

# Prescription for Consumer Success

## REACHING PATIENTS in the **PHARMACY**



ALTHOUGH CURRENTLY ONLY A SMALL PART OF THE OVERALL MARKETING MIX, CONNECTING WITH THE CONSUMER — AND THE PHARMACIST — AT THE PHARMACY LEVEL CAN HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON IMPROVING COMPLIANCE, AWARENESS, AND ROI.

It's not an emerging trend, because it has been in practice for years. It's not exactly a growing trend, because although there has been more uptake, it is still "underutilized" as a marketing medium. However, pharma companies that use DTC programs at the pharmacy level have found this to be an effective strategy to increase patient compliance and lift ROI numbers. So why isn't everyone piling on the bandwagon?

That's a good question, our experts say.

"The scarcity of these programs has more to do with a lack of experience than it does with the viability of the channel," says Mark Klapper, VP, strategic planning, MicroMass Communications. "Budgets are limited and the comfort level isn't the same as it would be for a tactic that has proven to be effective for the brand or the category. Having someone on the brand team who is willing to champion a pharmacy program because he or she has used it before or believes in its potential makes all the difference in the world. In-market pilot programs are a good way to gain experience with a new tactic without committing a significant amount of money."

**SELF-MEDICATION IS ONE OF MANY FACTORS DRIVING THE OTC DRUG MARKET PAST \$80 BILLION BY 2012.**

**KALORAMA RESEARCH**

Shelagh Brooke, executive VP and chief strategic officer at EvoLogue, part of CommonHealth, agrees, but cautions that any activity needs to prove itself against ROI and it's difficult to pilot and test programs in a way that gives the clear evidence necessary to expand on a larger scale.

"Investing in pilot programs and developing internal case studies will help brand teams in developing differentiated, scalable programs that contribute to the business," she says.

According to Lloyd Sheep, chief strategist at HC&B Healthcare, another reason for the slower uptake is that the retail space is another world to pharma companies.

"Compared with other marketing communication venues, DTC pharmacy programs require a great deal of coordination and resource allocation, and they offer marketers less direct control," he says. "Large pharmacy chains and groups of small independent pharmacies have separate rules, fees, and requirements, and few, if any, vendors exist that can provide coordinated access to all of them."

Still, there are several market factors — among them Medicare Part D and increased scrutiny of traditional DTC advertising — that could increase the use of DTC pharmacy initiatives going forward. Also, today's technology allows for a consumer touch point at the pharmacy, and data capture capabilities can be used for specific targeting, while taking into account HIPAA and privacy regula-



**SHELAGH BROOKE**, *EvoLogue*

CONNECTING WITH CONSUMERS IN THE PHARMACY ENVIRONMENT WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF BRANDS.

tions. And the increasing shift in the role of pharmacists — from dispensers to healthcare service providers — provides an opportunity for the pharma company to design programs that involve them in the continuum. Another factor is the growing need for pharma companies to cut through the clutter and reach the consumer at a targeted level. And last, but certainly not least, results show that DTC at the pharmacy level works.

Results have shown that when programs are tracked and ROI has been monitored, the outcomes can be high, according to Gary Norman, executive VP and general manager, RxEdge.

“For every dollar spent in a DTC pharmacy program, there is a \$7 return on the investment,” he says. “Program results show an aver-



**JOE MEADOWS**, *Catalina Health Resource*

MESSAGES ARE BEING CREATED AND DELIVERED BASED ON FACTORS THAT MAKE THOSE MESSAGES RELEVANT TO THE INDIVIDUAL CONSUMER OR PATIENT IN THE MOST FREQUENT HEALTHCARE TOUCH POINT: THE PHARMACY.



**MARK KLAPPER**, *MicroMass Communications*

THE MESSAGE SHOULD GET PEOPLE TO STOP AND RECONSIDER WHAT THEY ARE DOING. IN OTHER WORDS, IT SHOULD GIVE THEM INFORMATION THEY NEED TO FIND A BETTER SOLUTION TO THEIR PROBLEM.

age lift of 9.8% across 40 different categories in a six-week program, based on about 300 research studies.”

The pharmacy is the perfect place to reach the consumer, because he or she is thinking about medications and health problems and looking for solutions right then and there. Having a healthcare professional on hand when every message is delivered also increases the value and credibility of the information. If a consumer has questions, he or she can discuss these with the pharmacist before leaving the store.

“The beauty of advertising inside the pharmacy is that the pharmacist — a healthcare professional — is right there in the store,” Mr. Norman says.

Direct-to-patient marketing in this space has the additional benefit of being supported by the pharmacy, says Bob Mernar, brand patient messaging VP, Ateb.

“Pharmacists are a highly regarded community of health resources,” he says. “Information received in this channel is associated with a trusted profession and is well-received. The pharmacy as a focus of outreach is becoming a more prominent marketing layer.”

Mr. Mernar, who is also a pharmacist, tells PharmaVOICE that the programs that are most effective are moving from strictly traditional DTC mechanisms to more integrated programs that include multiple touchpoint vehicles, such as IVR, the Internet, and wireless communications via cell phones.

“DTC has historically been a sort of shotgun approach, and now we are looking at effective programs that are still classified as DTC but that are more defined and targeted to reach the patient,” he says. “In my experience, there is a still reliance on the older mass media tactics and the industry is slow to embrace or integrate some of the newer direct to patient models,” he says.

Providing information at the pharmacy has benefits similar to those gained by providing info at the point of care. The patient is thinking about his or her health and looking for a way to make it better.

“Presumably if the consumer is at the drug store, he or she may be thinking about health matters, and being able to provide them with objective information at this time is the Holy Grail,” Mr. Sheep says.

### TARGETING patient by patient

In addition to a hardy ROI, being able to deliver individual messages to the target

## 5 Strategies for DTC Marketing Success in the Retail Pharmacy

### Strategy 1 Establish communication priorities and brand marketing goals.

Virtually every critical brand goal — acquisition, adherence, education, awareness, pharmacist communication, adjunctive therapy messaging — can be addressed in the retail pharmacy environment. It is important to not only consider the overall objectives, but also the product's life-cycle phase. In-store programs can be strategically deployed at every phase of a product life cycle, helping a brand reach its full potential.

### Strategy 2 Define your target.

Programs delivered at the shelf are typically targeted based on the association with a related product. For some prescription products, there are clearly corresponding items. Some are obvious, for example, placing a GERD prescription product promotion in the antacid aisle.

For products that do not have a clear corollary on the shelf, consider the closest corresponding products that align with your target or demographic. Psoriasis sufferers, for example, may first reach for a medicated skin cream. Another consideration is the level of traffic in a given aisle or section. Many products have had success with placing information dispensers in high-traffic sections such as aspirin/pain relief and cold/cough.

Four signature categories drive drug store traffic: prescription, beauty care, OTC, and photo processing. These four categories drive 55% of all drug store trips and account for more than 80% of purchases on those buying trips.

### Strategy 3 Think of the store list selection as a media decision.

The ability to target geographically is a key benefit of retail pharmacy-delivered DTC programs, and the store list is a critical ingredient. Think of it as a media planning and buying process. It means developing a retailer line-up that will ensure that your message reaches target consumers when and where it will be most relevant to them.

Store lists can be derived from a simple list of zip codes — or can be created by using a combination of factors. Store lists are analyzed and cross-matched against key data points to determine the “mix” that will deliver optimal coverage.

### Strategy 4 Creative is key — design the in-store program in view of functionality, message appropriateness, and integration with other marketing elements.

As with other marketing communication vehicles, creative design plays a significant role in the success of an in-store program. **Functionality:** Consider the section of the store where the promotion will be displayed. **Message appropriateness:** Tailor messages to the needs of your target, and communicate according to those needs. **Integration with advertising messages:** incorporate key messages from other media forms that consumers are seeing.

### Strategy 5 Track and measure — put a measurement plan in place to help you refine future plans and validate your decisions.

Through the use of a matched-panel research methodology, results of in-store DTC marketing can be reliably measured.

Source: RxEdge, Hoffman Estates, Ill. For more information, visit [rx-edge.com](http://rx-edge.com).



GARY NORMAN, RxEdge

THE BEAUTY OF ADVERTISING INSIDE THE PHARMACY IS THAT THE PHARMACIST — A HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL — IS THERE RIGHT IN THE STORE.

patient at almost a one-on-one level is one of the biggest advantages of direct-to-patient messaging.

“Pharma companies can target and communicate with their selected audiences based on a patient's actual prescription and healthcare product use, while preserving that patient's privacy,” says Joe Meadows, VP, marketing and creative services, at Catalina Health Resource. “The great thing about this type of messaging is that companies can talk to only those that they want to reach, or that would find the message most useful. With more and more companies developing specialty products, the audiences for these types of products can be very small, and using a mass-media vehicle like television would be expensive and often wasteful.

“Making sure that the message relates to the patient on a very personal level and that it is relevant to that patient's needs will help establish a one-to-one communication relationship with the patient,” he adds.

Many marketers are not aware of the available scale of this type of marketing. Mr. Meadows says more than 35% of retail prescriptions can be targeted through Catalina's network.

“We reach more than 110 million patients within a single year, all through a single touch point,” he says. “It's not one message going out to everyone at once; it's thousands and thousands of conversations every day. Messages are being created and delivered based on factors that make those messages relevant to the individual consumer or patient in the most frequent healthcare touch point: the pharmacy. This adds up to huge numbers: 1.3 billion messages this year alone, just in our network.”

## Pharmacy BENEFITS

One of the major benefits to DTC pharmacy programs is that the one-on-one marketing can be further tailored to follow the patient through therapy, which allows mar-




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**LLOYD SHEEP, HC&B Healthcare**

PHARMACISTS ARE ONE OF THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCES IN HEALTHCARE, EVEN MORE SO THAN NURSES.

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eters to adjust the message to fit the needs of the patient along the treatment continuum.

For example, if patients have started a medication to control their diabetes, the first message they may receive would be a “welcome to therapy,” message, one that rewards patients for starting on therapy and filling that first prescription either with a voucher or network of support. If patients obtain the second refill prescription on time, the message may congratulate them on their commitment and give them more information that will encourage them to stay compliant. If, however, the second refill is late, the message would instead caution them about the need to take every dose and take it on time. Based on what happens between the second and third refill, the message will change appropriately. If patients show signs of not fol-

lowing therapy, then the pharmacist can talk to them about the importance of the medication or encourage them to speak to the doctor about other alternatives or ways they can better stay on therapy.

“We are witnessing a lot of continuum messages being developed based on what patients are likely to be facing in their therapy at a given point along the way,” Mr. Meadows says. “For chronic diseases such as asthma, compliance must be established as a habit early on, so by providing these tools, patients come to understand the therapy and why staying on it is important.”

Pharma marketers have a tendency to want to stay on message once they have a DTC advertisement that has been approved, says MicroMass’s Mr. Klapper, but simply repurposing that message at the pharmacy level can be a big mistake.

Using the same advertising message — for

example, one that says this product is safe, effective, and convenient — in the pharmacy channel is fine, but it doesn’t take advantage of the opportunity to connect with the patient at an important moment of truth, he says.

“Marketers should be using behavioral science to dig deeper into consumers’ psyche and guide them in developing a message that speaks to their needs and motivates them to act,” Mr. Klapper says. “For example, within a given group of patients there may be someone who is very highly motivated and wants to know about the product and why it’s a better option than others available. These patients should get a message about the product and how it differs from others. Another patient — one who has a disease that has been a problem in the family for generations — may need more emotional support. Other patients may just want the facts so they can have a conversation with their doctor. The message needs to



**BOB MERNAR, ATEB**

THE PROGRAMS THAT HAVE THE GREATEST EFFECT MOVE STRAIGHT FROM DTC TO A MORE INTEGRATED APPROACH.

long run,” he says. “We can never underestimate the power of the informed healthcare consumer.”

**OVERCOMING Risk Aversion**

The benefits far outweigh the risks, which are marginal if the company plans the campaign effectively, experts say. The biggest challenge is to make sure

the message is appropriate, on point, and relevant and addresses two targets — the patient and the pharmacist. If the retail pharmacist is not aware of an active campaign implemented by the retail corporate office, the best-designed patient campaign may fall flat. Mr. Mernar suggests engaging the store pharmacists before starting a program so they will be responsive to a patient inquiry.

“The biggest risk is missing the mark with pharmacists and alienating a very important target for the brand,” Ms. Brooke says. “The rewards, if done right, are: adding value to both the pharmacist and patient, facilitating a

more informed dialogue, and fostering loyalty and adherence that improves outcomes for both patients and the business.”

Administering a program improperly at the pharmacy level can ruin it before it begins, Mr. Sheep says.

“It could be the best program in the world, but if the execution is sloppy, it can turn off consumers and wear out your brand’s welcome with the pharmacist,” he says.

And in these days of tight formularies, pharmacists wield a lot of power, and marketers need them on their side. A physician may write a prescription for a brand-name drug, but the pharmacist has the leeway to go against that decision and dispense a generic equivalent.

“This is a big problem for marketers,” says Bill Drummy, founder and CEO of Heartbeat Digital. “After working to get patients to walk out of their doctors’ offices with branded scripts, it can all go for naught when they walk into the pharmacy. It’s funny when you think of it. The industry spends billions on either side of the transaction to convince doctors that their products provide the best safety and efficacy and then to encourage patients to ask for a product with DTC. But in the middle — where the transaction actually occurs — no one is paying much attention. Marketers must get pharmacists to feel an affinity for the real value of their products and their programs. They need to invest as much in that relationship as they do across other links in the buying chain. That means developing a much deeper and more nuanced understanding of the pharmacist’s view of the world. Then we can identify the messages that will resonate with pharmacists most.”

Like physicians, pharmacists have different motivations for recommending a therapy, such as better patient outcomes, lowering the overall cost of care, or creating long-term relationships with patients.

“So whether the communication is in the form of interactive patient education materials that include the pharmacy’s branding, or a widget that helps in the titration process, walking in the pharmacist’s shoes will help uncover the most appropriate message and the best way to deliver it,” Mr. Drummy says. “Marketers are really good at creating powerful messages and innovative tactics to reach their targets. But first they have to recognize

speak directly to patients’ concerns to be effective. Behavioral science can help identify those concerns.”

Mr. Sheep of HC&B Healthcare brings up another benefit: this type of messaging not only increases compliance, but also helps reach patients at a point where they are less suspicious of the industry, thus boosting the company’s credibility.

“Commercialized messages are being met more and more with skepticism from consumers, and approaching consumers with the right type of information at the right time benefits both the patient and company in the

**Elements of a DTC PHARMACY CAMPAIGN**

According to Shelagh Brooke, executive VP and chief strategic officer at EvoLogue, part of CommonHealth, there are several important elements of a DTC campaign at the pharmacy level.

The first important element, as with any marketing activity, is to identify the goal of the intervention and then execute against it in a way that’s consistent with the overall brand objectives and strategy.

“Specifically, in comparison with other DTC contexts, pharmacy programs are an excellent way to extend the dialogue beyond the physician’s office, to educate patients so that they understand the true value of their therapy, and to provide motivational interventions to foster adherence,” Ms. Brooke says. “It’s also crucially important to acknowledge the authority of pharmacists and respect their expertise in any direct-to-consumer activity planned through the pharmacy. If marketers try to bypass the pharmacist, or if he or she perceives that they are doing so, the program could fail.”

The most common mistake is to simply repurpose materials created for other channels without truly understanding the dynamic of the pharmacy interaction and role of the retail pharmacists.

“For example, a television spot designed to foster dialogue in a physician’s office may not be what is appropriate for playing in a loop at a big-box pharmacy,” she says. “By the same token, materials intended for use by a nurse in a physician’s office may not properly leverage the strategic role the pharmacist can play in communicating with patients, or recognize the differing context of a physician visit versus what many consumers view to be one item on a list of errands: pick up milk, get prescription, return library books, etc. Understanding the context of what is happening makes all the difference.”



**BILL DRUMMY,**  
Heartbeat Digital

PHARMACEUTICAL MARKETERS  
ARE IGNORING THE  
PHARMACIST AND LOSING  
SALES AS A RESULT.

store, he saw a prescription product being promoted at the shelf next to its OTC counterparts. The main message was a \$10 savings on the prescription product.

Well, certainly that type of pricing offer can be effective, but if someone is not on the prescription product, highlighting \$10 savings is not going to prompt him or her to ask their doctor about the drug," Mr. Klapper says. "A better program

would provide a good reason for trying the prescription product over the OTC and use the offer as an added incentive."

The benefits of a DTC program in the pharmacy are huge in that communications can be very tailored and targeted and the outcomes are very direct and measurable, Mr. Mernar says.

"Risks can be minimized if all involved parties have a good understanding and have tested the implementation of the program working in the pharmacy retail space both from an operations aspect as well as a privacy aspect," he says. "The end result is a better informed patient who can take more control of his or her condition and in the end be a healthier, compliant patient."

"And that is truly all anybody ever wants," Mr. Meadows says. ♦

PharmaVOICE welcomes comments about this article. E-mail us at [feedback@pharmavoice.com](mailto:feedback@pharmavoice.com).

who the target is in the first place. In the current pharma world, pharmacists are the missing link."

Ms. Brooke says the role of the pharmacist has become more crucial than ever as savvy, empowered consumers seek more help, more time, more answers, and more personalization.

"Pharmacies are responding to these trends by providing an enriched patient experience with health and wellness centers," she says. "Connecting with consumers in this environment will become increasingly critical to the success of brands."

Another way programs can fail is if no offer is attached or if the offer fails to be relevant. Not having an offer that consumers can act upon is a big mistake for two reasons, says Mr. Sheep. First, without a voucher or action point that requires a patient to turn in a coupon or register at a site for more information, there is no easy way to track the effectiveness of the marketing effort.

"The program has to offer consumers something they can access and something that marketers can track, because if not, results are awfully hard to measure," he says. "The other risk is providing an offer that is not relevant to the consumer. In designing the offer, marketers need to take into account that the consumers are looking for a solution to a problem and they will determine what is most meaningful to them."

Mr. Klapper says that a strong offer is important, but it should not be the main message.

For example, recently, while in a drug

## Experts on this topic

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