



iCrossing

PHARMA

**DIGITAL MARKETING FOCUSES
2021**

Trust is integral to pharmaceutical and healthcare industries. When a patient seeks advice from a healthcare professional (HCP) at a doctor's surgery, hospital or pharmacy, they know it's coming from qualified experts; authoritative and honest. And this trust forms the basis of any HCP/patient relationship.

But as pandemic concerns, lockdown and self-isolation have accelerated the shift to digital diagnosis, 'Dr Google' has never been more in demand; putting the quality of online healthcare content and virtual bedside manner under the microscope.

As the dispensers of this information, search engines strive to serve qualified content to prevent misdiagnosis, and in a way that patients and HCPs are comfortable with. To support patients, not only do we need to understand their needs and behaviours first-hand, but how digital platforms interpret and serve these.

Here our digital experts dissect how...

PART 01

PUT YOUR AUDIENCE FIRST



INSIGHT

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, we've seen a number of significant consumer behaviour changes. A major one being increased health awareness, with year-on-year searches for 'cough' almost tripling to 1,467,170 in March 2020, according to Google Keyword Planner.

With greater audience concern around health and wellbeing, the healthcare industry has been quick to adapt; rolling out digital alternatives to GP appointments, online consultations and support. And many consumers are rapidly adjusting. In its 2020 Digital Healthcare Insight Report, Global Web Index (GWI) reported that 56% of consumers surveyed said they would consider a digital health service to consult with their doctor.

In response to COVID-19, we're operating without fixed patterns.

Ipsos

Decision making is becoming more agile

A consumer behaviour change model, published by Ipsos in light of COVID-19, shows how decision making is becoming more agile based on a range of individual and contextual characteristics – from movement restrictions that may prevent us from visiting an HCP, to fluctuating emotions that alter our daily motivation.

It claims that "the spread of and response to COVID-19 has made our physical and social environments increasingly fluid, operating without fixed, solid patterns. Our thinking and planning about how to navigate the world cannot depend as much on automatic behaviours." ¹

Understanding these nuances gives your marketing impact

Now more than ever, we need to understand these instigators to inform how we communicate. We need to pay attention to the context surrounding audiences that will impact their capabilities and motivations when making healthcare decisions – whether that's booking an online GP appointment, a digital health assessment or deciding to quit smoking for good.

By understanding your audience holistically – their lifestyle, online habits and behaviours – your digital marketing will reach the right people in the right places. And this goes for patients as well as HCPs.

¹ Ipsos, [Coronavirus and Behaviour Change](#)

IMPACT



Health is so personal. Striking the right message by considering audience context – whether patient or HCP – can be the difference between a successful or unsuccessful marketing campaign.

“Audience listening and profiling helps shape competitive advantage”, explains client director, Jack Petchey, who leads iCrossing UK’s relationships with Pfizer’s global brands.

“In recent promotional HCP campaigns, for example, we saw the power of moving away from more traditional, clinical messaging to tap into our audience’s emotional drivers. Positioning HCPs as a support-function for patients, to help both parties achieve their goals, boosted performance in an increasingly crowded digital landscape.”



Strategy and insight director, Maria Bain, continues: “This audience research will also help you understand which channels and touch points have the biggest influence on their behaviour. It’ll set you up for media-planning success and help achieve your business goals. Media wastage (targeting a blanket audience across all platforms) will be reduced and your activity streamlined.

“But it’s not just about efficiencies. Yes, an audience-first approach is critical for pharma brands to avoid diluted messaging and weak impact, but it can also protect you from backlash amongst online communities. Mis-targeting can be dangerous in such a heavily-regulated industry.”

Listen to your audience. Not once or twice – continually.

iCrossing’s audience profiling and targeting framework uses consumer research methodologies (digital behaviour and attitude surveys, search and social listening and desktop research) to build data-backed patient and healthcare professional profiles. These profiles map detailed targeting frameworks and recommendations to digital platforms, supporting pharma brand strategies to economically reach and engage valuable audiences.

ACTION

Maria outlines her key considerations when building audience-first plan.

1. Review and revise

Do you really know who your audience is? Where they spend time online, what they're concerned with? What their opportunities, motivation and capabilities are to receive and seek healthcare support? Now's the time to consider whether you truly understand who you're looking to engage. And if you don't, carry out the research and be prepared to revise your approach.

2. Listen and learn

It all starts with listening to audience preferences – not once or twice, but continually. Especially now that opinions and capabilities are changing all the time. This information should help you decide on your strategy, messaging, channel ecosystems and even creative.

3. Adapt and act

Use the data you've gathered and put that strategy into practice. Understand the ever-evolving behaviours of patients. Health, more than ever, is front-of-mind, so provide support, information and relevance in any marketing activity. And continually measure and learn from your results.



PART 02

TAILOR YOUR MESSAGING



INSIGHT

A deep understanding of your audience is vital for developing tailored campaigns that encourage action. But personalisation isn't always straightforward in pharma.

The media industry takes user privacy very seriously, with many data protection laws in place around advertising and regulations regularly updated across our most widely-used search and social platforms. And due to the highly sensitive and personal nature of healthcare advertising, there's an even greater emphasis on compliance and privacy in medical messaging.

34% feel medical content tailored to their needs would be useful.

Men's Health survey ¹

This is a strictly regulated industry

With the power of personalisation comes great responsibility; there's an incredibly fine line to tread when using data to inform health-based content.

Google's guidelines on personalisation stipulate that sensitive interest categories "can't be used by advertisers to target ads to users or promote advertisers' products or services."² This means you cannot create an audience out of people suffering from a condition (or anything specifically related to that condition) and then target people using that audience.

So how does tailored ad messaging work for pharma?

While you can't target ads based on sensitive information or anything relating to a condition, you can in some instances use interest or in-market audiences to provide extra insight where you have approval from your platform (Google/Bing) to do so, which is typically done on a case-by-case basis.

Let's say someone searches "quit smoking". You can use an audience's previous browsing behaviour – if they've looked at bridal sites in the last 48 hours, for example – to get a feel for their 'life moment'. The language in your ad can then be adapted, speaking to how the condition may impact their day-to-day life.

Stop Smoking With Help | For You & Your Loved One

www.website.co.uk/Stop-Smoking

Give The Two Of You A Better Quality Of Life. Find Out How You Can Quit With Help Today!

In this instance, you're tailoring your copy's context, tone and feel to help it resonate with the target consumer.

And it's the same when marketing to healthcare professionals; it's important to understand their motivation and challenges when supporting their patients. You don't just want to know the audience size, their age and how long they've worked as a GP, but why they're visiting a certain conference, for example, together with their personal aspirations, to help your ads resonate.

² Google, Advertising Policies Help

IMPACT



“According to Salesforce research, 84% of consumers say being treated like a person, not a number, is very important to winning their business” head of paid media Lottie Namakando explains, “and Econsultancy found that 80% of companies report seeing an uplift since implementing personalisation.” ³

But how does this translate in the context of medical messaging? As part of the Hearst family, we hosted an online survey across two of the global media company’s health platforms to get a feel for user sentiment. Out of 2,198 Men’s Health readers surveyed, the majority reported that they felt positive or neutral towards medical advertising being tailored to their needs. Some 34% said that this would be useful, while 38% remained neutral. In contrast, 28% said that they’d not want to receive tailored medical content or ads at all. This split was mirrored in Women’s Health reader responses to the same

question (at 34%, 39% and 27% respectively), although the total number of respondents was lower at 357. ⁱ

“Because of regulation challenges in the pharma industry, the strategic use of audience research and a deep understanding of behaviour at a level that doesn’t manipulate sensitive healthcare information is vital to drive results for brands” adds Jack.

At iCrossing, our ABC approach helps keep planning grounded in audience need and brand goals:

A = Audience

Understand your audience.

B = Brand

Activate your brand – use your brand’s purpose and goal to produce powerful customer experiences with tailored media communication, activation and planning.

C = Context

Drive the context – ensure that the decisions you make are relevant; considering where your audience are, what they’re doing and what they’re looking for.

**Think beyond what Google permits.
Understand what people want.**


“This framework is where personalisation comes to life” explains Lottie.

“Our studies across Pfizer brands have shown the impact of tailored versus broader, more generic messaging on pharma ad performance, with an increase in CTR of up to 31% and up to 57% increase in conversion rate when using tailored ad copy.

“The key? Producing ads that not only tell the audience that we have what they’re looking for, but doing this in a style, tone and context that really resonates with them.”

³ Forbes, 50 Stats Showing the Power of Personalization

ACTION



To get tailored messaging right in pharma, you need more than just top-line insights. You need to really understand your audience in as much detail as possible, enabling you to define the perfect context for your brand's ad content and positioning.

1. Start by thinking about what's possible

Rules and regulations will vary, so first thing's first, confirm what's permitted for your specific account and brand, reviewing the targeting options available with your media partners.

With Google, for example, while you can't create an audience of people suffering from a condition, it's possible in some instances to overlay audiences that Google creates, which are based on general interests such as shopping or sport. This added context can help create ad copy that really resonates with the audience, by speaking to their interests.



2. Understand what people want

It's important to think beyond what Google permits, questioning whether the level of personalisation you use would sit comfortably with the consumer.

Research what your existing consumers want from a personalisation perspective, then do the same for prospective audiences.

3. Get started slowly

Take your learnings from the above and combine them with your audience-first research to create an audience framework and tailored-message testing plan. It'll help you explore what types of personalisation work well with your different audience groups.



PART 03

CREATE CONTENT WITH PURPOSE



INSIGHT

Recent pharma industry research forecasts that within six years there will be a 70% increase in medical brands spending over 20% of their marketing budget on digital channels. ⁴



11% - the percentage of pharma or biotech marketers with a content strategy that meets their needs.

Accenture

An increased demand for digital

This builds on findings that suggest digital advancements have changed the role of medical representatives, who are now seen more as “conduits for personalised content which can be shared on demand”. In fact, a comparison of trends between 2015 and 2018 shows a steady increase in digital channel preference among HCPs – perhaps due to a greater administrative burden and lack of time to meet representatives face-to-face. ⁵

And as patients are also conducting more research at home – with searches for ‘cold symptoms’, for example, up 191% year-on-year (September 2019-2020, source: Google Keyword Planner) – it’s crucial for pharma brands to be visible. Creating content that answers key questions for HCPs and patients helps earn that place in the initial consideration set.

Serving this increasing demand for digital, 78% of marketers in pharma and biotech say their organisation is producing a moderate to enormous amount of digital content and assets. Though only 11% report they have a clearly documented content strategy that meets their current and future needs, allowing them to measure the effectiveness of their efforts. ⁶

⁴ Indegene, *The Digital Savvy Pharma Marketer 2020*

⁵ Indegene, *The Digital Savvy HCP Survey Top Trends 2019*

⁶ Accenture, *The State of Content Survey for Life Sciences*

IMPACT



“This gulf between investment and value is clear in the discrepancy between marketer and audience channel preference” says head of content, Jo-ann Fortune. In a recent industry report, only one choice in the top three (Key Opinion Leader webinars) was aligned across the two groups:

HCPs:

Online journals, websites and KOL webinars.

Pharma Marketers:

KOL webinars, social apps and e-Detailing. ⁷

Content marketing is a long-term game; meaningful measurement can take a while.

“This lack of content marketing strategy – communicating in the most effective way to meet business objectives – can result in wasted time and money.

“The key to maximising pharma content effectiveness is to first understand what HCPs and patients are looking for and how digital competition is already serving them. By deconstructing this, you find what it will take to increase visibility and can then weigh up investment against expected results.

“But to turn that visibility into value, you also need to define how you classify effectiveness. What do you want the audience to do at each stage of their journey and how does this ladder up to your ultimate business goals?”



ACTION

Take stock of your [content strategy toolkit](#) to make sure everyone involved in content planning has the direction they need.

1. Find your purpose

Before you detail the specifics of what content to create and how, define your goals, KPIs and measurement framework. Then fix on topics, formats and channels by understanding need and how existing content currently meets this:

- People**
 Run stakeholder interviews around business needs, resource and capabilities, and profile your audiences by combining internal insights with search and social listening analysis.
- Platforms**
 Take stock of what you already have with content audits and analyse top-performing competitor content.

2. Look for long-term value

Content marketing is a long-term game – influencing decision-making processes that can span months and years. And as such meaningful measurement can take a while.

Beyond the initial vanity metrics of visibility and traffic, this might include analysis of user journeys, buying patterns and customer relationship management databases. But carefully planned and nurtured, content can deliver incremental returns to both start and strengthen audience relationships.



PART 04

OBSESS OVER PAGE QUALITY



INSIGHT

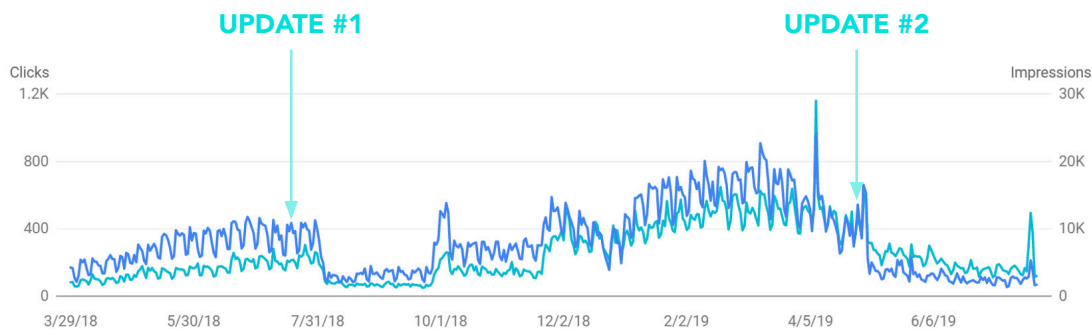
In recent years, Google has been 'diagnosing' more and more health concerns – over 100 million in Britain over a 12-month period, according to research by Benenden Health. ⁸ And more so in the current COVID climate, as NHS digital data reported GP appointments down 27% year-on-year in early 2020. ⁹

The Oxford English Dictionary even added the word 'cyberchondriac' to its listings, describing "a person who (obsessively) researches health information on the internet".

The search engine has often come under fire for prioritising false information, and accusations of misdiagnosis drove it to act. Enter – the medic update.

In August 2018, Google made an important change to its core ranking algorithm, applying strict scrutiny to any page that could impact a person's happiness, health, financial stability or safety. It calls these 'your money or your life' (YMYL) pages.

Around this time, Google also revised its Search Quality Evaluator (SQE) Guidelines – a publicly available document outlining the criteria used by manual reviewers when assessing webpage quality. These updates put a greater focus on a site's expertise, authority and trust (E-A-T), and as a result, many low-quality medical websites saw huge drops in search traffic.



E-A-T is vital in the pharma industry

So, clearly, this industry's content is at risk, because when it comes to health, out of date or untrustworthy content could negatively impact YMYL. This is especially true of content that might lead to self-diagnosis or medical decisions: pages covering symptoms and treatments, for example.

100 million – the number of health concerns Google diagnosed in a year.

Benenden Health

⁸ Benenden Health, Dr Google Will See You Now

⁹ Pulse, GP Appointments in April Down by 27% Compared to Last Year

IMPACT



“The healthcare industry is constantly developing, so your content needs to move with it” explains our content director, Sam Colebrook. “Stagnant content can quickly become irrelevant and seen as untrustworthy, which can do a lot of harm to both users and your site; affecting visibility, traffic, brand reputation and, in turn, customer loyalty.”

The healthcare industry is constantly developing. Your content needs to move with it.

Recent healthcare site audits conducted across 11 sites and markets by iCrossing UK identified the quality of main content (its clarity, accuracy, breadth and depth) as a major cause of poor site performance within the analysed pharma competitor set. Findings also highlighted how pharma brands have responded to the medic update, with E-A-T now a clear priority for many sites, seen through named expert authors and trusted source references.

Further highlighting the importance of search engine visibility for pharma brands, in a second Hearst platform survey that asked “Which are you most likely to consult for trustworthy information and advice?”, 62% of Men’s Health survey respondents claimed they would look to Google or other search engines. Some 22% said they’d seek information directly from a specific NHS or healthcare charity website, and with these sites often taking the top spots in search, it’s crucial to understand what’s already being covered in this content, as well as how, when planning to improve the visibility and value of your own.

Highlighting the importance of real-life stories – or ‘everyday expertise’ as Google calls it – in building trust, 11% of respondents said they would look to online forums and 5% to social media. Again, this percentage split was similar in a smaller pool of respondents from Women’s Health at 58%, 30%, 6% and 6% respectively. ⁱⁱ

Obsess over content quality in the same way Google does and you’ve got a much greater chance of gaining visibility and building trust.



ACTION

While not all pharma content is classed as YMYL, it's important to review your catalogue and identify the pages that are, performing a qualitative audit within three key pillars: reputation, quality of main content and E-A-T.

1. Reputation

What is the external perception of your brand or website? If it doesn't have a positive presence outside of your own site and social channels, you may want to look into promotion.

Negative external reviews or press coverage is a big no-no for Google, so action here requires reputation management versus more straightforward changes to your website.

2. Quality of the main content

When reviewing pharma content – especially YMYL pages – assess the accuracy, comprehensiveness and clarity against the page's purpose. Ask yourself: is the content accurate? Have you demonstrated this? Have you linked to a trusted source? Is it up to date?

Look at every element of the page and ask whether it helps or hinders clarity. Is the title ambiguous? Is the language complex and full of medical terminology? Is the information hidden behind a click-to-expand?

3. E-A-T

Expertise, authority and trust can overlap with the above, but must be assessed separately. Here are some questions to ask when auditing your content:

Expertise

Is your author an expert, and if so, have you demonstrated their expertise with an author bio? If not, have you got examples of first-hand experiences? Once again (highlighting the importance of this step), consider the comprehensiveness of the content for the subject matter.

Authority

Have you demonstrated your author's qualifications? Is your content a citable source? Think: would others link to this piece. Then think about your site as a whole. Does it show authority? Does it have signposted affiliation with regulatory bodies (like the European Medicines Agency), for example?

Trust

Is your author qualified and relevant in this field? Is the content clear, current and unambiguous? Be sure to show all of that with date stamps and links to trusted sources. A truly trustworthy site would have a thorough 'about' page and easy-to-find contact information, leaving no questions unanswered.



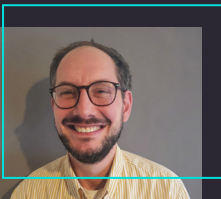
MEET YOUR iCROSSING PHARMA PROS



Maria Bain

Strategy and insight director

Maria has built digital strategies for the likes of GSK, Boehringer Ingelheim and Pfizer. Her team specialises in human-first digital planning and designs propriety consumer trends and insights reports to ensure audiences are at the heart of everything we do.



Sam Colebrook

Content director

Sam has over six years' experience working with digital pharma content; leading enterprise patient and HCP projects for Pfizer and developing quality evaluation processes specifically for healthcare content.



Jo-ann Fortune

Head of content

Jo has worked in digital content for more than a decade, most recently on projects evaluating page quality and delivering onsite content recommendations for Pfizer. Her team of strategists and editors work closely with SEO and UX experts to drive both visibility and value for our clients.



Lottie Namakando

Head of paid media

Lottie has a background in research and analysis and over eight years' experience in paid media; working with pharma brands including Pfizer, Nature's Best and Zava. Her team drives high-performance paid media campaigns with audience-first creative across PPC, Paid Social, Display and Video.



Jack Petchey

Client director

Specialising in digital transformation, Jack is our pharma expert and leads our approach to healthcare at iCrossing together with our global work with Pfizer, working with brands across multiple markets while supporting their Global Digital Marketing team. Over recent years the role has seen him travel the world to train teams in Paid Media, Social and the importance of deep audience understanding.

For your brand's digital diagnosis,
get in touch at results@icrossing.co.uk



iCrossing

icrossing.com/uk

30 Panton Street
London
SW1Y 4AJ

Tramshed Tech
Pendyris Street
Cardiff
CF11 6BH

13 Black Lion Street
Brighton
BN1 1ND

Notes

i Data gathered through an online survey hosted across Hearst platforms in the UK. Fieldwork undertaken between 25 August – 1 September 2020. Total sample size of Men's Health survey respondents answering 'How do you feel about medical advertising being tailored to your needs?' was 2,198. Number of Women's Health respondents to the same question was 357.

ii Data gathered through an online survey hosted across Hearst platforms in the UK. Fieldwork undertaken between 14 – 21 December 2020. Total sample size of Men's Health survey respondents answering 'Which are you most likely to consult for trustworthy information and advice?' was 510. Number of Women's Health respondents to the same question was 72.