



Bridge Worldwide/Dose of Digital White Paper Series

The Future of Healthcare Relationship Marketing

Bridge Worldwide believes that there will be a number of changes to relationship marketing in healthcare in the near future. While there will surely be dramatic changes in medical treatments and technologies, **there also will be a dramatic evolution in how the healthcare industry relates to its consumers.**

While some of these trends might not come to pass, we do know for sure one trend that has already begun and will continue: **Healthcare marketing must improve patient health.** Anything else will be rejected by consumers, physicians, payers, legislators, and the general public. The healthcare industry (especially pharma) will continue to receive unfair criticism, but can begin to win over these opponents by clearly showing every day the reason why they exist in the first place: to improve the lives of patients. Every marketing effort should help deliver this goal.

We have summarized some other evolving trends in this table. Following the table is a lengthier description of each trend.

Evolving Trend	Brief Description
Healthcare Information 24/7	The information that consumers will have access to and will use to make decisions will continue to increase in volume and availability.
Consumers As “Physicians”	With the staggering increase in bloggers, user-generated media (such as YouTube), and social networking, end users are creating and controlling more and more of the content available online.
Internet = Trusted Source	All other forms of media already fall behind the Internet as a source for healthcare information for most Americans.
It’s Their Data, Not Yours	In the future, consumers will have more control of their healthcare records and history.
Healthy Social Networking	Because of the sheer number of people utilizing the Internet, it is possible to find people who share the same experiences as you.
Constant Contact, Constant Care	Some technologies to monitor patients’ health, now in early development, which still are largely cumbersome and not embraced by the public, will become more widespread.

Healthcare Information 24/7

Consumers will demand immediate access to healthcare information. The information that consumers will have access to and will use to make decisions will continue to increase in volume and availability. A simple search on Google can yield reliable disease state information and treatment options. **Consumers now can get reports about the effectiveness of a particular hospital** to check not only mortality rates of a particular procedure, but also cost. This type of information will only increase in use. No longer do consumers need to be at home to find this information. Growing use of mobile Internet applications will make it easy for consumers to find out anything they want, anytime they want it. Healthcare companies must embrace this fundamental change by allowing easy access to information for consumers.

Consumers As “Physicians”

As in many other industries, consumers will generate more and more of the available content. With the staggering increase in bloggers, user-generated media (such as YouTube), and social networking, **end users are creating and controlling more and more of the content available online.** This will begin to extend to healthcare to a greater degree during the next five years. For healthcare companies, this represents both an opportunity and a threat. The opportunity is that, with wide networks and vocal brand advocates, your message can be spread quickly for little expense. **However, the negative side is particularly dangerous in healthcare.** Like other industries, for every positive mention of a brand, there is likely also a negative one. In the case of healthcare, incorrect negative information puts patient health at risk—something every company must be vigilant about monitoring in these situations.

Internet = Trusted Source

The Internet will become the primary site and, potentially, most trusted source for healthcare information for the vast majority of consumers. All other forms of media already fall behind the Internet as a source for healthcare information for most Americans. This is true across all age ranges and demographics. Savvy baby boomers will only accelerate this change. Friends and family have always been a trusted source, but will never be as comprehensive as the Internet for sheer volume of information. With more social networking and peer sharing opportunities online, many consumers will turn to their online “family” for information. Likely, physicians will remain *the* most trusted source for information, but **it is likely that most patients will check online before or after talking with a physician** to “double check” the information they received. Healthcare companies must be aware of this change and quickly move to become a trusted, objective, and valuable source of information online.

It’s Their Data, Not Yours

Advances in technology and consumer adoption will allow consumers to track and control all of their healthcare data in one place, making it available anywhere at any time. Technologies such as electronic medical records have existed for a number of years and are slowly being adopted throughout the country. However, in these cases, physicians, hospitals, and managed care companies continue to “own” the data. This includes data regarding past test results, physician notes, medication history, allergies, etc. In the future, consumers will have more control of this data. Services, such as Microsoft’s HealthVault and the newly launched Google Health, are two ways for consumers to maintain all of their healthcare information. This allows them to track their health over time when they want it, not just during a doctor’s visit. In addition, in emergencies, all of their data is

immediately available. This is something that's been promised by the healthcare system for many years, but **consumers have grown tired of waiting and are simply doing this on their own.** Healthcare companies must embrace this change and make it simple for consumers to track the usage of their products or services. Providing integration instead of another system for them to use will be critical.

Healthy Social Networking

Finding a world of people they can relate to online, patients will begin to form more formal and informal networks seeking advice of their peers instead of their physicians. Because of the sheer number of people utilizing the Internet, it is possible to find people who share the same experiences as you. This even becomes true for those with the rarest conditions. **These networks will be used to share treatment ideas, provide moral support, recommend physicians, advocate for causes, and demand action from the medical community.** Using the power of numbers, patients will now be able to pressure healthcare companies on a much larger scale. Healthcare companies will need to respond to these networks appropriately or face the negative repercussions, ranging from bad press to boycotts.

Constant Contact, Constant Care

Health monitoring technologies will put doctors and patients in constant contact. Some technologies to monitor patients' health, now in early development, which still are largely cumbersome and not embraced by the public, will become more widespread. These include vital sign monitoring to check on patients after surgical procedures, drug compliance programs, and constant health status updates via the Internet. As all of this data is captured and interpreted, doctors and patients will become more closely connected. **An office visit will no longer be necessary to see if a new blood pressure medication, for example, is working.** The doctor can simply access the patient's information online and adjust the medication instantly via a message to the pharmacy. Patients will become more accepting of these technologies and will have a greater willingness to share this personal information (and reject any security risks) in exchange for a higher standard of care from their doctors. Healthcare companies that help enable and even sponsor the deployment of these technologies will form lasting bonds with consumers and early adopters, gaining a big competitive advantage and increasing barriers to entry for others later on.



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