

The 7th Era of Marketing: Content-Driven Experiences

Dr Nicola Davies



Patient experience is driving marketing. How can pharma respond?

For the past twenty years, the focus has been one-on-one marketing and trying to create a personalization of products. Robert Rose, Chief Strategist at the Content Marketing Institute, says the 7th era of marketing is here and it's now all about experiences. Instead of simply acquiring products, it's the *experience* of those products and services that counts for the patient.

Enriching content is key

The concept of the 7th era is explored in Rose's book, *Experiences: The 7th Era of Marketing*, co-authored with Carla Johnson. "The idea of providing education, delight, and general usefulness (as a brand's approach to engaging potential customers) provides a new way to enrich interactions with customers at every stage of the buying journey," the authors write.

So, how can pharmaceutical companies provide enriching content? Definitely not by sticking with outdated strategies and processes. Rose points out, "For the last few years, there has been quite a bit of what I'd call 'content in marketing,' not 'content marketing.'" However, people don't want information that has no real relevance to them. They aren't interested in the amazing outcomes of an organization's corporate outreach program, but they might be engaged by an opportunity to read the story of someone who has the same disease as them.



Content is not an end in itself



Rebecca Lieb

According to Teradata Applications' Vice President for Content Marketing, Rebecca Lieb, "Content is the atomic particle of marketing. Without it, there's nothing to fill all those websites, blogs, emails, or social media platforms." Indeed, content has become so critical to businesses that larger brands, like GE and IBM, sometimes publish more weekly content than Time Magazine ever did during its heyday.

Content is clearly important, but it isn't an end in itself. Historically, 'content' or elaborate descriptions of products and their features were treated as the final product. However, given today's ease of digital publishing and sharing, to create suitable content, pharmaceutical companies need to **understand exactly who their clients are and what they want.**

This is where companies that are working directly with the patient experience, like PIP Health and Patient Connect, can provide pharma with valuable insights into patients needs – not only on a physical level, but on an emotional level. Patients want to be heard and understood, and sites such as these allow just that.

An example of a website with engaging content that has clearly listened to the patient experience is PillCamCrohns.com, which won the Best of Show Web awards for 2014. This site is engaging and speaks directly to the patient with an opening question, "Does it feel like you're in the dark?" Scrolling or clicking takes you through the PillCam®SB's animated journey. The site isn't text heavy and the small bites of information are easy to remember. There are no boring white backgrounds and ubiquitous doctors with stethoscopes. Intouch Solutions have created a website that is truly outstanding in delivering content as a strategic asset.



Another example of strong content marketing is offered by Rose –Pfizer’s “Get Old” website. The content here encourages older consumers to develop a new attitude and fresh perspective about ageing, by providing stories and information on how to fulfill long-forgotten dreams, and thereby increase their enjoyment of life. Stories and activities that are shared on the Pfizer website relate to anything from traveling experiences, to graduating from college or otherwise reinventing oneself after the age of 65.

Pfizer’s Get Old



Stories with heart

The strongest examples of engaging content comprise stories – patient stories and brand stories. Facts and figures may be important, but it is the stories that patients will share with friends and family, taking content beyond information and give it meaning.

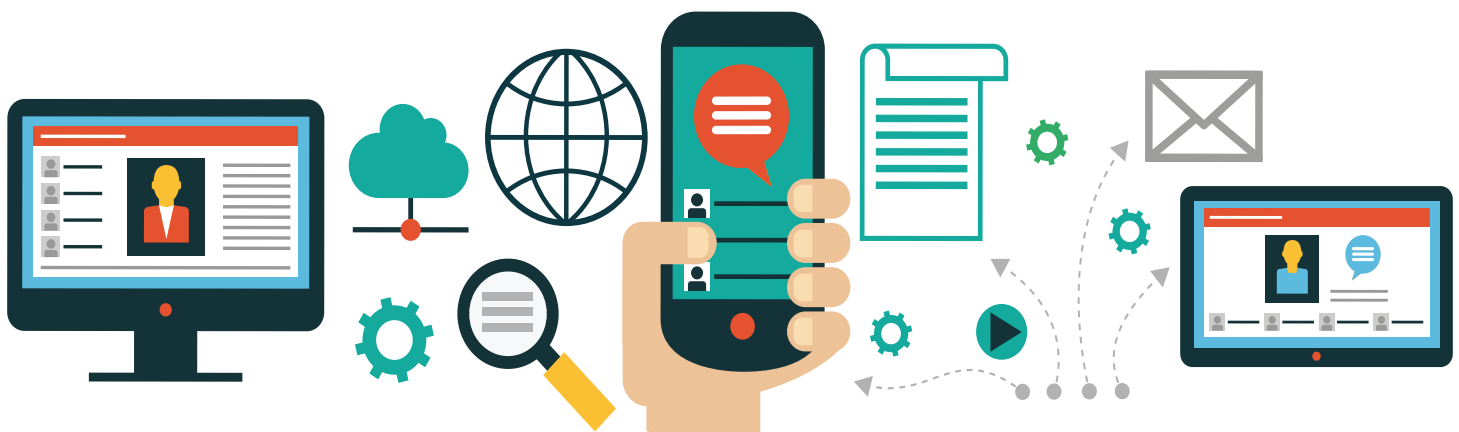
Both Lieb and Rose highlight that to build a consistent brand story with the potential to unify an organization, it is essential to find and excavate stories. Rose discriminates between the task of finding stories and creating a consistent brand story. To excavate stories, the key is to have people act as reporters, who go out and find potentially compelling stories in various parts of the company.

Lieb has focused on what she describes as the “culture of content,” and observes that doctors, patients, research and development officers, customer service personnel, sales, and just about any other outward facing part of the company are great sources of relevant stories. “Stories and topics don’t just live in marketing. They must be identified and harvested across and beyond the organization,” she suggests.

Overall, the real key in creating a consistent brand story is understanding the larger narrative you are trying to create, so that the excavating and finding exercise has a true purpose. Stories need to have heart – together these stories will create a brand perceived by its clients as caring.

Content needs strategy

Content today needs to be strategic because it has become an integral component in business as it is affecting all methods and channels of marketing. Rose says a company has a choice – either manage content as a strategic asset or an expensive by-product. Indeed, the common thread between good content marketing practices of large companies inside and outside the pharma industry is that they have an integrated organizational structure that places content at the core of company strategy.



Pharma companies must learn to produce and disseminate relevant and engaging content across various touch points, and marketers play a crucial part in this process. Marketers are no longer brand stewards, but leaders for organization-wide transformation.

“What is the value that we can deliver to that person at this stage in their journey?” asks Rose. The value could be education, entertainment, a practical ‘how-to,’ or simply anything that elicits an emotional response.” Whatever it is, it should be separate from our product or service that we sell. That meaningful experience is something that delivers value to the consumer’s life. ”



Robert Rose

The first step to restructuring a company towards a unifying content strategy is to acknowledge content as an asset. “Once that cultural hurdle is crossed, then it’s simply creating a real function in the business to create, manage, measure and utilize that strategic asset,” says Rose.

The next step is focusing on value; creating content-driven experiences is all about delivering value. “What is the value that we can deliver to that person at this stage in their journey?” asks Rose. The value could be education, entertainment, a practical ‘how-to,’ or simply anything that elicits an emotional response.” Whatever it is, it should be separate from our product or service that we sell. That meaningful experience is something that delivers value to the consumer’s life,” he adds.

Pharma companies need also to understand the Voice of the Customer, something which has been gaining increasing importance with the emphasis on patient-centricity. It is the voice of the customer that provides a basis for creating meaningful patient experiences. “Where are customers discussing health and pharma issues? What information will help them as they deal with healthcare issues? Where are their watering holes on the web?” asks Lieb.

Content marketing is all about attraction, so pharma need to embrace the challenge of being there when people seek knowledge, information and thought leadership. Fortunately, there are a number of technology solutions that help achieve this. Patient advocacy groups are where things are being discussed, patient support groups are filled with stories – pharma needs to find those that add value to the patient experience and harness them in order to promote their brand.

Loyalty as the bottom line

It’s difficult to directly compute the results of content marketing in monetary terms, but key performance indicators measure customer engagement and loyalty, both of which represent a good proxy for improved bottom lines.

“Any successful content marketing program should deliver an increasing audience, independent of whether that audience is a customer or not,” says Rose. “As long as you are building an increasingly loyal and engaged audience, you can always shift focus to how that audience can be better monetized. That’s the true magic of content marketing,” he explains. All of this boils down to greater interaction taking place and more people talking about and sharing what pharma are doing.

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Data results from non-buyers are also potentially valuable. “Building an audience is building an asset that can provide multiple values to the business over time. It may be a buyer today, but a loyalty tomorrow, or an insight into a new product next year,” Rose surmises.

According to Lieb, content and patient experience should flow seamlessly across devices and platforms. “It’s a brand’s responsibility to know customers well enough to create not just the appropriate content, but to do so on the right channels, at the right time,” she says. Apps for patients to remember to take their medications, apps to help with pain relief, games and rewards for filling out surveys all help to build the 7th era of marketing in pharma.

To measure whether content strategy has been optimized, pharma can use analytics and map customer segments and personas. However, this analysis should be more sophisticated than simply concentrating on ‘likes,’ ‘shares,’ and other volume metrics. In research conducted by Lieb and her colleague Susan Etlinger, indicators of business value identified include measures of customer experience, innovation, brand health, and operational efficiency.

An era of personalized content

The 7th era of marketing is coincidental with the emergence of wearable devices and the Internet of Things. Lieb says, “We’re about to enter an era of highly contextual and personalized content everywhere,” which will have dramatic implications on marketing in this area by making content more site and location-specific. By linking into this trend, pharma can become part of the daily life of people – working to ensure a better standard of health and healthcare.

In order to utilize the 7th era of marketing, Rose urges pharma to treat content as a process that must be embraced at an organizational level as technology changes and advances. In the end, content marketing means designing content-driven experiences that deliver value and create a foundation of engagement, loyalty and trust. Creating great experiences for patients will place pharma companies in an effective and strategic position within the marketplace.



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