

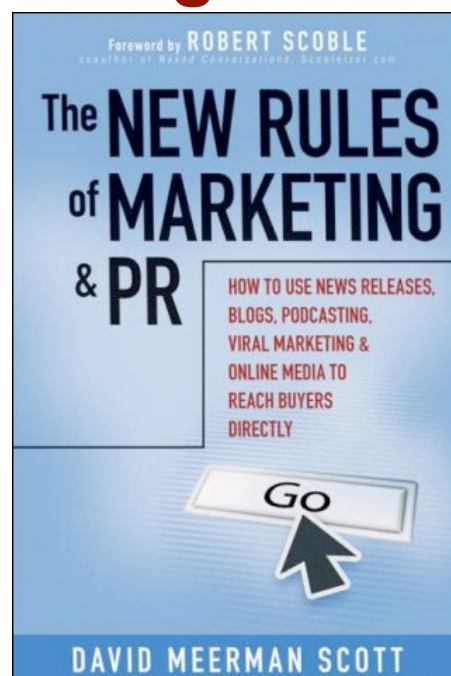
Guest Article

The New Rules of Marketing & PR

Book Review & Insights for Pharma

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I have to admit when I first saw the title of David Meerman Scott's new book, *The New Rules of Marketing & PR: How to Use News Releases, Blogs, Podcasting, Viral Marketing, & Online Media to Reach Buyers Directly*, my first thought was "here we go again." These days it seems we are constantly inundated by books and news stories titled the "New Rules of ____" ...fill in the blank. One only has to type in the beginning of that phrase as a Google search term to find over 100 million results ranging from *The New Rules of Car Buying* to *The New Rules of Reverse Mortgages*.

That said, this book does actually live up to the promise of outlining online strategies that can deliver results.

Do the New Rules Apply to Pharma?

Now, most of you reading this are engaged in pharmaceutical marketing or PR, so you should be forewarned that this book does NOT address the challenges we face in a heavily regulated environment. But that is not to say that the methods explored in this book are not extremely valuable. As an industry, we must find ways to utilize these tools in a way that is compliant with FDA regulations. The good news is we can! Let's explore.

First, What Are the "Old" Rules?

The book is divided into three parts. The first three chapters ground the reader by taking a step-wise approach to explaining how a strict adherence to traditional methods of marketing and public relations (the "old rules") can dramatically limit a marketer or PR professional's ability to effectively communicate with target audiences in today's environment.

In this section, you will develop a well rounded understanding of how to leverage the tools of the web to truly learn the needs of your customers, and then use that information to deliver useful content at the moment your target audience needs it (the "new rules").

Some examples from the book of the "old rules" are:

- "Marketing simply means advertising (and branding)"
- "Advertising is one-way: company-to-consumer"
- "Advertising and PR are separate disciplines run by different people with separate goals, strategies, and measurement criteria"

Sound familiar? Off course they do. Are they rules though? In the sense that these behaviors repre-

sent normal practices in pretty much every industry, I would say these statements do represent the rule rather than the exception.

Do we consciously enforce these rules? For the most part, I don't think so. In fact, I think it's quite the opposite.

Marketing and PR professionals understand that times are changing and that reaching your customer is not the same today as it was 10 years ago. I have seen hundreds of proposals that give the illusion of moving beyond these limitations, but it always seems to fall apart in the execution of the idea. More specifically, it seems to fall apart when trying to set metrics to measure the success of a particular campaign.

Unfortunately, I think these rules represent a comfort zone for marketing and PR professionals that few in the pharmaceutical industry have been willing to step out of. All too often, marketers and PR professionals will limit their measures of success to metrics like qualified leads and media impressions, which leads them back to using the "old rules" or old approaches because they know what to expect.

Examples of "New" Rules

So what are some examples of the new rules? According to Scott, they would include:

- "Marketing is more than advertising"
- "PR is more than just a mainstream media audience"
- "People want participation, not propaganda"
- "The internet has made public relations public again, after years of almost exclusive focus on media"
- "On the web, the lines between marketing and PR have blurred"

OK, nothing ground breaking here, but as I stated above these statements are true and we all know it. I would even take the last bullet a step further and say the lines between marketing and PR have blurred... period. Not just on the web, but across the board. Especially with truly integrated marketing communications campaigns where PR and marketing share many of the same metrics like sales generation, qualified leads and conversion rates.

Unfortunately, despite the accuracy of these "new rules," the old-rule comfort zone is REALLY comfy for some, making old habits hard to break. But to be successful and to bring more value to the phys-

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The Press Release Then, Now and Tomorrow

By **Mark Senak**

First published in *Eye On FDA* blog (<http://tinyurl.com/dbcmq8>)

A press release used to be sent out by fax and later email. They got picked up and printed and then people who wanted to read the article in the publication might. They might clip it out and send it to a relative. Later, with the Internet, they might send the URL to a friend. Then print media online began offering little "share this" icons so that you could email the article to a friend. That was all nice progress.

Then came RSS feed. One can aggregate a large number of feeds at once, getting news from a lot of sources and then spread them on quickly.

The nature of a press release is evolving as does our forms of communications. Now, there is no one sized fits all press release.

For example, there is a PR Web News Release, which is very useful to get news out electronically. And there are innovative forms of press releases such as one I noted that was put out by Cephalon as a very well done multi-media release that included downloadable video, etc.

But recently, through a colleague of mine named Geoff Gaspar in the San Fransisco of my employer Fleishman-Hillard, I was introduced to the Social Media Release and was wowed by it.

Geoff developed a Social Media Release for his client, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine. (CIRM) using a service offered by a firm called Pitch Engine, which is billed as "PR for the Social Web. CIRM not only had a very visual story, but also one that could easily be carried along by word of mouth. CIRM was announcing the winners of a photo competition that challenged entrants to develop the most beautiful possible photographs of stem cells. The release announced the twelve winners (see <http://tinyurl.com/bfdqje>).

There are a lot of reasons this is interesting. First of all, it not only spreads news to a targeted group of people who are interested in your topic, but it actually allows you to spread the news through your own social media networks while you read the release. There is a pitch, for example, of 140 characters next to a Twitter icon. If you click on the Twitter icon, you will automatically Twitter the pitch through your own Twitter account. Then your followers are seeing it as you continue reading the release, and may re-tweet the pitch to followers of theirs who may also be interested.

Likewise, there is a Facebook icon which, if hit, will post part of the article with links to your Facebook profile. Brilliant. Naturally, you can include video to post to YouTube as well, and there are a vast array of other social media hooks that can be employed to spread the word. Rather than a social media release, one might call it a viral release - it is designed to be picked up and handed off. As an example, I clicked on the Twitter icon and it immediately posted to the Eye on FDA Twitter account, which now has 534 followers. Within seconds, someone else retweeted the entry to their Twitter followers. No telling how far it went. But if you were interested in finding out, you could go to Tweetscan and enter in "stem cells" to see where it got picked up and sent along.

Considering that social media is occupying a larger and more important role in healthcare communications and that over 1000 newspapers are twittering, for stories that one wants to spread within a specific network, a Social Media Release may be just the ticket. Or, of course, you could send it out by fax.

But also consider the other applications for this type of release. A public service announcement (PSA) could be contained in a release that could, in turn, be posted by dozens of interested people to their own YouTube accounts. The PSAs would then be seen by audiences who have a *pre-disposed interest in the subject matter*.

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The Press Release Then, Now and Tomorrow (cont'd)

And consider the public affairs utility in terms of advocacy. An organization could not only alert their own grassroots network with a release, but facilitate the sharing of it with their networks so easily that you not only draw in your constituents, but possibly increase the size and scope of your effort instantly - for example a call to action regarding a vote in Congress urging everyone to call, email a public official.

The echo chamber offered by a Social Media Release might just have deafening potential.

The reach and uses of a Social Media Release are limited only by a weak imagination. It is a vehicle that takes the viral spread of news to a new height. Or, you could clip out the article that you think is interesting, and put in the mail to your Aunt Sarah.

I thought it interesting enough that I contacted the founder of Pitch Engine to discuss the utility of a Social Media Release. Check it out: <http://tinyurl.com/dbcmq8>

icians and patients we serve, we need to step out of that comfort zone and find new and effective ways to communicate to our targeted audiences.

New Tools to Implement New Rules

The second section of the book is a six chapter overview of tools that marketers or PR professionals can explore to find new ways to reach target audiences via the web. Chapters in this section are dedicated to a thorough review of tools such as blogs, forums, and wikis, citing examples along the way that illustrate the power of each approach.

Did I just hear the proverbial needle scratch to a halt across the record? (Sorry for the old media analogy!)

All of us recognize that we are in a heavily regulated industry and engaging in what could be perceived as uncontrolled two-way dialogue with physicians and patients can be a very risky proposition for a drug company and its products.

This is true, but that does not mean that it can't be done in a way that will mitigate risk and be fully compliant with FDA regulations.

As some of you may know, prior to launching my own company earlier this year, I spent the last 15+ years doing corporate communications work for a number of large pharmaceutical companies. I know the challenges each of you face trying to charter untested waters within your company. I have heard the word "NO" more times than I like to admit, but at the same time I have had a lot of breakthroughs... and none of the companies I worked for has ever received an FDA enforcement letter

because of it! That is because in addition to being a glutton for punishment, I established a very open and collaborative dialogue with my legal and regulatory folks and in the end we came up with solutions to the problems.

Expect to Hear Many "Nos" Before Your Hear "Yes"

Blogs, forums, wikis, and the other available forms of online media represent opportunities for all of us, but as I tell my clients—expect to hear "no" a lot before you get to "yes" and to the best solution.

Remember that not so long ago, television direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising was "new" media. Lawyers and regulators are still trying to find ways to do *that* correctly within regulatory guidelines. Expect, therefore, caution, if not outright resistance, when they are confronted with the new "new media." Meet it with solutions that address the spectrum of practical realities.

Simple Uses for Blogs

Even if you still have that lump in your throat, I encourage you take some time and read this section of the book, because it does a great job of laying out different ways these tools can be used. For example, Scott gives readers three simple uses for blogs and blogging:

1. "To easily monitor what millions of people are saying about you, the market you sell into, your organization, and its products."
2. "To participate in those conversations by commenting on other people's blog."

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3. "To begin to shape those conversations by creating and writing your own blog."

Again very straight forward, yet so few of us are doing it.

Can you imagine your company not issuing press releases to the mainstream media, not monitoring media coverage, or letting stories with misinformation go uncorrected? Of course not! But for some reason so many of us think the rules (not to overuse the term) are different for online media. If you really think that, I suggest you take a look at what people are saying about you, your market, and your products. You might be surprised.

Reporters Monitor Blogs, Why Not You?

If the fact that there are probably hundreds of blogs dedicated to your market where thousands of conversations are taking place everyday isn't motivation enough, maybe the fact that reporters, editors, and producers are scanning these sites for information that will help them develop their next story line is.

Blogs are a very rich source of information and in the same way companies can use blogs to monitor what people are saying about them, the mainstream media uses blogs to monitor hot topics that are of interest to their readers. It's something to think about.

Moving from Concepts to Action

The third section of the book ties it all together by walking the reader through important considerations for developing and launching a multi-faceted campaign on the web. Twelve chapters are dedicated to putting the concepts of web marketing and PR into action.

Too often authors explore concepts without giving the reader the information they need to execute them. Scott does just the opposite. This section is a user's guide to developing a web marketing/PR campaign and is structured in such a way that the reader can use the book as a reference to fine tune strategies and optimize tactics along the way to effectively reach a target audience.

Using Social Networks for Pharma Marketing

This section also touches on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Squidoo. Some of you may ask the same question I asked myself when I first learned about these sites... "How will social networking help me market my product"? The truth is, they all can, but in different ways.

Facebook, for example, is being used by companies across a variety of industries to highlight products, campaigns, even employees.

Say your company is getting ready to launch a disease awareness campaign. Facebook will allow you to set up a page specifically for that campaign that gives your company access to a network of millions of people (even groups that may have a similar cause) that can start spreading the word and building excitement around your campaign before it officially launches.

A great example of how this can work is the "It Girl Essentials Contest" currently being promoted by Ortho-McNeil-Janssen Pharmaceuticals, an operating company of Johnson & Johnson. They are using social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace to spread the word about their contest, which is aimed at identifying everyday women that are "superstars" in their community.

Social networking sites like Facebook are powerful and allow you to control how you manage reader feedback and who you allow to affiliate with your company or program.

Traditional Methods Not Likely to Fade Away

Having said all of this, there are still traditional methods of reaching our customers that remain important and are not likely to fade away anytime in the near future. But being aware of the new tools and "new rules" available to us can enhance our effectiveness and ability to have meaningful conversations with target audiences. Applying just one or two of these tools to your marketing or PR practice can have a measurable impact on your efforts.

But for a company to reap the benefits of new technologies, they must also recognize the overlap between marketing and PR and the importance of working together toward a common goal.

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With that, I want to end this review with a quote from the foreword written by Robert Scoble, formerly a technical evangelist for Microsoft and coauthor of *Naked Conversations*:

"It's a new world you're about to enter, one where relationships with influentials and search engine optimization are equally important, and one where your news will be passed around the world very quickly."

This book definitely outlines a new world for the pharmaceutical industry, one that is ripe for industry pioneers who are looking for new and more effective ways to communicate with their key audiences.

Pharma Marketing News

***About the Author:** Michael Parks is President of Pitch360 Inc., a public relations and marketing communications consultancy based in Downingtown, PA. Prior to launching Pitch360 Inc (<http://tinyurl.com/cclotw>) earlier this year, Michael was the Vice President of Corporate Communications at Centocor Inc., an operating company of Johnson & Johnson.*

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