

Reprint # 32-05

Beyond DTC: Consumer Relationship Satisfaction

By John Mack

Consumer information needs cannot be adequately addressed by DTCA alone. DTC can build awareness and convince a consumer to discuss a medical condition with his or her doctor. But what happens after the customer has visited the physician and received a prescription? Physicians—who typically spend less than 15 minutes with patients during office visits—often are not in a position to fill all the information gaps consumers face or motivate them to change their behavior.

According to Lynn Benzing, President, The Patient Marketing Group—who spoke at the Achieving DTC Success Conference in October, 2003—brands can begin to establish a relationship with patients from the very first interaction and build upon that relationship over time for the good of all parties. Building a beneficial relationship requires education, motivational interventions, and relevant messages tailored to be meaningful to the individual (see, for example, the article “Beyond Patient Education: Influencing Behavior Change” in this issue).

Consumer Relationship Satisfaction Survey

The effectiveness of such outreach programs, however, needs to be measured to understand how well pharmaceutical marketers are handling key consumer touchpoints that impact brand loyalty.

Benzing presented the fourth quarter 2003 results from her company's ConsumerRxperience Scorecard Project, which is designed to provide important feedback to pharmaceutical manufacturers on the effectiveness of their communication programs targeted to consumers and patients. It gives prospective and

current prescription product users the opportunity to rate the impact and helpfulness of these outreach efforts.

The study tracked several communication program components (see Box) and conducted interviews with consumers to explore the metrics associated with responses to requests for more information. An ad hoc consumer panel provided ongoing ratings of the elements of the brands' communication programs.

How Long Do Consumers Have to Wait to Receive Requested Information?

The survey measured how many days it takes to receive materials after a request was made by mail or by phone (see FIGURE, next page). Benzing suggested it sometimes takes longer to fulfill a request than necessary because of an economic incentive to fulfill requests in batches rather than as they are received.

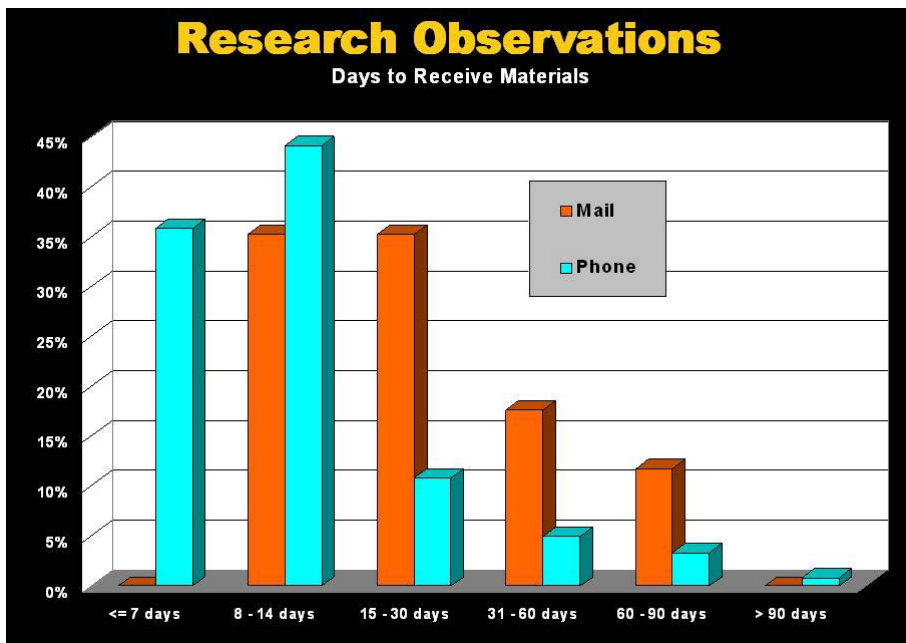
Privacy Ratings

It is important to pay attention to privacy concerns when communicating to health consumers, especially if you want to build a relationship based upon trust. “It is essential,” said Benzing, “that in addition to following all the requirements of HIPAA, we are mindful of the deep concerns consumers have about their personal privacy, particularly when dealing with sensitive health information.” Benzing's study, consequently, examines privacy and personalization benchmarks such as the use of opt out, discreetness of packaging, and disclosure notices regarding use of information captured.

Pharma Fulfillment Programs

Pharmaceutical companies fulfill requests for information from consumers by providing access to toll-free numbers or websites and providing them with several types of follow-up communications, including:

- Cover letters
- Patient Brochures
- Doctor Discussion Notes
- Surveys
- Resources guides
- Treatment Guidelines
- Free trials
- Coupons
- Rebates
- Promo items
- Newsletters



The survey found that over 60% of fulfillment materials included a clear opt-out notice. Similarly, over 60% of fulfillment materials are sent in discreet packaging to protect patient privacy. Messages on fulfillment envelopes range from the subtle discreet “The information you requested is enclosed” to the more brazen problematical “Last chance for a \$5 savings inside! Before eczema flares again, get your FREE offer. Eczema comes & Goes. But this special offer is going away...” Benzing suggested that it is better not to say what’s inside and noted that brand names on outer envelopes can give away content. Since her presentation, restrictive legislation has been passed in Texas and California barring healthcare marketers from including any form of suggestive copy on the outer envelope package, and similar legislation is pending in 6 additional states.

Personalization

Generic, non-personalized, salutations—e.g., “Dear Sir or Madame”—reduce the impact of a communications program. Personalization—e.g., “Dear Ms. Cole”—is better and a tailored salutation—e.g., “Dear Carrie, Getting your spouse diagnosed was an important first step...”—is best.

The results of the survey regarding level of personalization used in fulfillment materials are shown in the FIGURE to the left.

Consumer-Friendliness

Benzing suggested that patient-friendly PPIs (Patient Package Inserts) can add to the overall appeal of a package. Now that the FDA has issued draft guidelines that support the use of consumer-friendly language for disclosures in print

advertising (see article “FDA Draft Guidance for Print DTCA: Less than Feared” in this issue), perhaps fulfillment packages will also be more consumer friendly and include PPIs instead of professional package inserts.

Achieving Standards in Patient Relationship Marketing

Benzing offered the following tips for achieving standards in patient relationship marketing:

- When using a cover letter, always make it personalized
- Strive to respond to all requests for more information within 2 weeks or less
- Include an easy opt-out and process the requests promptly
- Be discreet on outer packaging

to respect the confidential nature of health information inside

- Disclose use of data prior to data capture on the phone
- Auto opt-in with easy opt-out relaxes the need for signature archiving in current practice
- Tailored content makes a campaign stand out in the present marketing current environment
- Use only relevant incentives to accomplish specific pre-established objectives
- Create a PPI and utilize in place of professional PI whenever feasible
- Utilize behavioral vs. direct marketing approach when seeking to drive compliance and persistency

Pharma Marketing News

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Pharma Marketing News—the First Forum for Pharmaceutical Marketing Experts—is published monthly by **VirSci Corporation** except for August. It is distributed electronically by email and the Web to members of the Pharma Marketing Network (www.pharmamkting.com).

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