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## Maximize Your Marketing Spend

Close the loop by integrating patient–physician communications into pharmaceutical brand planning

**A**s budgets tighten and promotional decisions require more scrutiny, now is the time to ensure that marketing programs deliver significant value for your brand. Vouchers and samples need to do much more than just encourage a patient's first use of a product, and consumer relationship marketing (CRM) programs have to expand beyond a one-way dialogue between the pharmaceutical manufacturer and the patient via segmented messaging.

One of the core challenges to patients' understanding of and adherence to medication regimens is lack of time for dialogue with physicians during office visits. A 2007 study conducted by Tai-Seale showed that as a result of the high volume of patient visits per physician, the average length of a doctor's office visit is just 15.7 minutes, with only 5.3 minutes spent on a primary complaint. A 1999 AMA study revealed the average patients seen per week per family physician to be 122.9, which works out to at least three patients per hour for a 40-hour work week (not

including the hours spent on the administrative tasks needed to run a practice). And that number has probably gone up in the last 10 years.

### Supplement the Dialogue

Patient feedback programs help to supplement patient–physician dialogue by providing a tool to facilitate communications between office visits. Patients complete surveys about their experiences with treatment regimens at set intervals (timing de-

These programs can also help develop positive relationships between the pharmaceutical industry and physicians. Physicians appreciate getting new information about their patients, and will typically incorporate reports into their patients' medical records. In addition, the content of the patient feedback reports can rapidly accelerate physician understanding of a product, thereby increasing confidence in that product and leading to subsequent prescribing.

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pendent on the condition being treated); the resulting reports give physicians a view of their patients' treatment challenges, including identifying any barriers to medication adherence. The physician and patient can then work together to meet those challenges and strive toward more successful treatment outcomes. By continually checking motivation and confidence levels through surveys, as well as verifying patient understanding about a medication, potential barriers can be circumvented.

More than a year ago, a large pharmaceutical client approached a major mental health category brand launch with a determination to deliver intelligent, timely messages to consumers, patients, and physicians. Using a Web-like communications platform for patient starter kits, a CRM program, vouchers, and an integrated patient feedback program throughout, the campaign was designed to create a more significant and meaningful dialogue between patients



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and physicians. The resulting integrated, cross-channel program paid off with measurable benefits for the marketing team, and more importantly, for the patient and the physician. Some of the program's benefits included:

- » More than 20,000 healthcare providers have received feedback reports on their own patients
- » On average, about 30 percent of patients enrolled in the CRM program chose to also join the feedback program
- » One of the largest patient feedback databases in the US, leading to numerous publications
- » Positive ROI, with latest results projecting more than 17:1 annual ROI
- » Significant increase in new prescriptions, ranging from 13 to almost 40 percent when matched against a control group

### A Call for Participants

In order to make the integrated promotional machine work, the program needed participants. Thus, it was critical for the marketing team to develop in-office promotional pieces (such as a patient starter kit) that offered clear messaging coupled with an invitation for patients to join the communications program. It was especially important that the program offered patients key information about the disease state, and what their treatment expectations should be.

A trial coupon in every patient starter kit required activation and served as an invitation to the CRM programs. However, the marketing team decided early on that they wanted to go one step beyond the typical CRM approach by allowing patients the ability to communicate with their prescribing physician between office visits. Their reasoning? The integrated coupon program supported brand messaging and accelerated the trial and adoption of the medication.

By providing patient starter kits that included a "free trial offer" coupon and an opportunity to participate in an integrated CRM/patient feedback program, the impact of a traditional marketing program was significantly amplified.

### Survey Says?

In this case, patients were given the opportunity to enroll in a patient feedback program when joining the brand's CRM programs. These provided ongoing support, patient education, and refill reminders, as well as the opportunity for patients to participate in surveys about their medication treatment experience.

Patient surveys close the loop of communications between the patient and physician. Upon completing each survey, a patient's survey response is mailed back to their prescribing physician (in the form of a graphical clinical report), providing the physician with a richer understanding of his or her individual patient's overall treatment experience. In the particular campaign we launched, targeted education and individualized feedback improved patient understanding. It also provided physicians with information that their treatment decision resulted in a positive treatment outcome for their patients.

Based on a 2006 survey of physicians participating in InfoMedics patient feedback programs, as well as anecdotal evidence over the past decade, we have found that physicians typically file these reports in their patients' charts (more than 90 percent of the time in some cases) for future discussion with them during the next office visit. In this particular program, a similar version of the report was configured for patients and mailed at the end of the program, along with additional savings coupons for medication refills. The consumer version of the report served as a discussion guide and supported communica-

tions with their physician during their next office visit.

### Deliver the Right Results

In today's pharmaceutical marketing environment, it's more important than ever to think "out of the box" and consider options that provide opportunities to achieve growth targets for our brands. The example of this brand's launch and continued success provides a positive illustration of how the power of one brand can initiate a connection with new patients and their physicians by offering free trial coupons in a patient starter kit. By integrating this with comprehensive CRM activity and a patient feedback program, it's possible to deliver improved results at both the patient and physician levels. Furthermore, it's possible to deliver ROI that every brand team wants to share with their senior management team.

For the client, this means even better news: The cross-channel communication platform is now poised to deliver the brand's message as it evolves throughout its life cycle. As the product matures, new competitors emerge, or physician strategies change, the integrated delivery platform can be effectively deployed to reach patients and physicians, reinforce brand messages, monitor satisfaction, and stimulate the ongoing flow of communications. Survey questions can be modified to solicit patient experiences and challenges throughout the product life cycle. Additionally, the brand is building a credible database of aggregate, blinded patient experience data, which not only provides them with an ongoing source for real-world insights but can also be published in appropriate journals for general professional awareness.

So what are you waiting for? Rev your marketing performance with a little help from the double whammy of CRM and patient feedback programs.

Your clients will thank you for it. 