



Schwartz Communications

THE PREMIER PR AGENCY FOR TECHNOLOGY & HEALTHCARE

Schwartz PRx Brief: The Changing Media Landscape

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SCHWARTZ PRX BRIEF: THE CHANGING MEDIA LANDSCAPE

What it Means for Healthcare Companies and How to Make the Most of It

Let's face it – it's no secret that no industry has suffered or changed more during the economic downturn than the media industry. And the changes continue unabated. With almost 300 newspapers folding last year (300!), long gone are the days of hearing the comforting thwack of the daily paper delivered to your doorstep and it being the primary source of your daily news. With print newspapers and thinning magazines sadly but almost inevitably going the way of the dinosaur and content increasingly only being available digitally, it's a different media world today.

For the medical device or biopharma company trying diligently to “get their message” out to investors, clinicians, advocacy groups, patients, partners and industry observers, the change in the media environment has affected entire communications strategies.

In some small way, the healthcare sector is a tad more immune to the changes in the media than others. This is largely because it's “milestone” driven and news of FDA actions, the publication of important scientific data and clinical trial results for example, are always relevant and important fodder for the media. They have a responsibility to cover it. But at the same time, the sheer amount of clutter and white noise emanating from tiny companies to big pharma is increasing while the media that is left to digest, understand and report on it is shrinking at a rapid pace. So for most healthcare companies, gaining an appropriate level of mindshare continues to be a daily and important struggle.

Healthcare public relations executives at our agency recently hosted a panel of leading healthcare journalists to get an accurate and honest sense for what's really going on in newsrooms today when it comes to the state of healthcare reporting.

Here are the top-line takeaways—the good, the bad and the ugly—of what to expect in 2010.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION: HELP! I NEED A TV CAMERA, A COMPUTER, PEN AND PAPER – ANYTHING!

Limited resources have severely impacted how journalists and producers are preparing stories. There are fewer reporters at each publication and broadcast outlets and the ones who are left standing are covering multiple beats. With little or no time available for background meetings or “get to know you” briefings, journalists today are incredibly selective in who they speak with and how many interviews they conduct, while at the same time they are under constant stress to produce stories. On the flip side, if you are lucky enough to land some face or phone time with a key journalist, you are now more likely than ever before to potentially score some major ink. Reporters can’t afford to waste valuable interview time and are more likely to utilize your company and products as a resource. However, it is best to tread carefully. Rely on your healthcare PR professional to guide you on when to push and when to reel back. The last thing you want to do is aggravate or alienate an important reporter at a key, influential media outlet for your target audience especially when their numbers are diminishing.

EXPERT COMMENTARY: I NEED A SOURCE AND I NEED IT YESTERDAY

Journalists are craving experts to opine on the record about new drugs, devices and clinical perspectives. The ideal resources are CEOs of companies and senior executives who can speak simply, eloquently and passionately about the issues. And, obviously well-credentialed clinicians who can speak to the patient and outcome perspective are critical. Reachability is key to the ideal spokesperson as well as full disclosure up-front. Reporters are more skeptical than ever and they want to know your agenda. They are all increasingly concerned about delivering false promises, false hopes and hyping new treatments/solutions for conditions. At all turns, they don’t want to be viewed as a shill for a new device or drug and nothing will turnoff a journalist faster than just calling them about a technology without background on the unmet clinical need and how the technology is truly a game changer for patients and physicians. And nothing appeals more to healthcare journalists that being able to put a human face on your story by supplying a real patient experience coupled with an expert clinical source.

As a result, healthcare reporters do not want to be on the frontlines doling out hype. Reporters still rely on a select handful of go to healthcare PR professionals to provide them with honest, valid resources who can back up what they are talking about and be available for commentary. Do not expect to land any ink or air time if you call a journalist for the very first time and tell them why they have to report today on your clinical trial results. You have to invest the time—either yourself or through your healthcare PR advisor—to develop these relationships. The best healthcare PR pros already have them. They won’t guarantee you a story—but they will guarantee you access.



“People make the story. Pitch the people in the company, not just the company.”

Healthcare Business Reporter

HEALTHCARE REFORM: ENOUGH ALREADY!

Interestingly enough, the journalists we spoke to have more or less had it with healthcare reform. Several expressed that it's just so difficult to see beyond healthcare reform and complicated unknowns have seeped into reporting and taken on a life of their own. They are tasked to write about healthcare reform but are quite darn sick of it already and the special election results in Massachusetts will only add fuel to the healthcare reform fire. Journalists, quite frankly, would much rather be writing more medical human interest stories that appeal to their own personal passions and, in their minds, to their respective readership. As mentioned, there is no replacement for putting a patient face on your story.

SOCIAL MEDIA: SHOW ME THE CONTENT

Social media is a really interesting phenomenon. While it has taken the world by storm—if you don't have a Twitter handle you are probably feeling like you missed the boat—it can be quite polarizing. The reporters we spoke with actually have yet to embrace the various social media tools in their own personal reporting yet recognize the tremendous force and prowess it has on driving eyeballs to their respective news organizations. Media outlets are widely utilizing Twitter, Facebook, blogs and the like with the goal to draw in new readers and advertise or promote content. These organizations are essentially using social media channels as news feeds to drive additional readers and some journalists feel that it's working and working quite well. Expect to see more journalists tweeting about their stories or looking for leads in the coming year.

While the FDA is beginning to make inroads on what will and won't be acceptable for drug and medical device companies as it pertains to social media, any sort of guidelines or rulings are still a long time coming. Healthcare companies should work with their Legal and Regulatory departments to come up with a plan on their own social media guidelines and start to dip their feet into the social media pool.

TIMES (CO.) ARE A CHANGING FOR ONLINE CONTENT IN 2011

With The New York Times Co. announcing that it will charge for online content at the Web site of its flagship publication, *The New York Times*, in 2011, expect others to follow suit. What does this mean for you? Well, that great placement that appears online now has the chance to reach fewer readers. With a behemoth like *The New York Times* starting the trend, it wouldn't be surprising if others follow suit.

VIDEO IS HOT, HOT, HOT...

...and healthcare journalists couldn't agree more. Videos bring a story to life and have proven to be incredibly effective in driving additional traffic back to Web sites. Consider filming a testimonial from physicians/patients or polling industry leaders and/or your own executives for short, catchy sound bites that can be offered to news outlets to supplement a story. Also, put it in on YouTube to help it go viral. Use a video to differentiate your story and provide a priority news outlet with a unique take on a story you are offering up.



"Where the rubber meets the road is whether patients' lives are improved. I want to do that story."

HealthcareBusiness Reporter

What makes a good interview?

- Credibility:** Disclose conflict of interests up front
- Experience:** CEOs, senior executives, those in the industry for 20+ years
- Passion:** Excitement about science and helping others
- Relevancy:** Unique insights
- Personality:** Speak in short, easily understood sound bites

ARE WE BACK TO BASICS?

One thing is for certain: the media industry remains fluid. Media outlets continue to struggle with determining the value of the physical daily or weekly paper or magazine while at the same time profiting on breaking news. Several reporters contend that in a lot of ways we are headed back to the “we work for a newspaper” mentality. The right formula for success hasn’t necessarily been established but no one is giving up hope that the print paper, or magazine, is dead forever. We don’t necessarily agree that it’s back to basics – social media is here and it’s here to stay—but hopefully it will be a combination of the two. Those who shy away from engaging in any aspect of social media monitoring or participation will be left in the dust. For one, reporters readily agree, they hate getting scooped. If they think a competitive media outlet is going to jump on a story, they will skip print and go straight to online. At the end of the day, it’s about savvy healthcare communications. Brevity is key, honesty is paramount and above all, think passionately and creatively. That’s what journalists are striving to do and healthcare companies should do the same.

ABOUT SCHWARTZ COMMUNICATIONS’ HEALTHCARE PRACTICE GROUP

The award-winning medical and healthcare practice of Schwartz Communications is structured to meet the demanding and always evolving communications needs of medical device, biotech, pharmaceutical and biopharma companies, as well as healthcare providers and the service companies that work with medical sector institutions.

We will help you develop, refine and communicate your corporate and product messages to your most critical constituencies. Physicians. Patients. Payors. Potential partners. Investors. Critical advocacy groups. Thought leaders. Our aggressive style of healthcare public relations, including traditional and social media, catapults our clients through the reams of competitive clutter that permeate the market today.

The senior staff of the agency’s medical public relations practice bring decades of experience and have headed some of the most visible and successful healthcare public relations campaigns in recent memory.

We would love to hear from you. If you’d like to comment, run something by us, or are interested in working together, please feel free to write us at healthcare@schwartz-pr.com.

HEADQUARTERS

Schwartz Communications, Inc.
230 Third Avenue
Waltham, MA 02451
USA
781 684.0770 P
781 684.6500 F

SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE

Schwartz Communications, Inc.
595 Market Street
Suite 2000
San Francisco, CA 94105
415-512-0770 P
415-882-5787 F

LONDON OFFICE

Schwartz Communications UK
Limited
2 Sheen Rd
Richmond
Surrey TW9 1AE
+44 (0)20 8973 2630 P
+44 (0)20 8973 2631 F

STOCKHOLM OFFICE

Schwartz Communications AB
Blasieholmsgatan 5
11148 Stockholm, SWEDEN
+46 (0)8 599 085 00 P
+46 (0)8 599 085 01 F

