



## Seize the Moment of Connection in DTC Marketing



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**P**rocter & Gamble (P&G), Cincinnati, calls it the “first moment of truth:” the few seconds when a shopper first encounters products on the store shelf and decides which brand to buy. According to P&G, it is during these initial moments when marketers can best capture the attention of the shopper and motivate a purchase. Those in the consumer packaged-goods industry have long depended on in-store marketing as an essential communication tool and an effective way to seize this “moment of truth.”

For pharmaceutical marketers, the challenge is similar but different in guiding the consumer from initial product awareness to purchase. Consumers can't just view a display for a prescription brand, grab a coupon, and buy the product during the store visit. The process is much more intricate.

Consumers first must become aware of a particular health condition, gather information about it, determine what their symptoms might mean, learn about prescription alternatives, see a physician regarding therapy options, get a prescription, fill it, and begin treatment. This elongated process should not dissuade pharma marketers from leveraging the in-store channel to help motivate decision making about prescription drug treatments. The retail environment may not be the first moment of truth for a prescription drug, but it certainly can be an important moment of connection within the landscape of DTC media choices.

Retail channels, account for 80% of total retail prescription sales, probably because retail outlets have licensed pharmacists onsite to answer questions. Market research studies show 64% of consumers have “complete confidence” in their pharmacist and 60% ask for a pharmacist's advice on new prescriptions. They are the second most frequently consulted information source, regarding medications, behind physicians.

The pharmacy is uniquely positioned to address the changing health care needs of consumers, who are more

proactively monitoring and managing their health. They are also making considerable effort to learn what they can about medications through a variety of sources. According to data from the *2006 Pharmacy Satisfaction Digest*, 50% of consumers surveyed said they read pharmacy brochures to get drug information. The National Association of Chain Drug Stores Foundation's (Alexandria, VA) *Chain Pharmacy Industry Profile* concluded “never before has the community pharmacy played so important a role in America's health care.”

For pharma marketers, the retail pharmacy isn't just a place where their products are stocked and purchased; it is the consumer's destination whenever health concerns are top of mind and remedies are being sought. Pharmaceutical marketers should consider in-store programs as a viable resource for patient acquisition and encouraging compliance with drug treatment.

Targeting, message relevance, and education are what make any DTC campaign work, and delivering the message in the pharmacy is no different. Consumers must connect with the message at a moment when it can affect their behavior. If that occurs, the results can be impressive. Independent research shows that in-store drug promotions yield an average prescription sales lift of nearly 10% across a range of therapeutic categories.

A recent Harris Interactive Communications (Rochester, NY) consumer study explored the effect of point-of-care media on patient engagement. The research included physician's office wall displays, in-office TV, product brochures, prescription pamphlets, and retail pharmacy shelf talkers, and showed the immediacy of point-of-care media drives specific actions that precede and prepare patients to make a brand request at a greater rate than general DTC media. Some of these actions were discussing a condition reviewing a brochure, and doing an online search.

Marketing investments in media campaigns should influence consumer behavior to promote product sales. Vehicles that are proven to be performers in driving consumer action are worth strong consideration. Placing actionable information in the pharmacy at the moment of connection can help consumers better understand their symptoms and move knowledgeably through the treatment-decision continuum. ■

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