

Don't be anti-social: Make social media work for your healthcare brand. Here's how

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Today, social media is an important component of a brand's multichannel communication strategy. Pharma companies have however been slow to adopt social media marketing. Here, Sabine Raves, CEO of Cingulate Marketing & Advertising shares how to successfully approach social media to effectively reach healthcare professionals (HCPs), patients and consumers alike, whilst mitigating any risks.



With numbers like these, can you afford NOT to be on social?

The healthcare industry is highly regulated, and as such, most pharmaceutical companies have either avoided social media entirely, or restricted their activities.

Consider that in South Africa there are:

- 38.19* million Internet users (an increase of 1.7 million users between 2020 and 2021);
- 25 million active social media users (an increase of 3 million users between 2020 and 2021).

Looking at these numbers, can your brand really afford not to utilise this dynamic marketing tool when developing an integrated multichannel communication strategy? The answer is no.

A powerful tool in expert hands

Social media marketing is a powerful tool. When it's used optimally, it can meaningfully contribute to achieving your brand's business objectives, whether it is a scheduled or unscheduled product. Think opportunities to educate, build awareness, and promote your brand to your respective target markets, whether they're healthcare professionals (HCPs), patients or consumers.

*That's where healthcare agencies that understand this specialised environment and its challenges come in. They will help you **expertly manage social media** to achieve your brand's objectives.*

Your approach is EVERYTHING

- Let your business objectives drive your social media activities such as brand awareness, disease education,

building a community or event registrations. What do you want to achieve? Knowing this will help you develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and set measurements. For example, you may be encouraging doctors, via LinkedIn and your Facebook page, to join a webinar. Set a goal for the number of doctors whom you wish to register and measure the results.

- Make a long-term commitment to social media investment. Building trust with your online target markets takes time, and will only happen if you deliver a consistent brand message. Ensure that when your HCP is ready to recommend and consumer is ready to buy, your brand is top of mind.
- Own your own channel (your own page) on social media. In this way you can control the narrative, promote and archive all your brand's videos, blogs and posts. You can then focus on growing your ideal audience for your page by optimising your content.

Owning the channel enables you to own your data and gives you greater control over the targeting, implementation and risk management.

Engage with the right audiences

Social media has ample data related to user demographics, behaviours and interests. Define your ideal target markets, then find your stakeholders and customise your message to them:

- Through LinkedIn, doctors, pharmacists and nursing staff can be targeted in a professional business environment.
- Facebook holds an incredible amount of data on its users. By utilising the platform's existing data, brands are able to create core audiences that allow them to target users at a granular level, for example, moms with babies under three months who live in a particular area.

Remember to always create your social media content with end user needs in mind:

- Use copy that's inclusive of all South African demographics.
- Provide content that fully answers any questions your online reader may have.

Continually track your results via relevant measurements. The saying goes, what gets measured gets managed. It is important when designing a campaign, the metrics that you measure support your overall campaign objectives.

You will achieve the best results (optimise your ROI) for your brand if you use complementary activities to support your Social Media campaign (e.g., activations, in-field activities using the sales force, emailers, WhatsApp's, radio, TV etc.)

Mitigate any risks

Due to pharmacovigilance, many pharmaceutical companies are wary of social media because of their responsibility to report any adverse events within 24 hours. To manage this risk, there are many parameters one can put in place:

- Partner with a specialist healthcare agency that understands the landscape from a pharmaceutical AND a digital perspective.
- Monitor your content and platforms seven days per week
- Ensure that your agency assigns a Business Community Manager who monitors all incoming messages and queries to your brand. This manager should have a Response Matrix.
- Set KPIs to stipulate the time within which an incoming query or comment must be answered.

The takeout?

Social media marketing is a highly effective means of connecting with HCPs, patients and consumers. The ever increasing penetration of social media has now made it a key part of a healthcare brand's multichannel communication campaign.

Should you and your brand need social media guidance, please contact Sabine or Angela on (011) 467 3645 or complete our contact page on www.cingulate.co.za

*Source: Datareportal – Digital 2021:South Africa

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