

# Attention Grabbers: Make Your Presentations SIZZLE

Interactive and new-media solutions are a way for pharmaceutical companies to get physicians' attention

By Dave Gulezian

**W**hether you are a pharmaceutical salesperson clambering to get a face-to-face meeting with a doctor, or a pharmaceutical marketer implementing a new eDetail program that hopefully will stand out in the physician's inbox, the need to devise creative, integrated ways to reach your target audience has become paramount. Although the pharmaceutical industry's sales force numbers continued to decline in 2009—and there's no reason to think the numbers won't continue to decline—there are still plenty of salespeople out there trying to reach high-prescribing physicians. However, in an environment with increasing barriers to entry to doctors' offices, pharmaceutical marketers are looking for new and inventive solutions to make their sales force more effective.

In addition, the growing acceptance and adoption of new technology and electronic communication by healthcare professionals has increased the need for pharmaceutical companies to leverage alternative channels to reach their targeted audience. "The Internet and other new-media

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channels are becoming increasingly important ways for myself and my colleagues to stay current on new developments in patient care,” says Dr. Anthony Padula, a leading rheumatologist in the San Francisco Bay area.

According to Manhattan Research, the number of physicians who use the Internet and other technology to access pharmaceutical, biotech and medical device information has grown 23 percent since 2004 to account for almost 90 percent of the total U.S. physician population. Devices such as the iPhone and the iPad will make it even easier for physicians to retrieve online content. In fact, one of the areas that saw the most significant growth during the past year is mobile, with 64 percent of physicians now owning smart phones.

## New Media, New Tools

Dynamic interactive and new-media solutions are a way for pharmaceutical companies to get physicians’ attention and to have their product messages stand out in an increasingly crowded space.

There are many different types of solutions, including interactive sales aids, which provide a way to blend scientific imagery, video and interactivity to visually illustrate and support key selling messages. Interactive case studies can incorporate a range of new-media content like video segments, animation clips and actual patient scans, as well as high-end graphics.

eDetailing has become very popular with pharma marketing managers, who give it some of the highest ratings for impact and value as compared to other traditional marketing tactics like direct mail and e-mail messaging programs. Even 3D disease state and mechanism of action (MOA) animation development has become so advanced that some of the leading interactive companies are using Hollywood special effects that resemble those seen in a Pixar production.

Not only are there myriad new-media tools being used, but there are also multiple delivery channels. Gone are the days when direct mail was the primary option for reaching a healthcare practitioner. Product information is being delivered via the Web, e-mail, smart phones and PDAs. In fact, given the rapid adoption of smart phones by doctors, effective interactive programs typically integrate a mobile device component whenever feasible.

## The Do’s and Don’ts

Clearly, there are many possible tactics, and sorting through them can be daunting. While the entertainment factor is critical, there are many other factors that should be considered when developing and deploying an interactive program:

**1. Understand your audience:** It sounds basic, but all good presentations start with a thorough understanding of the target audience and their information needs. It is unfortunate that too many presentations violate this basic principle with regard to content focus, level of clinical sophistication and overall tonality.

**2. Deliver an important message of interest:** Content is king. No matter what solution you use or how it is deliv-

ered, make sure that the medical information is something that healthcare providers want instead of just communicating what you think is important. Start by asking yourself, “What value can you bring physicians and how can you help them be more successful?”

**3. Strive for scientific accuracy:** While scientists have a solid idea of the processes that are occurring inside the body, often times they have never seen these same processes visualized. Yet, it is critical to get as close as possible to the real thing. This can only happen through a rigorous process of research to understand what is happening even at a cellular or molecular level. Hagop (Kane) Kaneboughazian, Viscira’s director of animation, describes the process of developing a 3D animation program. “We start with primary research on a disease state and product, key message definition and script development. It’s critical to understand the science first to make sure that the visual components are not only aesthetically impactful, but also technically correct.”

**4. Balance the clinical with the creative:** You never want the “bells and whistles” to become distracting to the viewer to the point where your overall messages are diluted. There are certainly instances where it’s possible to take more license with various interactive elements and other instances where restraint is appropriate based on the audience or the disease state. It’s very important to recognize and respect these differences.

**5. Keep it short:** Brevity is the soul of wit and also often vital to an effective presentation. As we all know, physicians have a limited and shrinking amount of time. It is important that your key messages are delivered quickly and succinctly. We recommend to clients that we keep the full run time length of any interactive module to 15 minutes or less.

**6. Provide navigation options:** Related to the previous point, users typically value the ability to jump quickly to points of interest in an interactive program or presentation in general. Similarly, sales reps also need the flexibility to respond rapidly to audience questions by quickly moving to a relevant section. Allowing the user to have some control of the presentation will help increase overall satisfaction.

**7. Track success:** Tracking is critical to understanding what programs are working and what messages are resonating with your target audience. Through closed-loop platforms and other mechanisms, you can assess and refine your initiative to maximize ROI.

If pharmaceutical marketers and sales reps want to communicate their product messages in an effective and efficient way they must embrace the new technologies available. The challenge is choosing the right technology solution from the plethora of options available. Whether your presentation is designed for healthcare professionals or patients, various multi-media elements can help make your content pop. However, good execution is critical in ensuring that you realize the powerful potential that these technologies have to offer.

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