

Product/Service Review

High Impact Content in Support of Rx Brands

Case Study: Alli – the Book!

By John Mack

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Pharmaceutical companies often are challenged to produce consumer-friendly content designed to help patients get the most benefit out of the drugs prescribed to them by physicians. Drug companies have focused much of their content-rich support efforts on the professional side of the marketing equation and depend almost entirely on TV-based DTC ads to educate consumers.

But that may be changing. For example, in 2007, Centocor—which markets biologics for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis (RA), Crohn's disease, and psoriasis—produced the film *Innerspace*, a first-of-its-kind documentary providing insight into the 'inner states' of three everyday adults facing chronic, life-altering inflammatory diseases. Later, the company released the film on DVD.

Obviously, a feature-length film is costly and may not be appropriate for every pharma budget. Another option is to produce a book that accompanies the launch of a product.

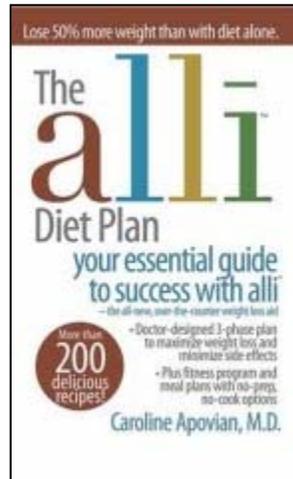
You've probably heard of the book "The alli Diet Plan," which was developed by PLGhealth for GlaxoSmithKline in order to increase the visibility, brand recognition, and sales of the over-the-counter (OTC) alli® weight-loss product and to support consumer compliance with the medication.

Introducing PLGhealth

PLGhealth, the health-targeted division of The Philip Lief Group Inc., conceives, develops, markets, promotes and distributes all forms of print and digital media.

"We produce high-impact books and online products that supplement product launches, develop awareness for educational initiatives, and improve patient compliance and persistency, as well as support global marketing strategies," says Philip Lief, CEO.

Regarding The alli Diet Plan, one reviewer on Amazon said, "Yes, the starter kit includes cards which have some of the same information contained in this book. I still think the book is a great asset, as it is far easier to find the exact chapter you need, whether it is starting a walking or other exercise plan - or simply planning meals, with tons of recipes included..."



A Best-Selling Pharma Brand Book!

PLGhealth has been producing books for over 25 years, but The alli Diet Plan book is a groundbreaking event as far as pharmaceutical marketing is concerned. It is probably the first book sponsored by a drug company for mass-market distribution. The book, for example, is sold in book stores and other retail outlets, including Wal-Mart and pharmacies. It made three bestseller lists: USA Today, Wal-Mart, and The New York Times. US consumers purchased over 857,000 copies, which convinced GSK to order

global adaptations to accompany the drug launch in international markets.

"GSK considered the alli book an integral part of the drug launch," said Lief, "not only because of the sales and reviews it generated in the press and the increase in brand visibility, but because it also provided information to patients to help them with compliance."

Not only that, but sales of alli increased 9%-16% when sold alongside the companion book, according to Lief. Indeed, if you visit Amazon.com and search for "alli" you will find the book and also alli starter kits for sale!

PLG's approach supports product launches by

- Creating specific publications to complement launch efforts
- Building brand awareness in multiple channels
- Supporting efforts to reestablish brands in the marketplace

Challenges

One of the main challenges facing GSK's alli marketers was the well-known "treatment effect" that Steve Burton, head of the alli team at GSK first described in his post "My oops experience" on the alliConnect blog and on CNBC.

Because alli, like its Rx predecessor XENICAL, works by blocking the absorption of dietary fat, it may cause some changes in bowel habits, including "gas with oily discharge, an increased number of bowel movements, an urgent need to have them, and an inability to control them, particularly after meals containing higher amounts of fat than are recommended."

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“Treatment effects are common if you eat meals with too much fat,” said Burton. “They aren’t a safety concern - they won’t hurt you. But they could be embarrassing if you aren’t prepared to deal with them.”

Another challenge faced by all marketers of diet drugs, including alli, is that consumers perceive weight-loss products to be “magic pills” that result in maximum weight loss with minimal effort.

Lief said that GSK naturally wished to address these challenges in the book and convey the message that when alli is used properly—namely in conjunction with a low-fat diet—the treatment effects can be minimized and that if users do not adhere to the recommended diet, they will not achieve optimal weight loss results.

A Review of the Content

PLGhealth worked with a renowned physician and weight-loss specialist—Caroline Apovian, M.D.—to create the book, which is subtitled “your essential guide to success with alli.” This multifaceted companion guide includes nutrition advice, a fitness program, and recipes specifically designed to work with the alli® weight-loss product.

The biggest challenge that PLGhealth faces when working on projects like the alli book, is to present all the essential messages that the client company wishes to convey to consumers and do it in a very appealing manner for the general public.

Because a proper diet is key to limiting alli’s treatment effects, recipes are a very important part of the book. Recipes include “Grilled Cowboy Steaks with Secret Sauce and Tomato Topping,” “Seafood Jambalaya,” “Arizona Jerk Chicken,” “Crispy Beer Batter Onion Rings,” and “Key Lime Pie.”

There’s also a guide to eating out with a table showing the grams of fat and number of calories in entrees served at various fast-food chains including Arby’s, Sonic, and Taco Bell.

“The recipes are very alli friendly,” says Lief, “and are very appealing to the general public.”

Cookbook Encore

Sales of the diet plan book were so successful that GSK opted to contract PLG to do a follow-up cookbook, titled “alli Cookbook.” The format and glossy, stain resistant pages are much better suited to being used in the kitchen. It includes full-page, four-color photographs and a convenient tear-out restaurant guide.

Thought Leaders Are Critical to Success

PLG’s customized, branded books and online products build on advertising and promotion initiatives, provide answers for customers, support consumers to change their behavior, and leverage consumer trust to encourage action. To achieve these results, PLG brings in thought leaders like Caroline Apovian, M.D., author of The alli Diet Plan, who is the director of the Nutrition and Weight Management Center and co-director of the Nutrition and Metabolic Support Service at Boston Medical Center and President-Elect of The Obesity Society.

Thought leaders review all the content and sometimes they write all the material. “Frankly their schedules often do not allow them to do all the writing,” says Lief. “Usually, our books need to be published quickly to coordinate with product launches, and marketing campaigns,” says Lief. Also, books like The alli Diet Plan include content such as recipes, which clearly benefit by having other writers involved. “It helps that we have a team of professional health

writers to do research, fact checking, and editing the manuscript so that it is appropriate for the intended audience.”

PLG’s team of experts include:

- Top industry experts and thought leaders
- Leading consultants with targeted knowledge
- Experienced health writers
- Skilled editors

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Bibliotherapy: UK Doctors Prescribe Books For Mild Depression

When some British doctors see a patient with mild to moderate depression or anxiety, they pull out their pads and prescribe a self-help book. Under a new program in more than a dozen counties across the United Kingdom, patients take the prescription to their local library, where they check out reserved titles such as “Overcoming Depression” and “The Feeling Good Handbook”.

Although this UK system is designed to cut back on physician over-prescribing, the concept of prescribing a life-style change book along with a prescription medication may have a significant impact on compliance

- Award-winning designers
- Finest photographers/illustrators

Compliance Benefit

Any Rx drug for which a life-style change would improve outcomes – which includes many blockbuster brands – would benefit from a branded, patient compliance-focused content product launched in tandem with the drug launch or as part of a new marketing strategy to maintain the brand.

“We see a tremendous opportunity out there for pharmaceutical companies to enhance patient support by providing books to physicians to hand out to their patients,” says Lief. This clearly satisfies current and likely future guidelines on “gifts” to physicians because the books would aid the physicians’ practice and are of nominal financial value.

PLG’s products improve patient compliance and persistency by

- Outlining specific therapy strategies for enhancing compliance
- Assisting patients in managing side effects and routes of administration
- Providing specialized tools to track compliance
- Fostering support mechanisms for maintaining persistency

Marketing Services Included

Not only does PLG produce books, they also develop a promotional and marketing strategy to sell the books. One deal that PLG is working on for the alli cookbook is to sell it together with alli starter kits on the QVC channel. PLG publicists can work together with their client’s publicists to get stories written in the press and consumer magazines. Sometimes, the book may be mentioned in a health-related story and sometimes it may be covered in the book review section.

What does it cost a drug company to have PLG produce and market a book like the alli Diet Plan? “That depends on the prospect for commercial success of the book,” says Lief. If sales are anticipated to be high, the investment for the drug company is minimal—PLG will take fees from profits on sales. Otherwise the drug company would pay a flat fee depending on the scope of the project.

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Experts Consulted

The following experts were consulted in the preparation of articles for this issue.

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