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PHARMA MARKETING: PATIENT ENGAGEMENT AT THE CENTER OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

WITHIN AN INCREASINGLY MULTICHANNEL AND CUSTOMIZED HEALTHCARE MARKETING CONTEXT, PATIENT ENGAGEMENT IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT ON WHICH AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY CAN BE BUILT. IN THIS SETTING, SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL LISTENING ARE KEY TOOLS FOR PHARMA COMPANIES.

Patient engagement is one of the main elements of the new healthcare marketing strategies. In an increasingly consumerized health sector, patient involvement plays an important role as the logical outcome of a multi-channel and personalized approach.

The global patient engagement solutions market is estimated to reach over \$22 million by 2027, with a compound annual growth rate of over 10% between 2020 and 2027 (source [MarketWatch](#)).

A recent survey by the multinational BCG, conducted in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, China and Japan, collected the opinions of patients, health professionals and advocacy associations to reconstruct their **expectations towards pharmaceutical companies**: the survey resulted in the request for a more decisive commitment in order to move towards greater patient involvement. Moreover, 50% of the interviewed doctors said that, under the same conditions, they were more inclined to prescribe drugs from a pharmaceutical company that they perceived as more [patient-centered](#).

The future of patient engagement

Pharmaceutical companies are beginning to **acknowledge the new power of patients** and endeavour to place patient engagement more and more at the center of their business models. Patients, just like consumers in general, are not all the same and for this reason their involvement also represents a **complex challenge to be faced by companies and marketers**.

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In the last few years, patients have become more aware and are ready to play an active role in treatment paths. The key to interpreting these new needs is to combine clinical effectiveness with the construction of a satisfactory experience for the patient, who is intercepted and involved in the various touchpoints that make up the [customer journey](#).^[SB(O1)]

Millennials have come to represent a substantial market share and accordingly an essential element of any communication strategy. A recent [Salesforce](#) report on **digital transformation in healthcare** shows how millennials and Z Generation share very high standards as regards personalization and engagement in healthcare, and consequently underlines the need to develop innovative paths so as to meet their expectations. While on the one hand Millennials are more than favorable to 'fast' and immediate solutions - integrated with their own lifestyle- when it comes to communication, on the other hand few of them believe that their expectations have been met in this sense.

Even when it comes to healthcare, millennials have a closer relationship with technology. They are actually at the forefront when it comes to adopting new tools. **From social networks to wearable devices and telemedicine**, they expect companies, operators and health systems to be ready, in turn, to integrate technologies and tools that are always new to encourage **real, fast and personalized involvement**. Virtual, but still high-quality.

Challenges and opportunities: social media are once again central

It is essential to be perceived as reliable, capable of generating user trust and build a constructive relationship with the patient based on that trust. **In this context, content marketing and social media remain crucial assets** to encounter different types of audiences.

Social media listening can provide valuable information regarding patients, allowing companies to understand their needs and then evaluating their experience by applying an analysis that can also find ways to improve it.

Proactive listening will allow companies to **make the most of these insights also to monitor their brand reputation**, gaining a useful picture of the context in which they operate that also implies keeping an eye on the competition.

Pharmas can guide social conversations and should do so, thus increasing the level of their brand quality awareness while offering accurate and reliable information that will generate value for the patient. In this scenario, interaction and involvement are essential precisely because the relationship between healthcare users and companies is evolving and becoming less and less one-way.

Polk&Union alongside Pharma companies in the race for digital transformation

For over 10 years **Polk&Union**, an Italian-American digital communication agency specializing in integrated marketing, has been working alongside the main players in the health sector. In 2021 it [launched the Polk&Union Health division dedicated to the Healthcare and Pharma sector](#).^[SB(O1)]

Over the years it has developed innovative creative communication projects (chatbot, consultancy for digital labs, institutional and branding campaigns, consumer positioning, social content, content strategy for B2B and B2C audiences, medical writing, online monitoring) with work teams based in Italy, New York, Dubai and India.

Polk&Union sponsor of the AboutPharma Digital Awards 2021

Important international players have relied on Polk&Union to build their **digital transformation path in the Pharma world**.

Several digital projects developed by the agency have been presented in past editions of the **AboutPharma Digital Awards**, an observatory that has become a reference point for the sector. This year Polk&Union, with its Health division, is an **event sponsor**.

«We are proud of this participation. Being among the sponsors of the AboutPharma Digital Awards once again confirms our presence as a reference partner in digital healthcare. Our approach to communication in the Pharma sector is acknowledged as original and effective in a highly regulated context, which requires professionalism and responsibility. The launch of the Health Division, which took place in September 2021, capitalizes on our ten years' experience alongside national and international clients in the Healthcare and Pharma sector, together with the specific know-how of our certified professionals», commented Polk&Union Co-Founder & Managing Partner **Alessia Sersanti**.

Information about Polk&Union

Polk&Union Digital Communication Agency was born in San Francisco, California, in 2007 and was named after the crossroads of Polk and Union streets, where its first head office was located. Innovation and internationality are Polk&Union's distinctive traits. With the cross-cultural mindset that is the backbone of its DNA, and the know-how it acquired in the United States – first in San Francisco and then from 2019 in Seattle – in 2011 Polk&Union landed in Rome, Italy, where the agency became an established reference point within the Italian market, supporting companies, organizations and associations in 360-degree digital communications within the B2B and B2C sector. Its main services include: Integrated Marketing Communication, Content, Digital Media and Digital Technology, together with those specific to the Polk&Union Health division for the Healthcare & Pharma.

Press Release

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