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Ad-ventures in marketing V

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For the fifth year, Med Ad News has chosen three Pharmaceutical Marketing Ventures to Watch that could change the way pharmaceutical products are marketed and sold.

by Joshua Slatko

This past September, *Med Ad News* began its now-annual search for the future of pharmaceutical marketing. We sought out young companies, spin-offs, offerings, and ventures to profile that are providing the most innovative and interesting products, services, or marketing opportunities to pharmaceutical companies and the healthcare community. After reviewing dozens of nominations, many of which were provided by our own readers, we narrowed the list to just three. Each of the three companies chosen by *Med Ad News* is very different in business model – one is an agency offering, another an independent company, and the third an internal agency venture – but all of the profiles do share one singular characteristic: they have found their way to the edge of the rapidly changing world of pharmaceutical marketing. In these ventures, we see a little of what the future of our business might hold. Here are *Med Ad News*' three Pharmaceutical Marketing Ventures to Watch for 2011.

PharmaWall

PharmaWall, launched in June by the digital agency Intouch Solutions, is a Facebook application that mimics the Facebook Wall but allows page administrators to review posts and comments in a queue before page visitors see them. This allows companies in highly regulated industries, like pharmaceuticals, to have open conversations with patients, caregivers, and doctors that they otherwise wouldn't be able to have due to the risk of violation of FDA regulations.

"There are no specific regulations that prevent pharma companies from answering questions or having a conversation with a visitor to their Facebook page," says Jim Dayton, senior director emerging media for Intouch. "However, there are regulations that govern what information can appear on promotional materials distributed by a pharma company. A pharma company's Facebook page likely fits into this category. So, for this reason, applications like PharmaWall are important to the industry, because they still allow Facebook users to post and comment on pharma Facebook pages – yet it also allows the company to review the material before it is posted live on the page."

According to Intouch leaders, PharmaWall was born out of necessity. The pharma industry had just started using Facebook and was having moderate success. Companies found they needed resources to monitor Facebook pages 24 hours a day to ensure comments were not inflammatory or potentially violative to FDA regulations or terms of use. Several examples of Facebook-related snafus popped up throughout the industry, one of the better-known being when one visitor decided to use Sanofi's Facebook page to voice discontent with the drug Taxotere.

In this challenging environment, the Intouch team saw an opportunity to innovate to help a client in need. The agency's application development and emerging media teams worked directly with CEO Faruk Capan to build the first version of PharmaWall. Intouch offered the application exclusively to existing clients until Facebook announced changes to their comment policy that would allow any page visitor to comment on any Facebook wall post on pharma pages that weren't dedicated solely to a product.

"At that time, we knew we should offer the application to everyone in the industry – because many would be



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needing it," Mr. Dayton told *Med Ad News*.

Within implementations of PharmaWall, Facebook members can still create new posts and comment on posts, but they are alerted that their post/comment will be reviewed prior to publishing on the page. The application stores new posts/comments in a queue for behind-the-scenes review by the page administrator who decides whether it will be approved, revised, or declined. If the content is approved, it publishes to the Facebook page. Copies of all content, as well as decisions to approve, revise, or decline, are documented for later review.

PharmaWall also provides the ability to display messages in the news feeds of all Facebook members who have "liked" the page, keeping them up-to-date on news and information from the page sponsor. Regulatory-friendly features include the ability to display disclaimers and product safety information prominently. And to support PharmaWall, Intouch Solutions offers 24/7 monitoring and moderation services.

The response to PharmaWall's launch has been enthusiastic. According to Intouch executive VP Wendy Blackburn, the agency has been contacted directly by more than 70 companies (pharma companies, their agencies, and others) to learn more about PharmaWall, and agency representatives have conducted about 20 demos specifically to pharma companies. About 10 Facebook pages have either implemented PharmaWall and have it live, or are in the process of implementing it. And the appeal of PharmaWall apparently extends beyond the scope of the pharma industry.

"We've also been contacted by credit unions, the city of Bonita Springs, and the Vancouver Canucks NHL team," Ms. Blackburn says.

Although other Facebook moderation services and tools are available, Intouch's team believes that PharmaWall is the only application that mimics the native Facebook Wall and was built specifically for the pharma industry.

"This industry has very unique needs, and most companies are still developing their social media infrastructure," Mr. Dayton says. "So, we had to make sure the application was very straightforward, addressed pharma's very specific challenges with Facebook, and evolved with the platform. We haven't seen any other product that has done that."

Keeping an offering such as PharmaWall current, as one might expect in the fast-moving world of social media, is no small undertaking. As the rules and regulations underpinning both Facebook and pharma marketing change from day to day, the Intouch team must hurry to keep up.

"The biggest lesson we've learned [since launching PharmaWall] is that everything in social media changes quickly," Mr. Dayton told *Med Ad News*. "Most people know that Facebook makes regular changes to their network. That alone keeps the team pretty busy. But, pharma's use of social media changes almost as quickly. And as we help our clients' comfort level with social media grow, they see more opportunity and their needs evolve. So, a dynamic platform like Facebook coupled with our clients' growing needs keeps the team on their toes. All this means PharmaWall will be in an ongoing cycle of development and testing."

To keep PharmaWall up to date, Intouch team members are constantly monitoring the Facebook platform – talking to the agency's reps and watching developer resources – to understand if changes to the platform affect functionality of the application. Others are talking to agency clients to understand their needs and how PharmaWall might help solve current and future challenges, and how the product can evolve to do more for them. And still others are testing and monitoring PharmaWall, building out new features to make sure the product continues to exceed client expectations.

For all this sprinting to keep pace, though, the future of PharmaWall may be out of Intouch's hands. As Mr. Dayton puts it, PharmaWall's future will be dictated more by the pharmaceutical industry than by Facebook.

"The offering only makes sense as long as the pharma industry uses Facebook to communicate with customers," Mr. Dayton says. "Some clients are using PharmaWall as a stepping-stone to open conversation on the native Facebook Wall, which we think is great. They are gauging what to expect in terms of the type and volume of conversation, sentiment of customers, and required resources. On the other hand, our most conservative clients will choose to utilize moderation tools and services like PharmaWall as long as they are engaging in social media."

All this, of course, could change if and when FDA issues guidance on the use of the Internet and social media for pharma marketing. Intouch's playing field, in short, could be transformed overnight.

"We plan to continue to innovate, providing applications, tools, and other solutions that help our clients and their customers," Mr. Dayton says. "If that continues to be PharmaWall, we will support and enhance the application as long as there is a need. But we encourage our clients to move forward using social platforms in a responsible way – the way that makes the most sense for the company, the brand, and the customer."

Syndus

Syndus, first launched into the industry two years ago, uses intelligent game technology to let doctors and healthcare practitioners explore complex disease states and how specific pharmaceutical drugs work in the human body. Rather than watching a video or a slide presentation, doctors can actually interact with 3D virtual patients, and dive into an organ system to observe the impact of disease as if they were inside real live humans. These "intelligent simulations," adapted for the needs of the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries, are able to respond to users in realtime based on the embedded intelligence of clinical guidelines, best practices, and thought leader input.

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"Practice and experience are the fastest, most memorable ways for doctors to learn and improve their practice and learn about a pharmaceutical brand," says Lisa Demko, Syandus' senior director of business development. "Syandus' simulation-based learning creates a new way for brands to remove clinical barriers to prescribing behavior, such as differential diagnosis challenges, treatment guideline comprehension, complex therapy management, and many others. Pharmaceutical companies tend to sponsor our 'simulations' since the more a doctor knows about a specific pharmaceutical treatment, the more confident the doctor will be in using it with patients who need it most."

The genesis of the Syandus idea was to combine game technology and systems engineering to create a dynamic way to learn medical science through experience. The concept was developed by company founder and CEO Douglas Seifert, Ph.D., who holds a doctorate in biochemical engineering and worked at Merck R&D for 12 years.

"The idea is to capture thought-leading knowledge in software, then through game technology create 'intelligent simulations' where doctors and patients can learn by interacting in the environment," Dr. Seifert told *Med Ad News*. "This 'learn by doing' approach is one of the most effective ways to learn complex concepts in medical science."

Syandus got off the ground with multiple awards from the National Science Foundation's Small Business Innovative Research Program. The company brought together individuals from a variety of disciplines: advanced software engineers, Ph.D. medical scientists, 3D digital artists, simulation designers, physicians who are recognized in their areas of expertise, adult learning specialists, and healthcare marketers to adapt the platform to the healthcare industry.

"Over the past three years we have incorporated the most revolutionary functionality into our proprietary technology platform," Dr. Seifert says. "Built with advanced game technology, it is well above the curve in terms of development and unique to the healthcare industry. There is no other promotional platform on the market today that has been proven to deliver evidence-based, compelling education and positively impact physician behaviors in clinical practice. Our analytics measure user interactions with the simulation, identify knowledge gaps, and define a return on investment."

In putting together the platform behind Syandus, the company's leaders learned that developing the software and the content wasn't enough; they had to be able to measure the platform's effectiveness, use those measurements to tweak the system, and build an audience.

"Developing great thought leader directed/guidelines based content is not enough," Dr. Seifert says. "We needed to create an easy and effective way to digitally deliver it, measure the results, collect analytics, refine future programs based upon analytical findings, and host events where doctors work side by side in a virtual setting within a simulation by synchronizing their data and collaborating to treat complex diseases. We recognized that a digital platform would allow our clients to be more nimble and quicker should they need to respond to changes in the competitive landscape."

The process of developing simulations for Syandus is, to say the least, complex. The development process starts with identification of clinical barriers within the clinical care path to a brand's success that are a strategic fit for the platform's approach. Syandus' team must then translate the medical science into an intelligent simulation that enables physicians to overcome the barrier. Once company staffers have captured the medical science elements through guidelines, literature, medical staff, and thought leaders, they immerse themselves in the design process.

"The technical design envisions the science algorithms, interfaces, logic, art, and key messaging," Dr. Seifert says. "The production process brings it all to life within the simulation development platform, customizing all the platform systems to the needs of the design. The production process is a team effort to bring the software code, 2D/3D art, text, voice, and sound together into the final simulation experience. After review and QA, the simulation is prepared for incorporation into the ALIVE Med multichannel delivery platform, and we activate the data base, cloud synchronization, and analytics components. Once it goes live, Syandus provides ongoing services that enable the brand to strategically utilize the asset in many creative ways."

Syandus' revenue comes from pharmaceutical sponsors invested in helping to educate their customers in the best clinical practices addressing specific high cost/high value chronic diseases. According to company leaders, pharma sponsors with the vision of a "franchise approach" to their current and future product portfolios are responding extremely well to Syandus' offering. Emerging biotech healthcare companies with complex and/or expensive pharmaceutical products/services also see the value of enabling key customers an opportunity to "virtually" try their products in a controlled and risk-free environment.

"Companies see simulation technology as a way to increase the level of physician knowledge, increase their product trial rate, and ultimately increase product adoption into practice," Dr. Seifert told *Med Ad News*. "The end result is a well-informed physician who is ready to deliver better quality of care to his or her patients."

The Well @GSW

The Well @GSW, launched in March, is a group of more than 50 strategists, innovators, and creators at the advertising agency GSW Worldwide who have in common a deep understanding of wellness in every state of health. The new venture was formed to support brands and companies pursuing a position of relevance in health and wellness. It focuses on providing marketers with an understanding of every state of a consumer's health and how wellness decisions are made.

"For pharmaceutical companies, consumer packaged goods, retail and government programs, we recognize that prevention and healthy behavior are a critical part of the new healthcare equation," says Brian Heffernan, founding

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partner of The Well @GSW and chief marketing officer for GSW Worldwide. "The Well @GSW was created in part because we understand that in order to be effective, people need education, motivation, and support beyond a doctor visit."

The Well @GSW, agency leaders say, was founded on the basis that wellness is a choice an individual makes in any state of health. The team includes members of another internal GSW venture: Pink Tank, specialists in understanding how women make wellness decisions for themselves and their families. But in order to broaden the scope of the new venture's thinking beyond the usual pharma/prescription mindset, its founders went outside GSW's pharma expertise and brought in specialists in retail and consumer products.

"Because The Well @GSW was created to positively disrupt how we think as marketers and consequently how we build brands for healthcare consumers, it seemed like a natural marriage to join Pink Tank, a futurist strategic group bringing extensive expertise on women as WellGuardians, with a group of inVentiv professionals bringing rich experience in retail healthcare," Marcee Nelson, the venture's chief creative officer, says.

The Well's leaders are careful in defining their terms; words like "health," "wellness," "patient," and "consumer" are not just abstractions for them.

"We focus on health and wellness, which are two very different things," says Scott Page, managing director and one of the founding partners of the Well. "Health is a state you are in. Wellness is a choice you make. The wellness choices a person brings to the equation – his/her free will – is critically important to a successful health outcome. The Well @GSW helps brand marketers offer more authentic wellness value to activate and motivate consumers."

Recognizing an accelerated shift toward prevention and wellness brought on by a confluence of forces in the marketplace, the Well has developed a service model that focuses on three key areas: counsel on strategic issues and program design by use of proprietary research, workshops, and tools; content that goes beyond syndicated wellness information to curate and create original content of value to client stakeholders; and communications to help clients tell their wellness story to consumers and to connect across stakeholders. These may not sound so unusual in the modern era of pharmaceutical marketing. But the Well's leaders believe that what they offer goes well beyond the traditional by providing a very different perspective on the patient experience.

"Our industry thinks in terms of 'patients' versus 'consumers,'" Ms. Nelson told *Med Ad News*. "The distinction seems inconsequential, but has huge implications in how we feel and approach our audiences. When we think 'patient,' we picture a person in a gown being shepherded through the system by healthcare authority figures. Newsflash: Patients are consumers – more demanding, more informed, more unified than ever before. Today, the physician's opinion is only part of the decision. Due to knowledge-as-commodity and global community, each consumer has a 'circle of influence' she/he consults, a phenomenon we call 'composite decision making.' With less authority, we must find new ways to influence."

According to the leaders of the Well, most brand managers in pharma are still building brands like advertisers instead of thinking and behaving like advocates. An advertiser, they say, has a product to sell and makes claims to attract buyers – but an advocate finds a shared purpose with their consumer and proves it through authentic brand actions and open interactions.

"For example, advertisers make a 60-second-tell-all-and-include-fair-balance TV spot and hope their claims outweigh their disclaimers," Ms. Nelson told *Med Ad News*. "The advocate approach to DTC is Do, Teach, Connect. Activating consumers' wellness choices through brand support, education, and partnership. There may still be a role for mass media, but more as a mass invitation to a personalized experience."

In the beginning, the partners who developed the Well set out to meet the needs of various industries that they believed could benefit from GSW's combination of expertise in health and wellness. What they quickly realized, though, is that a significant need exists to unite those industries to help solve the bigger issue: there is no continuum of self-care.

"As consumers try to self-navigate, they meet all kinds of dead ends and disconnects," Ms. Nelson says. "For example, the doctor says lose weight, but doesn't help with how. Grocery shoppers trying to manage a health condition feel completely alone and rudderless. And as we all know, persistence is the persisting problem in pharmaceuticals."

Finding ways to unite across industries to help consumers self-navigate wellness has thus become the new venture's focus.

"Now, food manufacturers tell us they have a desire to partner with healthcare professionals and manufacturers," Ms. Nelson says. "Retailers are looking for help with disease state education and guidance for their customers. Employers are seeking partners in health and wellness programs. By joining forces to create a continuum of self-care, brands can be better advocates – providing more complete consumer support that simplifies wellness instead of adding more confusion to an already overwhelming subject."

This concept of uniting various external forces starts at home for the Well; the venture's leaders believe that they have put together the "power of opposing forces" through a combination of expertise in professional healthcare, consumer package goods, retail promotion, and digital innovation. Ms. Nelson has worked on consumer packaged goods for companies like Kraft Foods in addition to her pharma work, while Mr. Page was a founding partner of a retail promotions agency that worked on brands like Yoplait, and the venture's director creative/innovation, Jim Johnson, has done creative work for Procter & Gamble. And potential clients are paying attention; the Well has already done work for the OTC brands Colief and Emetrol and the pelvic health device marketer American Medical

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Systems.

"We understand every state of health and we know how wellness decisions are made, not just in the doctor's office, but at the shelf and at home," Mr. Page says. "When you add the insight and female voice of Pink Tank, The Well @GSW offers in one compact package what you would have to put many companies together to get. Our diverse composition stretches our thinking and helps us to see new possibilities ... in products, programs, and partnerships."

Looking forward, Ms. Nelson sees a future where supporting consumer wellness will only grow more important in the continuum of pharmaceutical marketing, giving the Well @GSW considerable room to grow.

"As Burrill and Company observed in their report A 20/20 Vision to 2020, 'Along with genetic testing and preventative medication, customized exercise and nutrition will be the cornerstones of disease prevention,'" she says. "We would add disease management to that statement. The question is, who will help consumers customize? It's going to take a village. Creating better wellness products and programs and forming new partnerships to create a continuum of self-care is what we'll be focused on for the foreseeable future."

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