

Better mix for the money

Pharmaceutical marketers are turning to newer and more educational methods of promotion to increase brand or disease awareness and return on investment.

BY GINA-LOUISE MONARI

Unique methods of consumer-targeted promotion are quickly gaining popularity. New methods of promoting brands and disease-state awareness are aimed at complementing direct-to-consumer programs while educating consumers and patients. Some of the unique ways to promote to consumers and patients include at-shelf information dispensers and customized consumer-oriented health publications. Strategies such as these help expand a company's marketing mix and can help soften the market in advance of a DTC campaign, experts say.

Following a pullback from broad-based, direct-to-consumer advertising, pharmaceutical marketers are seeking out additional methods of promoting brands and disease states with an emphasis on education. Adding at-shelf information dispensers and customized consumer-oriented health publica-

tions to a company's overall advertising mix can increase brand awareness and maximize return on investment. Allergan Inc., Merck & Co., Sanofi-Aventis, and Eli Lilly and Co. are using at-shelf information dispensers, developed by **Rx Edge**, in pharmacies and on store shelves. In addition, several of the top pharmaceutical companies are adding customized consumer-oriented health publications, like those created by **MediZine Inc.**, to their promotional mix to better inform and educate the health-conscious consumer and patients.

Placed in store aisles to target consumers in pharmacies, in-store shelf promotions encourage consumers to talk with pharmacists about a drug's benefits and side effects even before speaking to or visiting a physician. Rx Edge, the marketing division of **LeveragePoint Media** (leveragepoint-media.com), is the only company that handles in-store promotion in the pharmaceutical industry.

Since the company was founded in 2001, Rx Edge has specifically positioned itself to focus on prescription pharmaceutical brands with an emphasis on driving people back into the pharmacy. The company's research confirms that there is a greater overall return on investment

when using this type of promotion along with DTC campaigns.

According to Rx Edge, in-store promotions are one of the most under-used advertising and marketing vehicles for prescription drugs, but the retail channel is an attractive, cost-effective outlet for reaching consumers who want to learn about various conditions and treatment options. Rx Edge noticed a tremendous increase in the number of in-store promotional executions by several pharmaceutical clients in 2005. Judging from assignments booked for 2006, and as a result of a shift from DTC promotion to more educational approaches, Rx Edge managers believe that business will double once again in 2006.

"We think part of that is because of the research that we've been able to provide across a variety of categories," says Gary J. Norman, VP and business director, Rx Edge (rx-edge.com). "The other part of it is what's happening in the DTC industry in terms of the backlash of TV advertising. We believe that marketers are trying to look for a more targeted way to deliver educational information to the consumer."

The average return on investment for in-store shelf promotions during the past few years has been \$6.40 for every dollar spent.



Some of MediZine's major brands include *MediZine Healthy Living*, *Remedy*, and *Diabetes Focus*. These consumer magazines target health-conscious consumers and provide them with information about specific therapeutic conditions.

A study conducted by Rx Edge on specific therapeutic categories showed that in-store shelf promotions for osteoporosis yielded a return of \$6.88 per dollar spent; the allergy category promotions had an ROI of \$7.03; the women's health category produced an ROI of \$9; and the attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder category had a return of \$9.78. The arthritis category ROI was \$3.91, the overactive bladder category produced a return of \$3.95, the gastroesophageal reflux disease category yielded \$5.12 per dollar spent, the fungal category ROI was \$5.70, and the erectile-dysfunction category was \$6.33.

According to Rx Edge's match-panel research studies that measure brands' prescription sales, in-store promotions averaged about a 9.8% increase in actual prescription sales through the register.

Mr. Norman believes that one of the reasons more brands are com-

ing to Rx Edge is because the company does a considerable amount of match-panel research testing behind every promotion. Clients are provided a research package as part of the program. These research packages measure actual prescription sales through the register. Research proves that this educational information drives people to their physician, which drives them back into the pharmacy with a prescription, and Rx Edge has been able to measure that increase in sales.

Rx Edge has helped launch new brands in the cholesterol arena and in the erectile-dysfunction arena, and the company has a variety of brands that are using in-store promotion as an ongoing part of their advertising mix. Companies that have used at-shelf information dispensers include: **Allergan** for Restasis, **Medicis** Pharmaceutical Corp. (medicis.com) for the scalp dermatitis and antifun-

gal drug **Loprox**; **Sanofi-Aventis** (sanofi-aventis.com) for the insomnia medicine **Ambien** and the allergy medicine **Allegra-D**; **Merck/Schering-Plough** Corp. for the cholesterol reducer **Vytorin**; **Lilly** (lilly.com) for the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder medicine **Strattera**; and Merck (merck.com) for the hair loss drug **Propecia** and the company's prescription medicine discount program.

In January 2005, Allergan began using at-shelf promotions for the dry-eye product **Restasis**. For Restasis, Allergan was trying to combat low awareness of the drug and a low awareness of chronic dry eye as a treatable condition. The at-shelf information dispensers help the company promote disease-state awareness and a product, as well as encourage untreated consumers or potential patients to talk with their doctor.

Randy Adams, manager, dry eye

consumer marketing, Allergan (allergan.com), says at-shelf promotions have been useful for the brand, and he believes that the at-shelf information dispensers have several benefits.

“The first benefit is we’re able to capture motivated consumers right at the time that they’re actively thinking about their disease,” Mr. Adams told *Med Ad News*. “For example, when they’re in the store purchasing an artificial tear or an eye drop and they’re thinking about their eyes, they’re thinking about

their condition, and we can use this vehicle to help continue to build awareness of Restasis.”

According to Mr. Norman, the shift away from direct-to-consumer advertising and toward more educational promotion is increasing the popularity of in-store shelf promotions.

“It’s clear to us that marketers want to target consumers more efficiently,” Mr. Norman told *Med Ad News*. “They also want to get good, solid educational information in their hands. TV, while it’s

good at giving you a lot of awareness about a brand and perhaps indication, it does not do a whole lot to teach you what you should know about a brand before asking your physician. What it does is foster the consultation process with a health-care professional, be it the pharmacist or ultimately the physician.”

Rx Edge managers believe that by speaking directly to the consumer when they are in the pharmacy, consumers are in a good mind-set to think about what remedies they should be using.



Rx Edge developed this at-shelf information dispenser for Allergan’s Restasis brand, for dry eye.

“People get a lot more health-care information from a lot of different sources, and now they’re able to get this information in the pharmacy and are able to speak to the pharmacist,” says Robert J. Blazek, director, new business development, Rx Edge. “The pharmacist is able to help the patients sort out what is appropriate for them and decide whether this is something they should speak to their doctor about. They’re able to have a very informed dialogue at that point.”

The insert that Rx Edge uses provides the marketer with an opportunity to create the appropriate message that is the right mix of education and promotion. In addition, this provides the consumer with the fair balance directly on the piece, which is becoming more important for marketers.

“We’re able to provide a vehicle that maximizes their opportunity, and we’re able to deliver it in a targeted way,” Mr. Blazek told *Med Ad News*.

At-shelf dispensers are a new way of reaching consumers, but a more traditional method, custom publishing, is on the upswing. MediZine provides customized consumer-oriented health programs and other forms of customized publishing for many of the top pharmaceutical companies. In addition, the company provides tailored solutions for second-tier and third-tier companies as educational marketing and disease-state awareness comes to the forefront of the industry. MediZine uses point-of-care marketing programs in pharmacies and doc-

tors’ offices, and permission marketing, in which consumers who submit personal information receive relevant advertising, enabling them to request the medical information they want and need.

Major magazine brands include: *MediZine Healthy Living*, the largest consumer health magazine; *Remedy*, the third-largest consumer health magazine; *Diabetes Focus* and *Diabetes Focus Espanol*, the largest magazines for diabetes patients and their caregivers; *Remedy Direct*, the largest opt-in health database of its kind; *Daily Health Feed*, late-breaking health-care news presented in a television news format reaching more than 30% of television households; and *HealthStart*, a comprehensive consumer marketing program delivered to patients by their physicians in the doctor’s exam room.

During the past year, MediZine has experienced a surge in its business. MediZine works with several of the top 15 pharmaceutical marketers throughout a product’s life cycle from prelaunch to the end of a product’s life cycle. The company’s publications and programs now reach 175,000 doctors’ offices.

MediZine executives say they are seeing companies moving toward the use of prelaunch education marketing, which is beneficial for softening the market in advance of a DTC campaign. In addition, the company handles tailored solutions, so if MediZine does not have exactly what a brand wants, then an additional solution can be created for a client.

“We have this direct sensibili-

ty within our company, direct to people who have the ailment and want to do something about it,” says Traver Hutchins, president and CEO, MediZine (medizine.com). “Other portions of our business have to do with finding people who are raising their hands in pharmacies and doctors offices and saying, ‘I want information.’”

MediZine was started in 1994, before DTC advertising was permitted in 1997. The company got its start after a 1990 federal mandate required that all pharmacists educate their Medicare and Medicaid patients.

“I like to say we were DTC before DTC was cool,” Mr. Hutchins told *Med Ad News*. “When we launched in 1994, DTC wasn’t even an acronym, it wasn’t a methodology to any degree. In fact, there were less than a handful of marketers even going to the consumer at all in the prescription category back then. Our background in development was coming out of the need to educate consumers to manage their own diseases.”

In the future, Medizine plans to build up the online area of its business, because clients have expressed interest, Mr. Hutchins says. The company also plans to launch more point-of-care programs. Although companies will continue to employ broad-based general-awareness tactics in their marketing, Mr. Hutchins believes that this will be supported by educational marketing at the point of care. □

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