

# The Importance of Digital Engagement for Healthcare Marketers



*Rebecca Wong, Managing Director,  
Three Whiskey US*

The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of digital engagement and virtual connection, especially for healthcare providers and companies. This year it will become increasingly important for healthcare marketers to leverage these digital channels in order to keep up with evolving customer needs and build brand trust.

So, how can healthcare companies transform their digital experience?

Providers are now shifting how they deliver care to virtual settings, whenever possible, while still focusing on quality patient care. Communication through digital channels such as email, social media, and messaging, will become increasingly important for customer updates as well as reminders of the company's safety measures throughout the pandemic.

Healthcare marketers will need to ensure these digital channels not only provide a good patient or customer experience but also that they're equipped to handle an influx of online customer engagement, for example on social channels, for faster conversion.

Additionally, providers and healthcare companies will need to shift their focus on analytics to properly track conversions and online behavior. Using analytics to demonstrate the value of these channels will become increasingly important.

## **Limited capabilities with in-person channels will lead to a focus on digital**

With sales teams being limited in their reach during the pandemic, digital channels have proven their effectiveness and importance during this time. Going forward, customer engagement and brand awareness through digital channels will be a key focus for marketers.

In addition to improving digital channels that impact the customer experience, healthcare marketers should also rely on digital like SEO, content marketing, and paid media to increase the brand's online visibility and potential conversions. We have seen increased investment and focus on paid media channels with our clients since the beginning of the year. When integrated with analytics, digital marketing is a powerful way to demonstrate the effectiveness of healthcare marketers' digital engagement strategy.

## **Patients are seeking information online**

Patients have been increasingly taking healthcare into their own hands and seeking information online to ensure they have quality healthcare. With the pandemic, virtual appointments are increasing as in-person engagements are limited. Providers need to focus on offering a superior digital experience in order to keep up with evolving patient behaviors.

Improving SEO to ensure your provider website is visible in search and information is easily accessible to your customers will be a major focus. Expert health information will position your company as a trusted resource.

Providers and healthcare marketers will also need to focus on

digital, especially social channels, to inform patients of updates, current research and healthcare trends, and the latest technology available. Social channels can increase engagement and customer relationships by sharing trusted expert advice.

Healthcare marketers have greater digital capabilities than ever before, and these should be leveraged in order to provide the best consumer experience possible.

## **Demonstrating success will be important for newer channels**

In 2021, healthcare marketing requires a more integrated approach in terms of measurement and delivery across systems. Some digital channels may not have been fully utilized in the past but with an increased focus on these channels, demonstrating ROI will be important. To ensure you're tracking the right metrics at the correct touchpoints, it's essential to set up a measurement framework during your initial planning stage.

Healthcare marketers need to begin by identifying the objectives of the provider's digital channels. From there, you can determine the type of data that should be tracked for successful conversions. For example, in hospitals, this could be appointments made, whereas, for pharmaceutical companies, this could be scripts written or actual product sales.

Sometimes new products, such as advanced technology or hospital equipment, have long sales cycles. The FDA approval process is also lengthy, but customers may be interested before approval. Tracking customer requests for information is a key area in which healthcare marketers can demonstrate the success of their digital channels. By tracking each step of the cycle, from inquiry to purchase, healthcare marketers can gain deeper insight into the buyer's journey and apply that to future marketing strategies.

## **Conclusion**

With an increase in virtual patient care and customers seeking information online, digital channels will become increasingly important for healthcare marketers. Demonstrating ROI in these channels will be imperative as companies continue on their digital transformation journeys. This shift towards digital allows marketers to engage with customers better and will continue in 2021.