

The GRIP PERSPECTIVE

**SOCIAL MEDIA in
HEALTHCARE MARKETING**



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INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to provide Grip's high-level perspective and approach on developing a social media strategy for Pharmaceutical Marketing in Canada. In addition, we attended the PAAB seminar on social media held in Toronto on September 30, 2009 and have included key elements into our framework for your consideration.

Before discussing a point of view on the rules of engagement between pharmaceutical marketing and social media it is important to baseline the term "social media."

For the purpose of this document, we will define social media as content that is created on the Internet by the public and not produced by journalists, editors or media conglomerates. Some examples of this type of online content include discussion forums, blogs, MySpace and, more recently, content on Facebook and Twitter. This space is relatively new and will continue to evolve as attitudes and preferences shift, but the basic premise (of content created by regular users and not publishing professionals) should remain consistent for the foreseeable future.

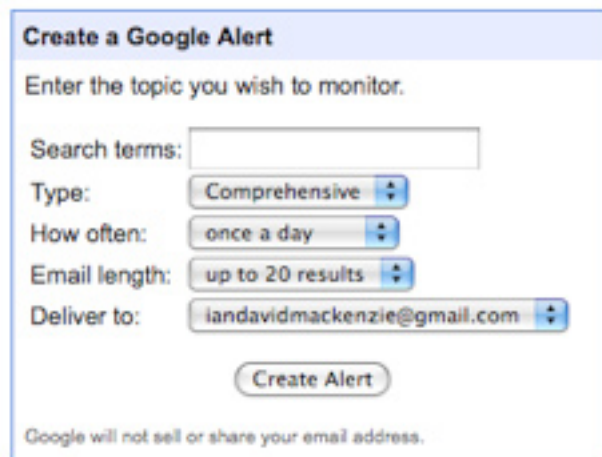
Businesses today leverage the power of social media in its various forms as they apply to marketing strategies, typically based on the nature of the business and its goals. For example, Best Buy is currently using **Twitter** (www.twitter.com/bestbuy) to provide knowledge and technical support to their customers. General Motors is using a **blog format** (<http://fastlane.gmblogs.com>) so their CEO can connect and communicate regularly with the general public. In each of these examples, both companies spent time assessing their customers' online habits and then developed a social media strategy that aligned with their marketing goals.

START BY LISTENING TO CONSUMERS

It's no secret that active listening is a valuable business skill. The same applies online when trying to develop a social media strategy. The first step to understanding the social media landscape for your brand is to find ways to listen to consumers. The goal is to learn what they are saying online about your brand or product, the competition and the condition area. This is a key first step since it will determine what social media strategy you use in your campaign or program. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. There are paid services, for example, that specialize in monitoring the social media landscape and providing detailed reports on conversations about your brand or product category. There are also some highly effective free online tools that are available to anyone wanting to stay informed about a topic.

One free tool we recommend using is Google Alerts. Visit [google.com/alerts](https://www.google.com/alerts). Follow the simple setup instructions (Figure 1.0). The service will automatically email you regular “updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic.” By entering keywords that are relevant to your brand, you'll get valuable insights into how it's being discussed online.

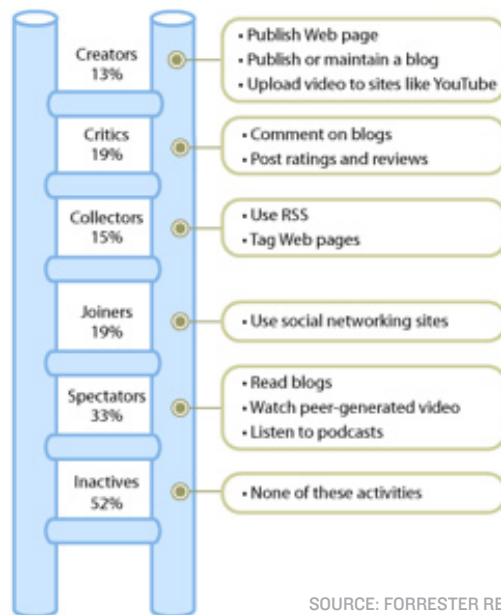
FIGURE 1.0



The image shows a screenshot of the 'Create a Google Alert' form. The form is titled 'Create a Google Alert' and has a light blue header. Below the title, it says 'Enter the topic you wish to monitor.' There are five input fields: 'Search terms' (a text box), 'Type' (a dropdown menu set to 'Comprehensive'), 'How often' (a dropdown menu set to 'once a day'), 'Email length' (a dropdown menu set to 'up to 20 results'), and 'Deliver to' (a dropdown menu set to 'landavidmackenzie@gmail.com'). Below these fields is a 'Create Alert' button. At the bottom of the form, there is a small disclaimer: 'Google will not sell or share your email address.'

Actively listening to your customer base will help you to understand where they fit on the social technographics ladder outlined in Fig. 2.0. The ladder provides a general indication of the types of users online and is subject to change as social media evolves. For example, the percentage of content creators will exceed 13% as people become more comfortable uploading personal content to social networking and other user-content based websites.

FIGURE 2.0 : THE SOCIAL TECHNOGRAPHICS LADDER



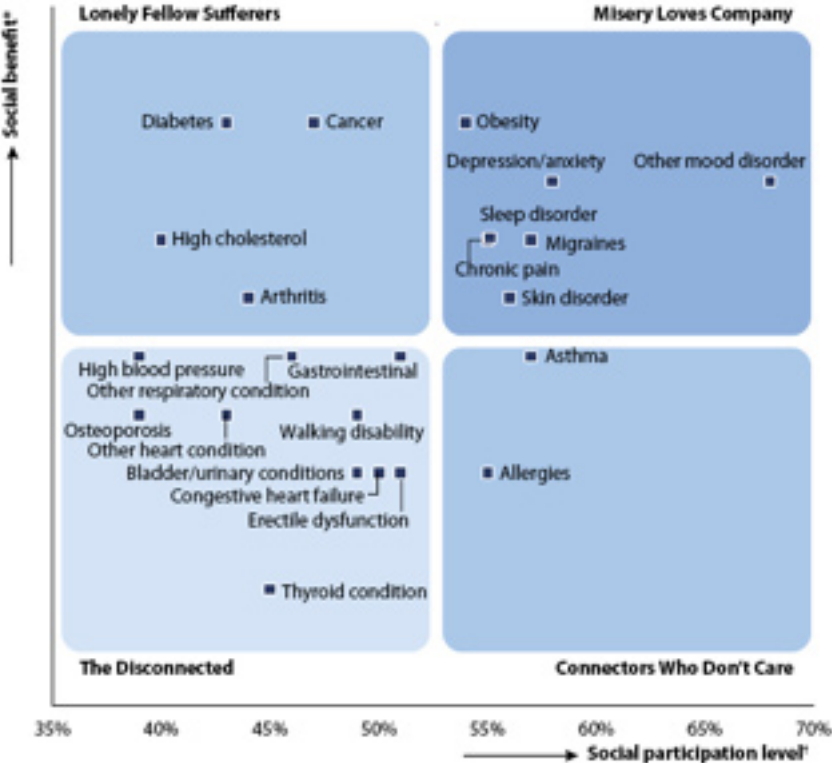
SOURCE: FORRESTER RESEARCH, INC.

The technographics ladder can be used to map segmented personas of your customer base. It will provide a quick snapshot that can help you determine if your customer base is high content creators (those who love to post pictures and tell stories), or if they are spectators (people who prefer to watch passively from the sidelines). In either case, each marketing vertical has specific considerations and anomalies, and this is especially true in Pharma marketing.

Fig. 3.0 provides an additional lens to further assess the best social media approach based on patient condition.

The research below shows that patients with certain conditions rank higher on the social technographics ladder. For example, patients with obesity tend to share more online than do patients suffering from diabetes. This does not imply that diabetes treatment marketers should disqualify using social media as a tool, but instead that the strategy and technology tactics used to engage this group would be different than with patients suffering from obesity.

FIGURE 3.0. ANALYZING SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND BENEFITS OF DISEASE BY QUADRANT



SOURCE: FORRESTER RESEARCH, INC.

NAVIGATING THE REGULATIONS

After you have spent some time listening to your customer base and have gained some useful information, decide whether you should move forward to actively participate in social media. This may be driven by one or more factors. You may find, for example, that the social buzz has generally misrepresented your product, or that there is a growing frustration or general confusion about your brand.

In any case, if the decision is to move forward to establish an open dialogue with those in the social sphere, how do you now engage consumers and become part of the conversation in a way that aligns with the structure of your organization, and using terms that are acceptable to Health Canada and the FDA?

We have extrapolated three key points from the PAAB seminar that fit Health Canada and FDA requirements. These apply whether you have an existing strategy or are working to develop one:

- 1. Determine if your social media strategy is considered “advertising” and thus requires a PAAB review.** To do this, take a look at the seven questions provided by Health Canada’s policy on the **“Distinction Between Advertising and Other Activities.”** If your social media strategy is not considered advertising and is, instead, PR, for example, then there is more flexibility allowed in the communication and marketing tactics used.
- 2. Be prepared to report adverse effects.** Companies are responsible for reporting adverse effects if all four Health Canada adverse events reporting criteria are identifiable (drug, patient, reporter and event). So if you have an active social media campaign or are listening to your consumer base within the social sphere and learn of any adverse effects, it is required that you report this to Health Canada. To put this frequency into context, in a recent Nielsen Online analysis of more than 500 user-generated health messages only one met the FDA’s reporting criteria. Even if you are not actively involved in running or managing a social media campaign, and merely monitoring social media activity regarding your drug, you are required to report adverse effects of any drug.
- 3. Keep the discussion “on-label.”** Any off-label comments made by users of a public network must be monitored and addressed/removed.

TAKING THE PLUNGE

As you can see, pharmaceutical marketing in the social media space is relatively more restrictive than its mass consumer goods counterpart. We do feel, however, that it is an extremely valuable space and quite possible to develop an effective strategy in it. Here's how:

- 1. Create an internal social media policy.** If your organization doesn't have a social media policy in place already, encourage or champion your internal teams (including medical, regulatory and legal) to develop a company-wide social media policy. Your policy should provide clear roles and responsibilities on who is required to report issues and engage or interact with public content. Successful companies engaging in social media have embraced the idea that it's a paradigm shift in the way organizations communicate with the public. All individual employees of your company, from sales to shipping, must understand the rules of engagement with the online public and the consequences if breached. It's a common trend today for companies to limit what their employees say online about their company, jobs, products or brands.
- 2. Adapt your internal policy for external use.** When developing a product- or campaign-specific strategy, most of the legal terms and conditions should be based on your company-wide policy with minor modifications if required. The chart below (Figure 4.0) will help to provide a perspective on the risks and tasks associated with some common social media objectives and strategies.

FIGURE 4.0 SOCIAL STRATEGIES FOR PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES

	Strategy	Objectives	Risks
Risks ↑ Low ↓ High	Listening Platform	Research	Report AEs
	Private Community	Research	Report AEs
	Physician Community	Increase favourable perspective	Same as detailing
	Sharing with limited choices	Increase consumer awareness/interest	limits on participation
	Moderated contests	Increase consumer awareness/interest	Report AEs
	Sponsor a community	Support consumers; improve image	None
	Pre-moderated community	Increase awareness and compliance	Report AEs, screen for off-label use and fair balance
	Condition community	Increase awareness of a condition	Not clear; limited until drug come to market

SOURCE: FORRESTER RESEARCH, INC.

3. **Engage PAAB and/or ASC as soon as you have a draft idea.** As with any new campaign, it's best to have a quick call with PAAB and/or ASC to walk them through a draft concept in order to get their input early. Waiting to do so until you've fully planned and designed the experience may be costly and will take longer during the review period.

4. **Ensure that you have the right resources and training in place to monitor and react to user comments in a timely manner.** This role is key. This person must have a solid knowledge base of the legal conditions and sufficient time to monitor and participate in the dialog.

TO SUM UP

Yesterday, brands told stories. Today, consumers tell stories about your brands. Pharmaceutical companies that work to incorporate social media as part of their long-term marketing vision will start to create the foundations toward earning their seat at the table to participate and listen to these high-value conversations about their brands.

Businesses today leverage the power of social media in its various forms as it applies to marketing strategies, typically based on the nature of the business and its goals. Although the process of pharmaceutical companies integrating with social media is a little more involved, we believe the benefits outweigh the regulatory efforts required to set up social media.

We hope this document has provided insight on how some businesses can approach social media and also shed some light on how pharmaceutical companies in Canada can engage in social media while remaining compliant with Health Canada regulations.

If you would like further information on any of the topics discussed, or assistance developing a social media strategy for your brand, please contact:

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