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Midwestern eMarketing Values

By John Mack

On the Internet it's still about content, content, content. Some may consider this old-fashioned. But Siren Interactive, a Midwestern interactive eMarketing firm, believes that valuable Internet content is a prime component of an effective eMarketing strategy for pharmaceutical companies.

These days medical marketers cannot rely merely on a pretty web site to communicate with consumers and physicians online. They need effective communications, especially regarding drug risks and benefits, lifestyle and treatment alternatives, compliance, etc.

"We create an interactive marketing channel that is effective in providing information to both patients and physicians," said Wendy White, founder of Siren Interactive. "The only way to do that is to establish a trusted relationship with your audience, which means you have to give them something valuable for their time and attention. Unlike other interactive firms, we focus on content development rather than stopping with just the design and technology components."

Content Development

"Most pharmaceutical companies need help developing content, and they often find it difficult to find quality content created by credible sources," said White. "Because of our willingness and ability to develop content, we are filling a critical need our clients."

Siren has content writers on staff, which is unique for an interactive agency. For example, Linda Martens, head of the Siren writing team, holds a Master's degree in Social Work from Smith College

School for Social Work. Her background turns out to be perfect for creating consumer-friendly content, which she has been doing for Siren since 2003. Siren also has a seasoned instructional designer on staff.

"We look for writers who can reformulate complex medical information using sensitive language that informs, supports, and educates physicians, patients, families, caregivers and other health-care consumers," said White. "We hire writers that really understand the material and the point of view of the audience."

What's the expected payoff?

Good content on the web often means higher search engine rankings, which translates directly into more website traffic. It also contributes to a more effective user experience. It's easy to collect the user behavior numbers with a good web analytics tool, and tracking a website's progress over time identifies important trends and anomalies.

Content also goes a long way in developing loyalty among your target audience, which is the real payoff. When they trust you and receive value from your offerings, you have a great foundation for a successful long-term relationship.

Integrated Strategy

Siren integrates a variety of eMarketing solutions into the overall marketing plan of their

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FIGURE: Sample of e-newsletter created by Siren Interactive for Baxter Healthcare.

clients. Each component aligns with one or more overall marketing objective. When looking at the big picture, there is a synergistic effect between all

components. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

For Baxter Healthcare, for example, Siren implemented a strategy for the hemophilia disease state that includes an email newsletter, a CD-ROM, and an award-winning hemophilia disease information web site (www.hemophiliagalaxy.com). The website is the engine that drives the larger interactive strategy, with the other elements adding additional value to the ensemble.

Hemophilia Galaxy offers helpful advice from hemophilia experts. It provides illustrated information about the disease and aggregates news and events from the hemophilia community that is vital for caregivers. It also offers guidelines for managing hemophilia.

Baxter's goal was to maintain an integrated eMarketing channel to educate physicians, patients and families about hemophilia. This includes treatment options and preventive strategies. In conjunction with this strategy, Baxter ran a trial offer program that provided free samples of Advate, a clotting factor (Factor VIII) that helps people with Hemophilia A prevent and control bleeding episodes. Physicians were able to download an application to the sampling program directly from the website.

Other interactive agencies may over-emphasize branding and design, but Siren believes that on the Internet it's really about content. Of course, it must be valuable content. One of the ways Siren leverages web content is through electronic newsletters delivered to site visitors who have asked to receive information every month.

Each monthly issue of the opt-in e-newsletter associated with the Hemophilia Galaxy web site (see FIGURE on previous page) includes a relevant, topical content article written by the Siren staff as well as summaries and links to news about hemophilia. Of course, there's information about what's new on the web site, too, with direct links to the appropriate pages on the site.

"We also piggyback product promotion with the content," says White. "But the space allocated to promotion is less than 10% of the total. And we are fully compliant with the guidelines specified by the CAN-SPAM Act to maintain the highest quality list possible."

The results:

- Hemophiliagalaxy.com continuously maintains a top-5 ranking on Google, MSN, and AOL for the keyword "hemophilia" and holds the top spot among corporate websites for the keyword.

- The site achieves higher than industry averages for repeat visitors and length of visit.
- The email newsletter consistently beats industry averages for open and clickthrough rates.

All these results indicate a targeted audience and relevant, valuable content.

The online efforts also contributed to sales success. Baxter's CEO stated "We exceeded expectations for Advate..." in a 2004 Q4 news release.

Siren's Midwestern eMarketing Best Practices

For patient programs:

Value - Provide information that is useful and timely.

Clarity - Keep wording simple and concise. Be clear about how to get more in depth information.

Relevance - Make sure the right information is sent to the right people.

Credibility - Use and cite reliable, respected sources for non-biased information

Reliability - Deliver as promised in terms of schedule, frequency, and content.

Content Mix - A mix of 60-70% new content and 30-40% promotional material is suggested. Note which content is promotional and which is non-biased.

For health care provider programs:

Credibility - Use and cite reliable, respected sources for non-biased information.

Value - Provide information that is useful and timely.

Clarity - Keep wording simple and concise. Be clear about how to get more in-depth information.

Relevance - Make sure the right information is sent to the right people.

Content Mix - A mix of 80-90% new content and 10-20% promotional material is suggested. Note which content is promotional and which is non-biased.

Reliability - Deliver as promised in terms of schedule, frequency, and content.

Pharma Marketing News



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