rules, which can result in an approach to creative that is safe to the point of meaninglessness and, sadly, ultimately wasteful.

The good news is that marketers who do their homework, as well as organizations that develop thoughtful and thorough enterprise guidelines for digital marketing regulatory compliance, often gain a significant marketing advantage over their more conservative competitors. The key is to develop guidelines that extend beyond merely rules to eliminate the possibility of noncompliant marketing. Rather, guidelines should live as part of a broader digital evangelism that includes best practice approaches to working effectively within those regulatory ground rules.



TINA FASCETTI
Chief Creative
Officer, Guidemark

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Creative challenges have always existed in our industry.

The key is hiring what I call "relentless creative talent." Simply put: Creative teams that have the mindset that does not allow anything to get in the way of their ability to produce great creative ideas and teams that view obstacles as fun creative challenges to overcome. It is also my job as a leader to inspire my teams every step along the way. Additionally, having brave account and strategy team leads to support the creative team to sell the best creative ideas to our clients is also integral. It really does take a village to deliver great creative for our clients.



JULIE HOGREFE
Creative Director,
Rx EDGE
Pharmacy Networks

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN DO VS. WHAT YOU CAN'T DO

Inspiration comes from keeping the end-user in mind: thinking about what's important to them, what will catch their eye, what their concerns may be, what's going through their minds. It is important to keep the message to the point and relatable to the target consumer. Ultimately, you want to capture the right people's attention and motivate them to learn more about the brand or condition. Regulatory concerns and risk-adversity are just part of doing business in pharma and shouldn't limit creativity. Focus on what you can do vs. what you can't do.

PHIL SCHERER
Senior VP, Group
Creative Director, JUICE



CREATE EXCITEMENT

If the basics work, then there is nothing wrong with using the basics. Sometimes what worked before is exactly what will work again. There's a place

for the tried and true when it comes to the foundation of your digital plan, and there's nothing wrong with getting those building blocks in place. But just the basics isn't going to get your brand to stand out. We need to make space in the plan for taking some risks. I think the key here is to actively seek out new ideas. Marketers should encourage their agency to bring crazy stuff to the table. Great ideas can excite everyone involved — even regulatory — and you're going to need that passion to get ground-breaking projects through the system.



BARRY SCHMADER
Chief Creative
Officer, Elevate
Healthcare Marketing

THINK DIFFERENTLY

I tell my teams this — you will be your most creative when you are put inside a box forcing you to think differently, to find a way to transcend the limits of the box without ever leaving it. Resorting to safe, mundane, or cliched ideas just demonstrates laziness and a defeatist attitude. This doesn't mean every creative concept must be edgy and win at Cannes. But falling back on trite ideas that have been done before because it's the path of least resistance, or giving in because of how restrictive the box is just doesn't fly. Know the rules. Get inspired by the challenge. Educate your client on why a different approach is better. Push yourself harder to find an innovative way to push the boundaries and still get the work approved.

led consumers to digital content that more deeply explained how Flonase worked and created an opportunity to engage consumers in a two-way dialogue.

The addition of a digital channel shouldn't

drive the whole concept behind the creative process, but whether the idea can successfully be brought to life in the digital channel should definitely be a consideration. The creative process is still the same as it ever was, says Barry

Schmader, chief creative officer, at Elevate Healthcare Marketing.

"However, today the core brand idea must translate powerfully into a 1,334 x 750 pixel canvas," he says. "Therefore, careful thought

is required whether the brand and the concept will travel responsibly throughout the digital ecosystem.”

While creating a cohesive message that works across all channels can be challenging, traditional channels and digital can work together to complement each other.

“Print vehicles can be used as a platform to promote a brand’s digital assets — an app the consumer can download, a link to a savings offer, a sign-up for a patient support program, a digitally based symptom tracker,” says Julie Hogrefe, creative director, Rx EDGE Pharmacy Networks.

However, marketers need to strive to be consistent with the positioning, tone, and look of other brand elements so that key messages are maximized across channels.

“From a creative process standpoint, cohesiveness is the key thing to keep in mind now and will continue to be valued in the future,” Ms. Hogrefe says. “We always strive to connect the messages we develop for the pharmacy channel with other creative that the consumer may be seeing elsewhere, whether it’s digital, social, TV, or print.”

Concepts that will work in digital and across other channels require a different lens, says Mr. Scherer, one that looks beyond just a key visual and a campaign line.

“We need a platform for storytelling,” he says. “Customers are going to see the campaign across so many channels in these little chunks of engagement strung out over time, and that means the creative needs to serve as a kind of through-line linking it all together.”

Key visuals will exist but marketers need the flexibility to iterate across channels. Using a range of executions with variations on the theme, marketers should strive to bring a consistent voice with identifiable elements, which has the ability to speak to a wide variety of topics, across every part of the story.

Incorporating a Digital Experience

A well-integrated marketing campaign includes a strong media strategy that defines key patient and professional “perspectives” on treatment for the pertinent disease state, and the corresponding audience preferences for information gathering — this becomes the starting point for an enlightened creative roadmap, informed with both channel and messaging propensities.

One of the biggest mistakes pharma marketers make is developing too few digital

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PHIL SCHERER
JUICE



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BARRY SCHMADER
Elevate Healthcare

creative versions to effectively engage key audience subgroups, even individual audience members, for whom A/B testing can easily determine the most effective ad versioning.

“As a pharma agency executive, I can appreciate that brands prioritize working media dollars to maximize reach and frequency against their core audiences,” Mr. Benjamin says. “However, that investment can be hamstrung if it comes absent a suitably robust creative rotation with dedicated executions shown to resonate with key audience segmentations.”

The many different tactical options that digital provides can be distracting from the main goal of the creative process, which is to create a memorable concept that will showcase the brand message while telling a story that engages consumers. In some cases, the lure of the new spectrum of digital has supplanted implementing a core brand idea. Tactical execution becomes a proxy for a campaign.

“As marketing in the digital space becomes more immediate and even faster, we need to fight the urge to truncate the creative process, or it will have a major impact on the brand,” Mr. Schmader says. “As creatives, we have never had more platforms at our disposal to build, execute, and optimize digital experiences. It’s tough — but necessary — to keep up and stay ahead of the curve.”

The Health Chat Transformation



CHRIS DUFFEY
Global Director of
Creative Technology,
Sudler & Hennessey

One of the biggest transformations in building campaigns of the future is the expansion of the definition of “creative.” Specifically, the need to shift from a mindset of promotional to service-based communications in healthcare. An example of this is seen in the success and ongoing development of Chatbot technology.

Chatbots essentially simulate conversation via voice or text commands, and at their best, are powered by artificial intelligence, which enables the bots to get smarter as they learn from conversations they have with users. As a result, physicians, patients, and health-information seekers are able to have valuable and ongoing informative exchanges and brands can share relevant health information.

Chatbots are an extraordinary business opportunity for launching innovative brand experiences based on utility — another, impossible-to-ignore example of the power of the health tech revolution.

Using digital also brings with it a fair amount of risk, and in a risk-averse culture of the pharma industry, that can stymie the creative process.

Additionally, there’s the burden of regulatory review and the rigid processes that impede speed to market that can make it difficult to get updates out frequently and achieve a good cadence across the strategic and creative plan.

But, experts say, the bigger challenge may be in getting top-down buy-in to allow creative to go places it hasn’t before, and to move away from the tried and true, and take a chance on something outside of the traditional channel box.

“Great digital work involves taking some risks, and that can be difficult when you have established norms that offer the perception of safety,” Mr. Scherer says. “Take concept testing for example, many marketers are still looking for a winning concept based on a single-surface execution; that worked for the old journal-ad-and-visaid model, but it’s not suited to the multifaceted campaigns of today.” **PV**