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FOR GLOBAL BUSINESS AND MARKETING LEADERS

Pharmaceutical Executive

A Billion Brochures

Marketers can now customize messages down to the word.

In principle, everybody understands that it makes sense to approach consumers with highly targeted messages that are customized to an individual's age, state of health, attitude toward medicine, hopes, fears, income, education, and many other variables. But how does a company create hundreds of thousands—or even more—distinct messages? And how does it match them up with the right consumer?

An interesting and promising solution to that problem can be found on the Internet, in sites supporting Baxter's Advate (recombinant antihemophilic factor) and GlaxoSmithKline's NiQuitin CQ nicotine replacement patches. There are differences between the sites, but the underlying strategy is the same. Potential customers visit the web page and fill out questionnaires about themselves. A computer then uses their answers to create a custom booklet that is delivered either over the Internet or by standard mail. The degree of customization is remarkable: The NiQuitin program can deliver approximately a billion different versions of the basic document, taking into consideration such factors as patient motivation, medical history, concern about side effects, and even hobbies.

The combination of web-based questionnaire and digitally printed documents seems likely to play an important

role in the next generation of highly targeted communications. So *Pharm Exec* got in touch with the vendor behind both the Baxter and GSK site—HealthMedia of Ann Arbor, Michigan—to hear more about the science and technology underlying those innovative pharma programs.

Targeted Psychographics

The nuts and bolts of HealthMedia's programs come from studies conducted

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by the company's founder Victor Strecher, PhD, at the University of North Carolina's department of health education and health behavior and at the University of Michigan's health media research lab. There, Strecher found that by giving patients information specifically designed for them, rather than generic information, it was possible to change their behavior.

In town for CBI's CRM conference, Ted Dacko, president and CEO of HealthMedia, says, though it may seem intuitive, many pharma companies still

don't understand how tailored communications can motivate patients. “It's easier to motivate an individual rather than a market,” says Dacko. “Your mind may wander during a lecture with a large audience. Now if that same individual focuses their talk to you directly, the experience will be far more interesting and relative. Companies can apply that to patient information, and consumers will take the time to study materials tailored to them that they would otherwise throw away.”

HealthMedia uses a combination of healthcare technology and behavioral science to design “action plans” that give patients tips, advice, and strategies to obtain a healthcare “goal.” In essence, the action plans are the front end of a highly sophisticated customer relationship management program that can segment at the individual level so that each fragment of every sentence in the plan is customized and corresponds to how patients answer a constellation of questions.

To that end, the company must be meticulous about designing the questionnaire. “The content group, which consists of health professionals, does extensive market research on a disease area before constructing the questionnaire,” says Dacko. “We use that information to help us write the questions. We also include market research questions that pharma companies want answered.”

To obtain a comprehensive overview, HealthMedia asks patients about:

- » their motivation and self-confidence to manage health conditions
- » treatment compliance
- » barriers such as cost and side effects
- » stress, depression, and lifestyle issues



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- » social support availability
- » relationship with their physician
- » hobbies, interests, and employment status.

It takes consumers about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Most

tion. After researching the market, the company's content group writes "rules" that dictate what messages each type of patient receives. Then, the technology team turns those rules into computer code that runs the tailoring technology

care professional."


Dacko notes that graphic images are an important aspect. In addition to demographics such as age, race, and gender, the company can incorporate visuals of the patients' hobbies to increase the interest level.

Product managers may ask, with so many possible versions, how do the materials get through pharma's medical and regulatory departments? "It can be a very long and painful process," Dacko says, but the company shows the sourcing for all information used and has a methodology that illustrates many potential combinations of information.

Turning Results

The action plans represent an effective new approach to disease management, and companies seem happy with the results. Baxter's "Passport for Life" program won two eHealthcare Leadership Awards for Best Care/Disease Management Site and Best Interactive Site.

But Dacko says that the only real way to prove the program's effectiveness is to put it through randomized clinical trials—and it has. In a study of 3,971 smokers who tried to quit using the NiQuitin CQ 21 mg patch, participants were assigned either HealthMedia's tailored "Committed Quitters Stop Smoking Plan" or untailored support. Of those who received the action plan, more than half (55 percent) were able to sustain 10 weeks of continuous abstinence from smoking compared with 43 percent in the control group—a 28 percent increase in effectiveness.

Additional clinical trial results from other pharma and managed care companies' programs will be published in medical journals in coming months. 



Common Interests "A back-care program we're rolling out ties the hobby theme throughout the guide," says Ted Dacko, president and CEO of HealthMedia. "I'm an avid cyclist. So the program may say, 'What happens if your back goes out? You won't be able to go bicycling.'"

companies post the program assessments on product websites, but others insert them into product packaging, or make them available through a call center. In the case of Baxter, patients can obtain the questionnaires at hemophilia treatment centers. There are some differences between the online and print programs, says Dacko, but they are about 80–90 percent similar. Distributing online programs allows features such as streaming media and audio. Offline programs cost more because the action plans must be printed and mailed.

If pharma companies already know the messages they want to disseminate to patients, HealthMedia spends its time figuring out the most effective context in which to package that informa-

program, which produces the customized targeted plan.

"Tailoring technology allows us to get down to the sentence fragment level, so we're literally piecing words together and forming sentences to build individual programs," says Dacko. "We deliver a plan that says, 'Heart disease is important, particularly given your family history of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, and your personal history due to the fact that you're a smoker, you're already overweight, and you have some angina.' The words in that sentence will change based on the person's information. And that's just one sentence in the typical 16–24 pages of tailored material we deliver. But at the end of the day, that plan has to read like it was a logical personal program written by a health-

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