

Article Reprint # 66-03

Got Game? Online Pharma Advergaming

By John Mack

According to an entry in Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, "advergaming is the practice of using video games to advertise a product, organization or viewpoint."

eMarketer, a market research company, recently published a report called "You've played the game. Now eat the food." In that report, senior analyst Lisa E. Smith states that "CPG [Consumer Package Goods] companies spend far more on interactive marketing campaigns, such as microsites, advergaming and downloadable music, than on Internet advertising such as display ads, search and e-mail. This year," claims Smith, "CPG companies will spend \$600 million to advertise online, just 3.1% of the total \$19.5 billion expected."

eMarketer expects US spending on advergaming will hit \$344 million in 2011 (see Figure 1).

While advergaming seems to work for the consumer package goods industry, will it also work for pharmaceuticals?

Give Your Legs a Rest

Fabio Gratton, Co-founder of Ignite Health and blogger at IgniteBLOG: The Perfect Storm, seems to think advergaming works for drug marketing. He recently wrote about a advergaming on WebMD called "Give Your Legs a Rest," which he confessed was addictive. This game was developed for WebMD's client, Mirapex, a drug intended to treat Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS) as well as Parkinson's disease. Mirapex is produced by Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

The object of the game is to score points by aligning three of the same objects (eg, stapler, coffee cup, etc.) horizontally or vertically. You do this by clicking on two adjacent items, which switches their locations on the board.

"The game is intended to give players tips on how to avoid and manage Restless Leg Syndrome," says developer Blockdot in a press release. "As people work nonstop throughout the day, they often forget to take a minute and rejuvenate their bodies. The game reminds people of this through a series of 'Quick Tips'. Quick Tips give facts about our bodies and suggestions to avoid Restless Leg Syndrome around the office." (See a screen shot in Figure 2, next page.)

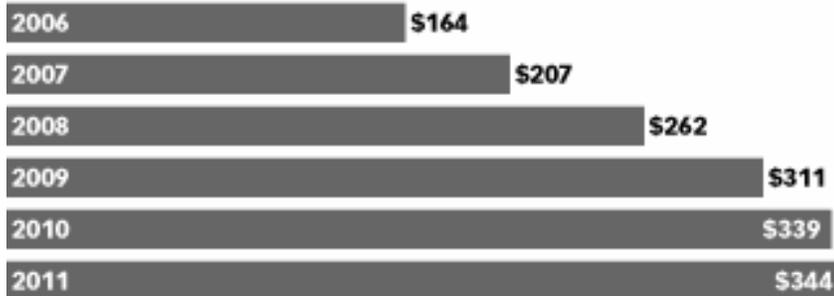
In 1998, according to howstuffworks.com, Blockdot (then NVision Design) needed to build company recognition, so they created a game they called "Good Willie Hunting," a parody of Whack-a-Mole that made fun of President Clinton's extramarital escapades. The game was a huge success and brought more attention to this new promotional method.

I Play the Game

Although the "Give Your Legs a Rest" game is addictive and held my attention for several minutes, I completely ignored all the surrounding

Continues...

US Advergaming Spending, 2006-2011 (millions)



Note: Advergaming refers to games wholly designed with the intention of promoting a product; excludes mobile games
 Source: eMarketer, April 2007

082073

www.eMarketer.com

Figure 1: Chart. Source: "You've played the game. Now eat the food" (eMarketer.com)

The screenshot displays the 'Give Your Legs a Rest' advergaming interface. At the top, it says 'Give Your Legs a Rest' and 'Brought to you by Mirapex'. Below this, there's a navigation menu with options like 'Give Your Legs a Rest', 'RLS Matching Game', 'See All Tips', 'Related Health Centers', 'Sleep Disorders', and 'Pain Management'. The main content area features a matching game titled 'Busy Day at Work' with a 10x10 grid of icons. A character of a man in a suit is shown at a desk. The game interface includes a 'Quick tips' box, a 'Save \$15 GET COUPON' banner, and a 'Learn More' button. The Mirapex logo is visible in the top right corner.

Figure 2: Level 1 of the advergaming "Give Your Legs a Rest."

Mirapex promotional advertising and almost did not notice the option to take the quiz to see if I had RLS.

Sample quiz question: I often find myself tired and dragging during the day. Please answer "Yes" or "No". It turns out that this is a trick question: "being tired and dragging" may be symptoms of old age or dissatisfaction with your routine office chores, but they apparently are NOT symptoms of RLS!

I only played "Level 1: Busy Day at Work", the theme of which was "Conference calls, deadlines, e-mails..." [all of which I ignored while playing the game] "...Getting away from your desk can seem impossible."

During the game play, I received tips like "stretch your legs," which I couldn't very well do since I was addictively tied down in my chair playing the game! Had been engaged in actual office activities instead of playing the game, I may have been better able to comply with this and other sensible tips.

Not Medical Advice; Also Not Educational!

The game includes this disclaimer: "This tool does not provide medical advice. It is intended for informational purposes only and does not address individual circumstances. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Never ignore professional medical advice in seeking treatment because of something you have read on the WebMD Site. If you think you may have a medical emergency, immediately call your doctor or dial 911."

Putting aside the unlikely scenario of an RLS "medical emergency," I find that this game, in and of itself, offers very little "information" or education about RLS. In my opinion, therefore, this type of advergaming suffers from the same problem that TV DTC ads have: a profound lack of educational content. Sure, the game makes the Mirapex "microsite" on WebMD "sticky," meaning that visitors will spend a long time on the site, which features Mirapex ads and free coupon offers.

Continues...

I hope that BI is getting a good conversion rate from this microsite, but I am somewhat doubtful that they are. You can spend a lot of time playing this game and hardly notice the surrounding offers, let alone bother to click on them. There's not much product messaging built into the game—it's pretty much focused on disease awareness messages.

It May Fly in Battlecreek, But Not in Raritan!

Advergaming appears to be very successful in the CPG/food and beverage market. According to eMarketer, Wm. Wrigley Jr. Co.'s advergaming site is one sign of a CPG marketer's success with this type of campaign.

"The firm's candystand.com draws between 4 million and 5 million unique visitors per month to play Wrigley-branded games such as Orbit Video Poker," says eMarketer. "Earlier this year, the company launched a microsite, wii.candystand.com, which can be accessed through Nintendo's Wii Internet channel, even though it is not licensed or authorized by Nintendo." Is this type of advergaming, which is appropriate for Rx products? I don't think so. Here's why.

Rx Drugs Require More Than Branding

The purchasing decision for soda or chips is not that complicated, certainly not as complicated as the decision to ask your doctor whether or not Mirapex or Requip is the best treatment for your RLS symptoms. When you really come down to it, the difference between one brand of sugar water and another is the brandname and everything that's associated with it. CPG advertisers are brand advertisers par excellence and use online entertainment to keep the brand images in front of you.

Rx drugs also want to be brands, but they cannot be brands like Coke or Pepsi. If you tie too many positive benefit emotions and not enough risk emotions to a drug brand, you will violate FDA regulations regarding direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising. Pepsi and Coke have no such problem. They can link their brands exclusively to positive images (ie, happy young partygoers on the beach). They don't have to balance these with negative images of obese youngsters downing 20 ounces of Pepsi in a single gulp!

Drug advergaming would be more effective if they integrated product information into the games themselves. Tips are OK, but what about patient information related specifically to the product? Information like mechanism of action, important

side effects, what to tell your doctor before treatment, etc.

Drug advergaming has the potential to convey a great deal of educational information that ordinary DTC cannot convey or that patients don't ordinarily read. Unless they reach that potential, advergaming, like TV DTC, are more entertaining than they are educational.

Pharma Marketing News

Pharma Marketing News

Pharma Marketing News (PMN) is the FREE monthly e-newsletter of the **Pharma Marketing Network**, focused on issues of importance to pharmaceutical marketing executives. It is a service of the Pharma Marketing Network—The First Forum for Pharmaceutical Marketing Experts—which brings together pharmaceutical marketing professionals from manufacturers, communications companies, and marketing service providers for wide ranging discussions and education on a multitude of current topics.

Pharma Marketing Network & Pharma Marketing News provide executive-level content, professional networking & business development with permission-based eMarketing opportunities.

www.news.pharma-mkting.com

Publisher & Executive Editor

John Mack

VirSci Corporation (www.virsci.com)

215-504-4164, 215-504-5739 FAX

<mailto:editor@pharmamarketingnews.com>

VirSci, PO Box 760, Newtown, PA 18940,
215-504-4164