BOOST YOUR POWER TO INFLUENCE WITH EVIDENCE-BASED CONTENT

How to make storytelling the cornerstone of your marketing activities to foster patient & HCP engagement
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Content marketing matters to the life sciences and pharma industry. Life sciences and pharma companies need to deliver the same key messages in multiple formats and via multiple channels to reach and inform patients, healthcare professionals (HCPs) and their own non-specialist staff. This practice of producing multiple versions of the same theme, known as content atomisation, heralds a new approach to content development. It relies on evidence-based storytelling to effectively convey a key message or theme across multiple channels by strategically remixing, refreshing and repeating content. But it is not only the adaptability of the content that matters, it is the quality as well.

Until now, much of the conversation on content marketing has centred on how to measure the impact of marketing campaigns through the use of new tracking technologies and methods. In parallel, companies have developed strategies to gain deeper insights into what their target audiences want and need. Marketing campaigns are then designed and refined based on these audience and impact insights. Regardless of how campaigns are evaluated, effective marketing continues to rely first and foremost on the development of quality content in the form of compelling digital stories.

To develop such impact stories, the primary question to answer is not what you need to say. Instead, the question is why should your audience care about what you are saying? This means adapting the style and substance of each piece of content to the varying perspectives of the target audiences. This includes, for example, developing medical education content for HCPs, disease awareness campaigns for patients, and clear and accessible material for non-specialist professionals.

The key to effective audience engagement is found in a simple equation: content must be relevant and have one of three attributes – it needs to be 1) insightful, 2) useful, 3) emotionally powerful. In the context of pharma and life sciences, content must also be accurate, understandable and trustworthy. It must be evidence-based.

Not all content is created equal. Life sciences and biopharma content communicates complex issues and often rapidly developing scientific advances. Creating content for this industry, therefore, requires therapeutic area expertise in addition to creative skill. This means that quality control and validation must be built into the process of transforming a complex message into effective and engaging evidence-based stories.
THE VALUE OF QUALITY CONTENT IN INFLUENCING YOUR AUDIENCES

In the life sciences and pharma sector, devising messages to influence audiences presents its own challenges:

1. Translating complex issues into clear, concise and compelling content
2. Constantly monitoring rapidly developing scientific advances to account for the latest company innovation in its scientific context
3. Taking into account regulatory and ethical considerations
4. Addressing issues pertaining to social perception and trust

In response to these multiple challenges, the marketing model of this industry is rapidly evolving. Much of the conversation on marketing revolves around measuring the impact of marketing campaigns using digital technology innovations and strategies. Another part of the conversation is focused on insights and feedback as they relate to customer needs and engagement. Despite marketers’ intense focus on measuring and insights, it is content development that matters first and foremost in implementing an effective marketing communication strategy.

Content is what underpins and maintains the conversation between the life sciences and pharma industry and its stakeholders – patients and HCPs. “Maintaining a quality conversation is based around the value that the customer experiences,” explains Dan Davies, Head of Customer Marketing at Sanofi Pasteur in the UK, “which in turn creates a new challenge, the challenge of content creation and maintenance.”

Yet, not all content is created equal. Evidence-based content development for the life sciences and pharma industry requires both subject matter knowledge, such as therapeutic area expertise, as well as creative and editorial skills. Accuracy and quality control must be built into the process of transforming a complex message into compelling content. This can be achieved by relying on the talents of science and medical content creators with the right subject matter expertise and through validation. Quality life science and biopharma infographics that make an impact with a wider audience, for example, should be created and ‘validated by specialists’.
CONTENT ATOMISATION

In content development, the primary question to answer is not *what do we need to say*. Instead, content needs to be designed to answer the following question: *why should our audience care about what we’re saying?*

In the life sciences and pharma industry, this means adapting the style and substance of content to the varying perspectives and needs of practitioners, patients, and non-specialist professionals. This spans the spectrum of understanding from post-doctoral specialism to a lay-person’s passing knowledge. To achieve this, marketers adapt a tactic called content atomisation, where a single key message or theme is distilled through multiple formats and adapted to various channels.

Although the core message will be the same, the ‘clothes it wears’ are tailored to the needs and characteristics of each audience segment. For example, in its bid to raise awareness of the public health threat posed by antibiotic resistance, Public Health England’s *Antibiotic Guardian* campaign created quizzes, animations and videos for patients. In parallel, the campaign deployed case studies, technical toolkits and educational resources for healthcare and veterinary professionals. Another campaign with a similar focus was promoted by the government of Luxembourg under the title *Les antibiotiques ne sont pas des bonbons*. The campaign addressed the same topic with a similar variety of materials in different formats geared to engage different audience groups, public and professional.

The right question is not *what do we need to say*, but *why should our audience care about what we’re saying?*
One of the goals of content marketing is to enhance patient and HCP understanding of the innovation a company brings to them and to underpin their ability to make informed decisions.⁴ Infographics are well-suited to present and communicate complex information quickly, clearly and effectively. Perceived as appealing and user-friendly content, they are associated with higher reader preference,⁵ making them more likely to be read by non-specialists. Suitably conceptualised, infographics make medical and scientific information more accessible to target audiences and can enhance audiences’ understanding and ability to make decisions.⁶

A study on educational infographics and sun protection knowledge, for example, found that ‘skin cancer education through infographics demonstrated significant improvement in patient understanding of appropriate sunscreen usage and label interpretation.’⁷

Likewise, in a study on concussion knowledge, participants reported that infographics met their knowledge needs (91%) and provided them with new knowledge (87%). Significantly, 55% of participants also reported that they intended to use the infographics to educate others.⁸

The following infographic example focuses on the effective communication of messages related to hospital-acquired infections (HAIs). It combines a visual element with text and data. The visual is, of course, vital in communication but readability is important too. Readability here refers to a language that is both accessible and useful to a target audience.⁹ In this case, the target audience is policy makers.

Another infographic example depicts the key findings from published new research on the rare disease Neimann-Pick disease. The infographic is aimed at a general audience. It was conceptualised and produced by a creative team with subject matter expertise and it was validated by specialists (the scientific researchers behind the published study).
2 new biomarkers to diagnose Niemann-Pick disease

Niemann-Pick disease is a fault in lipid (fat) and cholesterol metabolism

Trouble moving eyes vertically

Affected brain cells cause learning difficulties

Loss of muscle tone in limbs

Enlarged liver and spleen from cellular cholesterol accumulation

Condition needs more diagnosis tools

- New Biomarker A (Sphingosylphosphorylcholine)
- New Biomarker B (lyso(sphingomyelin-509)
- Works with existing biomarker test for better prognosis

THE CONTENT MARKETING EQUATION

How can we persuade someone to give up their time and attention to engage with content? The key to a successful disease awareness campaign or a popular medical education course lies in a simple equation. Content must be relevant and have at least one of three attributes:

1. **Insightful** - Does it offer valuable information on a new, emerging or poorly understood issue? Or does it offer a novel analysis of a familiar topic?

2. **Useful** - Does it offer a timely solution to a current problem?

3. **Emotionally powerful** - Does it provoke a reaction from delight to outrage (the latter being an emotional trigger in fundraising campaigns by non-profit organisations, for example).

At least one attribute must be in play to engage an audience. However, to engage and persuade people to act, transact or change behaviour, the most successful campaigns are likely to draw on two or all three attributes and be played across different content formats, media or channels.

The case for interviews in conveying evidence-based information

Digital stories, such as interviews and profiles of key opinion leaders, represent opportunities to more effectively engage with HCPs. In contrast, interviews with patients open the door to communicating with wider audiences, particularly in disease awareness campaigns. Ultimately, using such interviews may impact people’s lives. The underlying goal is to offer value to these stakeholders. “Digital marketing is an enabler in that it can help us change the behaviour of the people we have in front of us,” explains Haider Alleg, Swiss-based Global Head of Digital Excellence at pharma company Ferring. “We should aim to build something more meaningful based on clinical evidence and which helps our doctors do a better job”. This approach can also help patients make better decisions.

An advantage in choosing the interview format in conveying messages and information to HCPs or patients lies in its versatility; an interview can be presented in text, audio and video. This makes it possible to convey a single core message via multiple channels for targeted distribution to different audience segments.
A better management of chronic illnesses such as dementia can be done by harnessing technological solutions. But this kind of innovative support cannot be used unless it respects the rights of people affected by the disease. In contrast, those close to dementia patients have a responsibility to adopt preventive steps to manage the disease. But this can only happen once governments implement adequate level of support. In this exclusive EuroScientist interview, June Andrews, director of the Dementia Services Development Centre at the University of Stirling, in Scotland, UK, analyses the potential and the drawbacks of innovation for the 50 million people worldwide affected by this condition.

“If we listen better to our customers, then this is the first step in being able to better address their needs.” Linda Valenta

- Created by SciencePOD

Linda Valenta, Global Director of Healthcare Innovation at Boehringer Ingelheim is scheduled to speak at the Marketing and Customer Innovation Europe conference, which is happening in London from the 15–16th October. Linda will present an award-winning case study entitled “How Boehringer Ingelheim’s Interactive Guidelines support HCPs in the daily management of asthma patients.”

We asked Linda some questions about this area, the case study, and the upcoming conference.

Your case study presentation is about the use of technology to deliver value to HCPs – how do you think technology is helping pharma meet customer needs?
ENGAGING YOUR AUDIENCE – THREE SCENARIOS

Content marketing, as opposed to traditional advertising or communication approaches based on advertorials, offers an effective route to engage and persuade different audience segments, for example:

1. Engaging Patients

EU rules prevent direct marketing of prescription medicines to consumers. However, providing public health information in the form of disease awareness campaigns is permitted. It offers a valuable route to building brand trust, authority and recognition while serving the civic good.

GSK’s Tackle Meningitis campaign, for instance, recruited former England rugby player Matt Dawson, whose infant son contracted the disease, as an advocate to help parents better understand the risks and symptoms. Sports stars of other nationalities, such as Irish rugby captain, Rory Best, were recruited and geo-specific surveys among parents were carried out to help spread the message in other countries.

2. Engaging Healthcare Professionals

When communicating with HCPs, it may be tempting to merely provide a technical description of a product or service. Although this is a vital element of a campaign, it is only a baseline necessity. To truly engage new or existing customers, life sciences and pharma companies need to take a different path. They need to develop content that provides added value to their audience.

Take, for example, the educational resources website of biotech product development company Thermo Fisher which offers an array of learning tools. These range from general courses in bioinformatics for data scientists to stem cell research training with the company's R&D scientists. The value-add comes from problem-solving content that offers insights to a time-poor audience. This helps build customer trust and affinity with the brand.
Long gone are the days of the sales rep who is armed with dry, highly technical material. Today HCPs expect to receive accessible and engaging content, often in the form of medical education or digital portals. Content needs to be geared to help sales teams answer the question: why should potential customers care?

The lessons outlined above are simple enough. However, the execution of successful content marketing campaigns requires creative flair and careful planning. Above all, it requires a willingness to produce content that goes beyond what everyone else in the industry is doing.
CASE STUDY:
CREATING COMPLEX TRAINING MATERIAL FOR SPECIALISTS

The request from a multinational biotechnology company that provides analytical and laboratory products was to create content for a new educational portal. The educational content created aims to assist scientists using a molecular biology technique called real-time – or quantitative – polymerase chain reaction (qPCR). The objective was to help scientists optimise the outcome of their experiments and provide advice in troubleshooting. This case required the delivery of clear, concise, scientifically accurate content tailored to an audience of specialists. Topics covered in this project ranged from ‘Real-time PCR basics’ to ‘miRNA analysis and real-time PCR’.

In a large content project such as this, accuracy and quality control are paramount. At the same time, there is still a need to ensure that the result is useful, insightful and clear. Therefore, it required a team of content creators with expertise in content creation (science writers and editors) as well as qualifications and experience in biomedical science, molecular biology, medicine and computational modelling.

Real-time PCR training center (qPCR)

This training center centralizes the presentation of educational resources in a wide range of fields of application of PCR in real time. Select an application area below to view a collection of different types of educational resources on this subject, including articles, application notes, videos, and online seminars. Browse the resource library to view all of the real-time PCR resources organized in a table where you can easily find and sort information.

Sub-sections on real-time PCR

Fundamentals of real-time PCR
If you’re new to real-time PCR, also called quantitative PCR (qPCR) or want to learn more about new applications for qPCR, we have the educational resources, including videos and online seminars, to help you understand the technology and get started quickly.

Genetic expression
Gene expression profiling simultaneously compares the expression levels of many genes between two or more types of samples. This analysis can help scientists identify the molecular basis of phenotypic differences and select targets for gene expression for further study. Profiling gene expression provides an interesting insight into the role of differential gene expression in normal and pathological biological processes.
TRUSTWORTHY AND UNDERSTANDABLE

Life sciences and biopharma content must speak to a variety of stakeholders and audiences, specialist and non-specialist. Whether it takes the form of a white paper, leave pieces, a feature combining text and infographics, a podcast, video or a disease awareness campaign, the content must be understandable to the target audience and above all trustworthy. A variety of channels offers more and new opportunities to reach audiences and digital technologies allow marketers greater insights into customer needs. As Linda Valenta, Global Director of Healthcare Innovation at Boehringer Ingelheim, in Germany, asserts, ‘listening’ is key. Why should your audience care about what you’re saying? Make sure it is because you’ve listened, your content is accurate, it offers value, it is understandable and trustworthy.

FEATURE WITH INFOGRAPHICS

Real world use case: A model for Ebola

The Ebola virus is one of the deadliest human viruses. Infection begins with flu-like symptoms, progressing to vomiting, diarrhoea, a rash and in many cases bleeding internally and from the ears, eyes, nose or mouth. On average, half of those infected with the Ebola virus die from their symptoms.

The biggest known outbreak of Ebola virus disease occurred in West Africa in 2014, eventually infecting over 28,000 people. The outbreak inspired a global forecasting challenge, in which several teams submitted forecasts of the outbreak to the US National Institutes of Health, using synthetic datasets under several different scenarios.

The teams were asked to submit forecasts at the local and country level, over the short- and long-term, and to provide estimates at several different timepoints along the development of the simulated epidemic.

One team in this challenge, based at Virginia Tech’s Biocomplexity Institute (and now at the University of Virginia), built an agent-based model during the 2014 outbreak, with the express purpose of helping policymakers.

Lead author Dr Srinivasa Venkatraman explained how the model works: “In an agent-based model, the evolution of the system state is modelled by encoding the actions and interactions of individual agents. In the context of infectious diseases, the evolution of

The case for reducing hospital-acquired infections in India

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RESEARCH SUMMARY

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ABOUT SCIENCEPOD

The first platform for science content marketing – clear, concise, compelling content.

SciencePOD stands for Science Prose On-Demand. We take complex ideas and turn them into effective and engaging digital stories for use in marketing, medical communication and media. The SciencePOD platform is an innovative one-stop-solution for quality science and medical content – giving you access to a global network of science, medical and technology content creators and making it easy to order content through intuitive editorial and workflow tools.

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