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Build meaningful customer engagement with by data-driven digital insights

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The behaviours of healthcare professionals (HCPs) are changing and in the last 6 months, there has been a large increase in their use of social media. Many HCPs have been posting online at more than double their usual rate and pharmaceutical companies have been accelerating their digital plans and tactics by learning from their customers' online conversations, according to research.

Building a meaningful brand as a pharmaceutical company can become quite overwhelming with multi-channel marketing and so many new opportunities, and challenges, to effectively engage with your HCP customers. But one thing has remained constant: the first and most important thing is to understand and listen to your customers!

The collective intelligence of HCPs on social media

Within any health topic discussed on social media, we have found that HCP mentions make up around 5% of the online conversation. Growing every day, there are millions of HCPs contributing billions of social media posts. Pre-COVID-19 we saw that the proportion of health-related conversations by HCPs was on the rise. After analysing the network of HCPs in the North East of England we saw that up to 50% of their posts were health-related posts, up from 10% in 2013. This is a behaviour that has only increased since the beginning of 2020.

Let's take a look at some of the areas where understanding the online HCP conversation can reveal powerful insights and support your ongoing brand strategy and tactics.

Content planning

It may be relevant to discover what HCPs really feel about the products that you have in development. If you are a pharmaceutical product leader, it is likely that HCPs are shaping their perceptions of your product well before you have developed your brand plan.

We carried out a study into pancreatic cancer and saw HCPs talking about diagnosis and treatment of the disease. Since there are several long-awaited new treatments emerging, we saw a real passion among HCPs to understand data on new products, discuss it together, and consider what it means going forward.

When thinking about content planning it is essential to use the right message and speak the language that your customers are using. When HCPs talk online, they often discuss the burden of disease and patient concerns as well as discussing efficacy, pricing and medicine administration. These conversations highlight customer needs that are likely to be specific to each role type and market.

Congress tactics

It can be valuable to follow the online conversations of HCPs prior to, during and after congress events to understand who or what is really influencing their views. Especially during this time where most of the medical congresses are held virtually. When we analysed what HCPs think about virtual congresses we found out the HCPs are showing excitement for the virtual adaption of the congress but they are missing seeing their colleagues and collaborating with them face-to-face. They are continuing to make the most of the congresses with live updates to support their peers and finding new ways to collaborate effectively online.

By tracking the engagement of HCPs at congress meetings and listening to their conversations you can:

- Understand their views and interests.
- Monitor and learn from their digital behaviours.
- Identify their information needs and concerns about prescribing new products.
- Learn the language and messaging they are using.
- Gain competitive intelligence.
- Recognise strategic digital partnerships.
- Identify the influencers or Digital Opinion Leaders.

Partnerships

Our study of HCP conversations about pancreatic cancer showed that they were most engaged with their peers. Beyond other HCPs, however, patient advocacy groups (PAGs) were also highly engaged, with the top two being PanCAN and Let's Win! Pancreatic Cancer. HCPs shared, mentioned and interacted with these groups, reflecting the trust that exists between them. The data suggests that manufacturers who successfully engage with these organisations in a meaningful way have the opportunity to reach HCPs too.

Digital Opinion Leaders

We might define a Digital Opinion Leader (DOL) as anybody who influences the view or behaviour of other stakeholders through digital activity. The opportunity for a pharmaceutical company is therefore to identify HCP DOLs and build relationships with them.

When looking at influence metrics it is not simply about measuring who is talking the most. Context is key. Metrics you might consider when identifying a DOL include: Do they post relevant content? Do they have a high peer or public following? Are they trusted among online HCP peers? Do they carry influence offline? Are they in an existing relationship with you?

Identifying and learning about the individual behaviours of your DOLs allows you to explore potential partnership opportunities. By listening to their online conversations and understanding their individual behaviours, you can leverage insights from the HCPs shaping the views on any topic, in any country.

What next?

Knowing your HCP customers are online and are likely to be talking about products and its competitors can inform your customer engagement, both online and offline. Your next steps may be to discover the:

- online HCP network to plan channel-specific engagement.
- unmet HCP needs to drive content creation.
- digital HCP behaviours to plan your congress strategy.
- organisations or PAGs integrated into HCPs' conversations.
- digital opinion leaders to build relationships with them.

Following the application of these steps you can track the online response, learn how it shapes the behaviour of HCPs online and then use the learning to improve future campaigns and ultimately build meaningful customer engagement.

For more information please message me at anni@creation.co.