

DIGITAL MARKETING GUIDE

FOR MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

A five-part industry guide to the biggest digital marketing opportunities available to medical technology marketers today

Part 1

SOCIAL MEDIA



GREY MATTER MARKETING

MARKETING SMARTS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

The healthcare marketing landscape is undergoing a dramatic transition brought on, in part, by a wave of new regulations. Now, more than ever, it is important that medical technology companies and their customers evolve together. Manufacturers can no longer succeed by simply delivering incremental product and cost improvements and deploying a retail/detail sales force. Instead, hospitals and physicians are seeking broader, more strategic relationships with manufacturers.

Nothing lends itself better to this new buying process than digital marketing. Digital marketing initiatives allow manufacturers to engage with prospects earlier in the sales funnel to communicate their value offering while reducing the costs of sales. When done right, digital marketing aids in the discovery of meaningful insights, allowing you to engage customers better and cause changes in their behavior. The more meaningful customers find your solutions, the more profound and favorable these changes will be. As the campaign progresses, digital marketing also provides real-time access to performance metrics so marketers can maximize the efficiency of their investments.

In the spring of 2013, Grey Matter Marketing fielded an online survey of 108 marketing professionals employed by U.S. medical technology companies. Grey Matter Marketing requested that respondents share opinions and comment on current trends and challenges in digital marketing. Using the insights from this survey and experience in the field of digital marketing, Grey Matter Marketing has developed a five-part industry guide to provide medical technology marketers with a roadmap for the biggest digital marketing opportunities available today.

Part one of our five-part series outlines how medical technology professionals can use social media in a regulated environment. Even more importantly, it gives readers the supporting evidence needed to recommend specific social media strategies to management and internal legal and regulatory teams.

PART 1: SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media Defined

People have adopted entirely new modes of communication online, rapidly and en masse, that allow them to instantly disseminate and obtain information with crowds of people around the world. A sensible marketer can clearly see how this presents a range of excellent opportunities that could not have existed — that were not even in the public's imagination — just ten years ago.

Social media encompasses the set of online tools used for facilitating user-generated content on the web. This ranges from online reviews, blogs, and social bookmarking sites, to popular social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. Social media is an environment for people to build relationships online by fostering interaction and information sharing.

"We are confident the Urologix social media presence will provide information that sparks much needed discussion with and between patients. Oftentimes, men with benign prostate hyperplasia (BPH) will suffer silently with the disease because they aren't aware there are solutions outside of drugs and surgery. Social media is a great way to provide timely and relevant information to help educate patients on these proven treatment options for BPH."

Greg Fluet, CEO, Urologix

Why Social? Why Now?

The rapid adoption of social media in the healthcare space is staggering. Eighty-one percent of U.S. adults use the internet, and **59%** say they have looked online for health information in the past year. Thirty-five percent of U.S. adults say they have gone online specifically to try to figure out what medical condition they or someone else might have.¹ Although social media is often associated with the younger generations, baby boomers are adopting this medium just as quickly, with **52%** using social networking sites.²

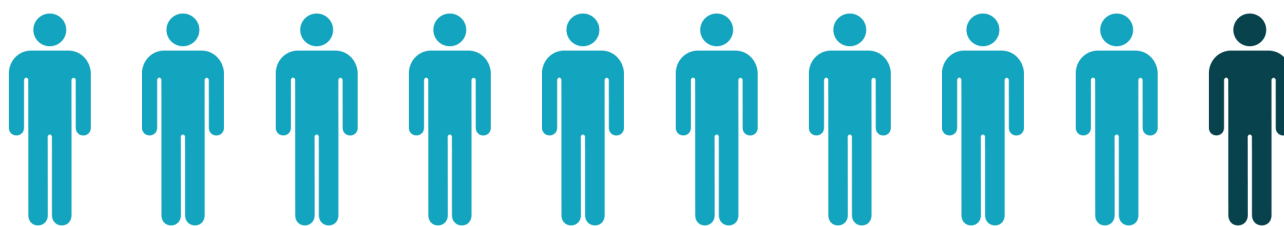
¹ Fox, S., and Duggan, J., "Health Online 2013" Pew Internet and American Life Project. Jan. 15, 2013. Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Health-online/Summary-of-Findings.aspx> Accessed June 26, 2013.

² Duggan, M., and Brenner, J., "The Demographics of Social Media Users - 2012" Pew Internet and American Life Project. Feb. 14, 2013. Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Social-media-users/The-State-of-Social-Media-Users.aspx> Accessed June 26, 2013.

With such heavy use of the Web for health information, there is a huge space for companies to step in and listen, share solutions, and build patient trust. But many medical technology professionals focus on the business-to-business environment and do not target directly patients. These marketers are not exempt; patients are not the only ones adopting social media.

Social networking also provides physicians with an efficient and effective means for staying abreast of the vast amount of medical knowledge required to deliver patient care. A recent study in *The Journal of Medical Internet Research* found that **24.1%** of physician respondents used social media daily or many times daily to scan or explore medical information, whereas **14.2%** contributed new information via social media on a daily basis.³ Current use varied on an application-specific basis, from **6.8%** for Twitter to **52%** for physician-only online communities such as, Sermo, Ozmosis, and medical society members' sites.

Given these statistics, it is not surprising the Grey Matter Marketing Digital Marketing Survey revealed that medical technology marketers understand the value of social media, with nearly **90%** of respondents participating in some form of social media initiative. **Forty-four percent** identified social media as a moderately important initiative to their overall marketing strategy, while **33.8%** said it was very important.



³ McGowan BS, Wasko M, Vartabedian BS, Miller RS, Freiherr DD, Abdolrasulnia M, "Understanding the Factors That Influence the Adoption and Meaningful Use of Social Media by Physicians to Share Medical Information," J Med Internet Res 2012;14(5):e117. Available at: <http://www.jmir.org/2012/5/e117/> Accessed June 26, 2013.

What MedTech Marketers Need to Know About Social Networking

The case for social media is clear. Smart marketers follow the eyeballs. Your customers are looking at social media, and therefore you should be leveraging it to drive business and compete effectively in the new era of healthcare. But what do you need to know before jumping in or expanding your efforts? What considerations do medical technology marketing professionals need to take into account when implementing a strategic social media plan?

Choosing the Right Platforms

We would like to talk about two common mistakes that medical marketers make when developing a social media plan: underexposure and overexposure on a particular platform. Some marketers do not understand the wide variety of available social media channels, and they grossly underestimate their target audience's participation. Other marketers use a "shotgun approach," setting up profiles on all available networks, and assume results will follow.

Neither of these strategies is effective. It takes more than a passing knowledge of a few social channels to truly understand your audience and develop a successful social media strategy. An effective strategy depends on having a clear understanding of who your target audience is and what social networks they prefer.



Marketing professionals typically choose social media platforms using a variety of methods. The optimal selection method is highly dependent on the type of company, resources available, budget allocation, and timeline. Some common methods of selecting social media platforms include:

- **Social media audit:** an in-depth review and analysis of how your customers and competitors currently use various platforms to engage in social media
- **Buyer persona exercise:** research and development of archetypal representations of customers and buyers that model behavior and goals
- **Platform analysis:** outlining the general participation rates, strengths, and weaknesses of various platforms as they relate to your business objectives

	Effectiveness	Expense	Timeline	Typically Performed by
Social Media Audit	High	High	Moderate	External agencies
Buyer Persona Exercise	Moderate	High	Long	A combination of internal teams and external agencies
Platform Analysis	Low	Low	Short	Internal teams

In the Grey Matter Marketing Digital Marketing Survey, the most commonly cited social media channels used by respondents were LinkedIn and Twitter, with **69.2%** reporting engagement for each. Following, at **66.7%** each, were Facebook and YouTube. None of the respondents reported using physician-only online communities.

Top Social Networking Sites for Physicians

1	LinkedIn	2	Sermo	3	Ozmosis	4	Twitter	5	Facebook
The world's largest professional network offering users access to people, jobs, news, updates, and insights.		Physician-only online community where M.D. and D.O. members post opinions, observations, and questions about clinical issues.		Online community for licensed and verified physicians to discuss clinical and practice management issues.		Real-time information network and microblog delivering messages of 140 characters or less.		The world's largest social networking site, with over 1 billion monthly active users.	

Rules & Regulations

Social media marketing, when managed and executed correctly, can lead to increased awareness, increased leads, increased sales, and improved communication with customers. Yet, in the medical technology industry, excitement about this new and engaging channel is often overshadowed by anxiety and uncertainty.

Healthcare marketers understand the value of social media, but they may become overwhelmed by what they perceive as tight regulations or frustrated by seemingly restrictive FDA guidance.

More than four years in the making, the FDA issued social media guidance in June 2014 that finally offers the industry some direction on the use of digital media. Unfortunately, even after such a long wait, little has changed.

The first of two new draft guidances, "Correcting Independent Third Party Misinformation About Prescription Drugs and Medical Devices," sets forth guidelines for a company's response to user-generated content on the web.

Companies can now correct misinformation, in a truthful and non-misleading manner, without objection from the FDA. Alternatively, a company may also provide a reputable source from which to obtain the correct information, such as the firm's contact information.

According to the guidance, the communication should:

- Be limited and tailored to the misinformation;
- Be non-promotional in nature, tone, and presentation;
- Be accurate;
- Be consistent with the FDA-required labeling for the product;
- Be supported by sufficient evidence, including substantial evidence, when appropriate, for prescription drugs;
- Either be posted in conjunction with the misinformation in the same area or forum (if posted directly to the forum by the firm), or should reference the misinformation and be intended to be posted in conjunction with the misinformation (if provided to the forum operator or author; and)
- Disclose that the person providing the corrective information is affiliated with the firm that manufactures, packs, or distributes the product.

Companies are under no obligation to correct misinformation. Nor does correcting one instance on a website obligate the company to correct all instances of misinformation on the site.

Note that when the company itself is hosting the discussion, the guidance does not apply.

The other draft guidance, “Internet Social Media Platforms with Character Space Limitations – Presenting Risk and Benefit Information for Prescription Drugs and Medical Devices,” addresses how companies should discuss risk and benefit information on platforms such as Twitter, as well as paid search links on Google where communications are limited to a specific amount of characters.

The new guidance stipulates that, regardless of character space constraints, if a firm chooses to make a product benefit claim, the firm should also incorporate risk information within the same character-space-limited communication. Plus they must provide a link to allow for direct access to more complete risk information about the product.

The FDA provides the following example of a Tweet: “NoFocus (remembrine HCl) for mild to moderate memory loss may cause seizures in patients with a seizure disorder www.nofocus.comrisk” – 134 characters, with 140 the limit.

As you can see, inclusion of so much information within the body of the tweet, leaves very little opportunity to communicate any other message. Branded, product-specific communications on platforms with character space requirements are already rare. It is doubtful this guidance will change that. In fact, if a medical device company can not achieve the balance of benefit and risk within character limits, the FDA proposes it “reconsiders using that platform for the intended promotional message.”

Although these new draft guidances provide the medical technology industry with the FDA’s much anticipated position on social media, they do not provide any clear benefit to the manufacturers.

While social platforms continue to grow and expand in both numbers and participation rates, the FDA documents may have unintended negative consequences. Strict requirements are likely to discourage participation in social media, especially from traditionally conservative companies. Therefore, information available on any medical device could actually become more limited — benefit, risk or otherwise — and not reach the public where they expect to find it.

Regulatory Action by the FDA

In April 2013, FleishmanHillard International Communications sponsored a white paper whose author, Mark S. Senak J.D., examined the regulatory actions of the Office of Prescription Drug Promotion (OPDP) during the four-year period from 2008 to 2012. Of the 173 warning letters issued during the four-year period, only one concerned a social media platform. This one instance involved a Facebook share widget.

Despite the perceived increase of regulatory risk associated with social media, recent analysis of FDA enforcement patterns instead finds digital media no more likely to elicit a regulatory action than traditional media.

Other digital violations cited in warning letters involved videos that had been uploaded to YouTube, but these warnings would have been issued whether the video was on a social media site, a company's own website, or a DVD, or was part of a television commercial.

These citations highlight an important point: **a violation has less to do with the medium of delivery than with the message itself.**

3X

An FDA warning letter was almost three times more likely to be based on traditional media than digital media.

Another surprise discovery found in the analysis was that a warning letter was almost three times more likely to be based on a traditional media communication vehicle than on a digital one. Furthermore, **the number of warning letters issued for digital media vehicles has declined every year since 2009**, despite the rapid increase in corporations participating. The bulk of violations that occurred on digital properties consisted of copy on Web pages and sponsored links.

Without comprehensive guidance, Nielsen BuzzMetrics' healthcare analysts also tried to decipher the risk social media poses to medical technology companies, this time with regards to adverse event reporting.⁴ Research teams manually reviewed 500 randomly selected online healthcare messages and scored each message for mentions of the FDA's four criteria for adverse event reporting.

Their research implies that while a company that participates and diligently monitors social media for mentions of its brand should expect to see some adverse events within the discussion, **social media as a medium does not trigger adverse event reporting.**

So, how can medical technology companies join the conversation while protecting their organizations?

⁴ Bell, J., and Davies, M., "The Realities of AER in Social Media." Word of Mouth Marketing Association. Online slideshow. Available at:

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AboutFDA/CentersOffices/CDER/UCM194668.pdf>

Medical technology companies can start with some basic internal documentation that allows them to safely enter the world of social media while reducing their liability and maintaining a consistent company message. A company's marketing team should make it a priority to involve the legal and regulatory teams early in the planning process. Since these internal bodies exist to protect the organization against legal threats and minimize liabilities, they can provide valuable information on issues such as adverse event reporting requirements and off-label promotion concerns.

Marketers, meanwhile, can share the nuances of the digital environment and why social media plays an important role in achieving business objectives. The reg-legal teams are predisposed to be cautious. If you receive a negative response to a marketing proposition, you should work to understand the area of concern or perceived exposure and collaborate to find a workable solution. Usually, it is not a case of "You can't do that," but rather "Let's figure out how we can make this work." Just as the job of the legal and regulatory teams is to keep the company safe from liability, the marketer's job is to keep the company in the public eye and to generate sales — and both are necessary to the health of the business. These teams should work to achieve as many "yes" results as possible; key players in the medical technology industry already understand this and are working with this in mind.

5

key documents to ensure a consistent message and reduce liability

1. **Social media policy** - *A legal document that covers how employees can use social media at work and on your behalf.*
2. **Social media guidelines** - *Provides employees with best practices for interacting on social media and on the Internet as a whole.*
3. **Conversation guide** - *Your style guide for social media. Describes acceptable types of images, naming conventions, and appropriate protocols for posting messages. Ensures consistent branding and voices across all social media accounts.*
4. **Response protocol** - *Spells out how to respond to negative feedback.*
5. **Community guidelines** - *The behavior you expect from your community and what they can expect from you.*

Engagement Basics

The social media paradigm is undergoing a major shift. Success in social media no longer relies on numbers of followers, although having a large "Like" count does give nice bragging rights. While it is important to have crowds of people consume your content, it is much better to not stop there. You want them to engage and take action. The so-called "engagement ratio" used by most social networks underscores this point. By calculating the engagement of your messages, social networks determine whether, and how prominently, your message appears on a user's feed (similar to organic search rankings).

Facebook Engagement Ratio (ER)

$$ER = [(Likes + Comments + Shares)/Active fans] \times 100$$

Increasing fans will not improve the ratio if they are not also active



The first step in becoming more engaging is learning what motivates your audience to take action. This can best be done by seeding your channels with a variety of information and analyzing what performs best, or by observing your target audience's current behavior across the web and drawing inferences. Let the community identify what information would be helpful to them and where you should go next.

What does your audience want to do?

- Demonstrate thought leadership? Post breaking news.
- Share their opinion? Create a survey.
- Have a laugh? Post a funny photo.
- Help a cause? Share charitable information.
- Help a loved one? Give them a discussion guide.
- Understand their condition? Develop an educational video.
- Associate themselves with your brand? Give them a badge.

Transparency

Patient and physician consumers alike are well aware of your legal and regulatory constraints. Patients are accustomed to pages of labeling information appearing next to their magazine advertisements or listening to 30 or more seconds of fair-balance language at the end of television commercials. Physicians interface with sales representatives on a regular basis and are familiar with the constraints concerning on- and off-label promotions.

Being up-front about your policies not only protects your company but also builds trust and respect among your audience. State your internal regulatory policies, but be wary of legal jargon. Explain in very clear terms what your customer can expect, such as a 24-hour delay for responses or that all medical questions will be forwarded to a medical professional.

If nothing else...

Remember, conversations about your products or services are already taking place online, whether your company is involved or not. The way people use social media is not like other forms of marketing — they do not consume the information, they interact with the informer (that is, you). There are regulations that apply to companies' involvement in this sphere, so the legal and regulatory departments are key players in any discussions on the subject. Have a policy in place for interaction with users, and clearly state it. Have well-researched knowledge of what users are looking for when they turn to you, and provide it. These conversations are ongoing, and it is vital for companies to monitor and participate in these conversations in order to stay relevant and connect with customers.

If you are interested in learning more about digital marketing as it relates to medical technology companies — including the latest trends, ROI, and how to sell-in digital marketing to your management team — we are offering readers a free phone consultation.

Email us at info@greymattermarketing.com to set up a call.

ABOUT GREY MATTER MARKETING

Grey Matter Marketing is a full-service, award-winning marketing agency working exclusively with medical technology companies. We provide the marketing architecture to build strong connections with providers and patients to drive adoption of innovative technology that improves lives. We have a proven track record in developing both traditional and digital plans that create compelling marketing experiences and drive business results. Our strength is finding the important truth in any communication effort, and translating that truth into something your customer understands, and more importantly, feels. Armed with this knowledge and insight, we roll up our sleeves and do what we do best: work hard, think strategically and deliver.

ABOUT THE BOOK

In the spring of 2013, Grey Matter Marketing fielded an online survey of 108 marketing professionals employed by U.S. medical technology companies. Grey Matter Marketing requested opinions and information on current trends and challenges in digital marketing. The results of that survey combined with the changing digital landscape inspired this guide. Digital Marketing for Medical Technology Companies outlines how medical technology professionals can use social media in a regulated environment. Even more importantly, it gives readers the supporting evidence needed to recommend specific social media strategies to management and internal legal and regulatory teams.

Part 1 SOCIAL MEDIA

If you are interested in learning more about digital marketing as it relates to medical technology companies — including the latest trends, ROI, and how to sell-in digital marketing to your management team — we are offering readers a free phone consultation. email us at info@greymattermarketing.com

Share It



greymattermarketing.com