

LIGHTING THE PATIENT PATHWAY



How to bridge the audience divide in pharmaceutical marketing



When it comes to marketing a new drug, media agencies often play on two separate teams. One might be the B2B team, concentrating on doctors, while another agency might focus on patients. This is the typical approach, and the reasons for it are many. Different departments within a client company. Or a perception that these two audience segments are incompatible, each requiring highly specialized expertise.

But there's something very wrong with that picture. Because it overlooks a unique aspect of pharmaceutical marketing: patients and doctors talk to each other every day, and they may very often see messages intended for each other.

It's true, professionals and consumers are completely different target audiences, and they need different strategies—from channel types to frequency and message sophistication. Finding fresh ways to reach both audiences calls for the right expertise.

There's a better way to look at these two audiences. A way to consider them both within a bigger, smarter framework.

Let's take a look.





Pharma is a unique industry where B2B and B2C collide.

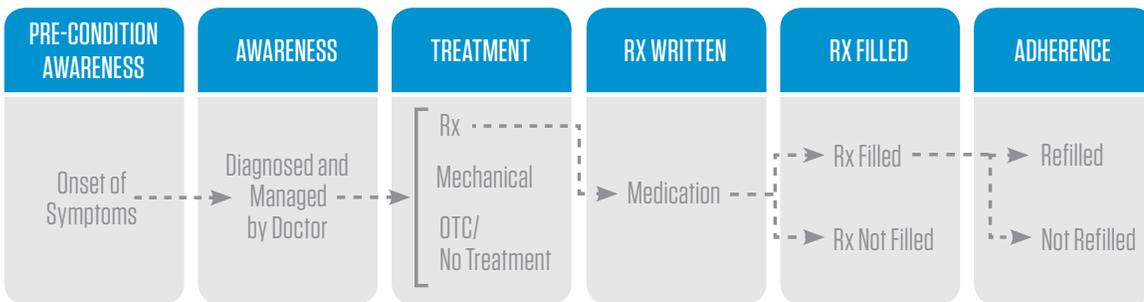
Doctors and consumers both have crucial roles in the pathway that leads patients to the medications they need. When you only think about these audiences independently, you miss an important insight into how they interact with each other. Millions of consumers see their doctors on a somewhat regular basis. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 47% of Americans have had 1-3 healthcare visits in the past year, and 24% had 4-9 visits.

It's a unique aspect of pharmaceutical marketing: B2B and B2C targets have a direct relationship with each other. Without both, consumers will never find their way down the pathway.

HEALTHCARE VISITS
IN THE PAST YEAR:



THE PATIENT PATHWAY



Consumers follow a consistent track from diagnosis to prescription. Understanding the channels they encounter throughout can help you reach them and their doctors better.

It's simple: unless consumers understand that a particular treatment is a viable option for them, they'll never ask their doctor about it, and begin the discussion that leads to a prescription. Likewise, unless a doctor knows about the treatment, he or she is simply going to prescribe a different product. Consumers spark the discussion. And they get their prescriptions filled. But everything in between is up to their doctor or other influencers.

So how do marketers bring these two considerations together into a single, integrated campaign with the right touchpoints? Where do these audiences intersect? And how can you lead them to your brand?



Five steps toward a cohesive, effective campaign.

1 AVOID OVERLAP.

When agencies develop B2B and B2C campaigns independently, there's often overlap in tactics and messages. For instance, if one of your tactics is online paid search, two agencies might be bidding on the same terms or key words—which means they're unwittingly bidding against each other for the same client. When you integrate your media plan, you can combine efforts and avoid unintended conflicts.

When it comes to overlap, remember that doctors are more than professionals—they're consumers themselves. They're going to see your consumer messages, too. For instance, publishers like WebMD and Medscape offer consumer-facing content, but they also target professionals. When you created a unified plan, you can ensure that each message resonates with both professionals and consumers, which avoids waste and creates a cohesive campaign.



2 WORK ON YOUR TIMING.

In pharmaceutical marketing, the B2B and B2C audiences come together frequently at the doctor's office. So the timing of messages is critical to ensure that when they interact, your product comes up in the discussion. Think of it as a delicate choreography.

“Integration allows marketers to better choreograph the timing of messages to the professional and consumer as they interact with each other.”

– Peter Infante
Chief Strategy Officer, Butler/Till

The patient pathway begins with a diagnosis—and it's important that consumers are made aware of your product as a viable option when they're diagnosed. At the same time, doctors need to know that your product is available, so when the time comes to prescribe treatments for their patients, they're ready to talk about your product and they already have a working knowledge of it.

Research suggests there's room for more conversation between patients and doctors. A 2013 Novo Nordisk study found that only 29% of patients surveyed said their healthcare teams asked their opinion on treatment regimens. The same study showed that 84% of healthcare professionals surveyed said that, “it would be helpful if their patients prepared questions in advance of consultation.”



3 NEGOTIATE FROM A BIGGER PICTURE.

When you control both sides of a campaign, the big picture perspective makes it easier for you to negotiate better packages with media to cover both audiences. It's more cost effective and it further reduces overlap.

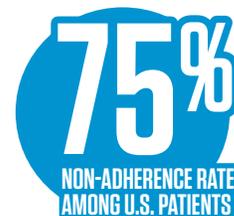
There are plenty of publishers out there who reach both consumers and providers. For instance, AdRx is a health-focused ad network that offers both professional and consumer targeting channels.

4 MEASURE THE RESULTS MORE HOLISTICALLY.

By integrating your B2B and B2C media plans, you can gather a nice, neat, single pile of data—including reporting. With all the stats in one place, it's easier to draw insights from the campaign results for both professionals and consumers, see how they may relate—and optimize both areas at the same time.

5 ENCOURAGE REFILLS.

No patient pathway is complete without one final step—the consumers adhering to their medication and having their prescription refilled. And it can be one of the toughest parts of a campaign. According to the American Heart Association, 12% of U.S. patients never even fill their prescription, and another 12% don't take the medication at all after they fill the prescription. Add to that 29% who stop taking the medication before it runs out, and another 22% who take less of the medication than prescribed, and we're looking at a staggering 75% non-adherence rate.



There's no magic formula for persuading consumers to refill prescriptions, but maintaining a day-to-day presence can help. That means continual communication with both consumers and the doctors who want them to continue with their medication faithfully. And when you're armed with the richer data of an integrated media plan, you can plan for a more thoughtful adherence campaign.

The bottom line:



No consumers take the patient pathway alone. Their doctor is there with them along the way. From the moment you begin to plan your media strategy for reaching these two key audiences with a new product, it's worth the effort to think of it as a single, integrated campaign. There's no category quite like pharmaceutical marketing. By uniting your efforts across B2B and B2C, you can help foster closer relationships between patients and doctors—and start valuable conversations about your product.

"The line between B2B and B2C is becoming blurred and they are looking more alike all the time," says Michael Deichmiller, an account director at Butler/Till. "There are media agencies that excel in both realms."

Whether you accomplish it through a single agency relationship or a more collaborative effort across multiple agency partners, it's an approach that can lead your brand down a successful pathway, too.



About: Butler/Till

We are a media and communication agency that delivers progressive ideas for engaging audiences across multiple platforms, channels, and media. We dream it up, build it, execute it, measure it, and continually improve it.



We'd love to start a conversation with you. Actually, Keith would – to be more exact.

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