



Looking Back on SXSW and SXSH

*What Can Healthcare Take Away From the Nation's
Largest Digital Gathering?*

March 2010

www.HealthEd.com

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Brad Aufderheide, George Fencl, Jeff Greene, and Abel Rajan of HealthEd's Strategic Services department attended the 2010 South by Southwest® (SXSW) Interactive Festival and the inaugural Social Health conference, to bring back perspective and opportunities in the fast-changing space of digital healthcare. The following document represents their observations and learnings for HealthEd clients and partners.

Background

In 2010, Austin, TX, hosted what in reality were 2 different conferences. The well-established SXSW Interactive Festival, part of a 2-week gathering of digital, music, and film insiders, shared the spotlight with a friendly rival: the inaugural Social Health (SXSH) 2010 conference. As the new arrival, SXSH carved out territory by focusing more narrowly than SXSW on the power of online communities and emerging digital tools to change consumer *health* behavior. It was the brainchild of 4 healthcare marketers who saw a growing interest by pharma, providers, and insurance companies in the same topics commonly probed at SXSW.

One day before SXSW kicked off, about 80 healthcare communicators met at the offices of the Texas Hospital Association. There, speakers, including Marc Monseau, Director of Corporate and Media Relations at Johnson & Johnson, and Doug Ulman, 3-time cancer survivor and president and CEO of the Lance Armstrong Foundation, which runs the LIVESTRONG.com health community, shared stories of how new media channels are engaging patients in 2010. Ulman's Twitter account, for example, has more than 1 million followers, and the Web site has seen visitorship grow by 294 times in the past 2 years. Videos on the J&J YouTube channel have been viewed more than 1.6 million times since 2008.

One theme that emerged from both conferences was uncanny: Few innovators had clear direction before embarking on programs that were ultimately successful. Ulman admitted he had no idea what Twitter was before an associate downloaded it onto his Blackberry, so he and his staff devised some experimental pilots to determine if the tool might be useful for growing the community. Today Twitter is the #1 traffic driver to LIVESTRONG.com.

It is through trial and error, and by learning from peers, that marketers in every industry are discovering techniques to effectively adopt new communications channels. As a strategic partner to clients, HealthEd encourages them to seek opportunities to integrate new channels into the patient communications mix. Below are highlights from the 2 conferences that may offer some compelling starting points for pharma companies and others committed to educating patients through emerging media.

Key Learnings

Model Behavior-Change Communities: WebMD is the most-visited healthcare site on the Web, yet sites like LIVESTRONG, Twit2Fit, and Get Up and Move are the ones showing how community and social interaction are potentially more effective techniques when it comes to actually changing consumer health behaviors. These venues offer opportunities to learn and model successful techniques that our own clients might adapt.

- At **LIVESTRONG**, thousands of consumers sign up to “dare” each other to follow through on small health behavior changes, such as drinking 8 glasses of water daily. Members who register (for free) on the site can send “dares” to friends and discuss practical tips for successfully completing a “dare.”
- The **Twit2Fit** community combines a social network built with the Ning platform and the simplicity of Twitter messages. Members post supportive tweets, which are tagged with “#twit2fit” so they can be easily tracked. Greg Matthews, Director of Consumer Innovation at Humana, said after the health plan told its members about Twit2Fit in a pilot, use of the “#twit2fit” tag increased about 300%.
- Recently launched, **Get Up and Move** brings the LIVESTRONG “dare” concept to Facebook and Twitter, with a bit more scientific laboratory approach. It was developed by start-up Contagion Health, which describes itself as a consumer-centric, health-focused, social software firm, created to make healthy behaviors “contagious.” Friends challenge each other to “asynchronous” activities (e.g. I will do 20 push-ups if you climb 3 flights of stairs). These small, “random acts of daily micro-fitness” are communicated through the 2 popular social networks. The site design incorporates incentive theory to observe which kinds of “dare” challenges work and how they work. Research showed that asynchronous challenges were 3 times as effective at driving behavior change, according to Contagion Health founder Jen McCabe. To date, more than half of all challenges on the site have been achieved by both participants.

Use Games to Encourage Health Activism: A health plan may not be the type of company in which you’d expect to find innovation at work, yet that’s exactly what is happening in Louisville, KY, home of Humana, the largest regional health insurance provider with 9 million members. Like many firms in healthcare, Humana felt frustrated about changing patient health behaviors. The company recognized that its ability to find ways to achieve this, whatever the source, has the potential to lower the cost of care—ultimately touching the Humana bottom line. So Humana built an innovation center to percolate new technologies that would drive positive health outcomes. The center’s director, Greg Matthews, shared one of his most successful case studies: the “Horsepower Challenge.” Piloted in the Louisville school district, it encouraged students to walk, move, and learn. Matthews highlighted significant behavior changes that were observed at the pilot’s conclusion: 13% of students had increased their activity levels, nearly two-thirds said they

were exercising more at school and home, and more than half had engaged their families to exercise. What encouraged these students to modify their behavior? As part of the program, all participants were given wireless pedometers that attached to their shoes. As the students exercised, the pedometers recorded their activity and transmitted total steps taken to a database, which powered a Web-based game. To advance in the game, students simply had to walk more. Matthews said students began to self-organize and create class “activity groups” during their free recess periods, to collectively advance the class in the game. The game spread to London through word of mouth, and after a U.S. Congressman joined a game in Kentucky, it’s now spreading across America.

Make Videos Shareable and Surprising: One of the most revealing insights from SXSW came from the “viral video” panel, featuring speakers from YouTube, TED Talks, and the alternative band OK Go. (The band’s music video for Here It Goes Again, featuring a choreographed dance on moving treadmills, is one of the most-watched YouTube videos of all time.) YouTube’s Margaret Gould Stewart said the majority of traffic to the most popular YouTube videos actually comes from outside YouTube.com during the 2 days after launch. The reason? Influential bloggers find out about new videos and embed them in their blogs. It’s a good rationale for healthcare communicators to ensure all social content they create is “embeddable” and to build personal relationships with online influencers who can help distribute that content—assuming it’s compelling. The most popular YouTube videos make a personal connection with the audience and tend to be clever, surprising, and positive. “In general, people don’t like to share negative stuff,” Gould explained. OK Go created another music video in which a giant-sized Rube Goldberg machine was triggered in a California warehouse. The production took 6 months and more than 60 takes, said singer Damian Kulash, who wanted to try “the most impossible thing we could think of” despite a limited budget. In the first week after launch, the video had garnered 6 million views. The surprise of seeing if the machine would work made the video “instantly viral” according to CNN. Along for the ride was corporate sponsor State Farm, whose logo appears briefly at the start of the video.

Make Content Matter: As our pharmaceutical and biotech clients consider ways to use their Web sites, e-mail programs, and digital assets to drive health behaviors (such as taking medication as prescribed, starting right, or sticking with treatment), they often think about tailoring content for greater relevance. With greater relevance, the content that matters to patients can have a deeper impact, and by association, the digital assets we create are more likely to generate behavior changes that are better for the patient ... and the brand. Despite this intent, it’s not uncommon for organizations to spend 2 to 3 months planning and designing the structure of a Web site, only to squeeze content development into 2 to 3 weeks, said Karen McGrane, content strategist and managing partner at Bond Art+Science. Other organizations attempt to “repurpose” content for a new Web site when it was originally intended, let’s suppose, for a printed brochure. McGrane implored her SXSW audience to elevate the role of digital content by thinking more deeply about content strategy. She said content strategy attempts to answer 3 basic

questions: What do we want to say? Where will we get the content? Who will maintain it? Web planners can begin to answer these questions by first analyzing any existing content, from available stock photography to the old Brand.com manuscript. Simple Excel grids can help inventory and categorize existing content. While McGrane admitted this is one of the more tedious tasks a Web team faces—she shared a sample grid with more than 100 rows of annotated information, eliciting groans from the audience—the exercise cuts waste and ensures the final Web site stays focused on business goals. Her recommendations for a structured approach were echoed by Will Evans, a user experience designer and founder of Semantic Foundry, who urged SXSH conference-goers to rely on observational testing with live users, not on self-reported research. When it comes to informing digital projects, he said, broad surveys are never as accurate as acute observational tests in which designers can see first-hand how users interact with a site.

Incorporate Emerging Metrics: Margaret Francis from Scout Labs and Blake Robinson from Attention! shared their perspectives on how to best measure the success of online initiatives—especially social media efforts. However, they predicted that in the future we will see social media as an endemic means for communicating with customers and that there won't be as much of a need to prove results. Today, the reality is that marketers experience significant gaps when seeking reliable and accurate tools to truly measure the business impact of social media. The current best practices are to look at: total number of mentions (by type or channel), key themes/emerging memes from conversations, the most viral content (by volume, influence, engagement, or relevance), share of voice vs. competitors, most influential sources, sentiment, brand perception, product feedback, campaign performance/reception, and actual e-commerce sales. One caveat the speakers raised is the difficulty in measuring performance of brand vs. the entire universe of online comments, because that universe is growing daily. It becomes difficult to accurately track more than a dozen themes in “Web time,” particularly for complex health conditions that are among the conversations many of our clients are monitoring. However, Francis and Robinson did recommend using the following tools to measure the online chatter: PostRank (which ranks engagement), TwitterCounter (which discovers trends from Twitter feeds), Webtrends, Omniture, Google Analytics, Compete, and Quantcast. Together, tools such as these can be used to compile the data needed to set and track trends for results of online efforts. Lastly, the speakers counseled marketers to develop online measurement plans that look at similar modeling criteria as offline measurement plans.

Know Who You Really Want to Influence: Savvy marketers realize the social Web consists of people who act in different roles. Susan Mees of WEGO Health, a growing community for influential health consumers, described the different roles in which she has observed people interacting on the site, based on a reasonably large quantitative sample of participants. For example, behavioral observation has led WEGO Health to classify participants as broadcasters, engineers, matchmakers, or Mom/Mr. Mom, among others. Each group fills a different role and can be targeted by addressing different unmet needs. Mees offered a number of important questions for any healthcare marketer to consider,

such as: Which type of role is important to influence? How broad is their influence across the community we want to reach? What kind of influence do we need to create? What actions or behaviors should the target take? These are familiar notions, amplifying basic concepts set forth by Malcolm Gladwell (*The Tipping Point*) and now validated by observing interactions in real-world online health communities. A final point: Mees observed that even many offline-oriented consumers are influenced by online conversations. She believes this trend is likely to grow in the coming years.

Leverage Innovation the Government Is Backing: David Hale, project manager for Pillbox, gave a detailed demonstration of this major government undertaking (FDA/National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health) to gather, classify, photograph, and link photos to FDA-approved drug information, for all medications that are manufactured. The project started because multiple government agencies were looking for ways to combat unintentional poisoning, improper dispensing of drugs, and other medical mistakes that have been increasing over the years. Pillbox is taking high resolution photographs, assigning tags to classify them for easy look-up, and connecting the images to Prescribing Information documents. Recently, Pillbox added a voice recognition system and mobile device access, potentially in support of paramedics and emergency room staff who need to make quick decisions in the real world. Hale commented that private enterprise has developed numerous applications of the data Pillbox is now cataloging. The bigger notion: the Federal stimulus package, healthcare reform, Government 2.0, and other major government initiatives are laced with projects we can tap to support the educational activity our pharmaceutical industry clients are trying to achieve.

Implications

How can pharmaceutical brands and healthcare providers put these learnings to work? We believe marketers should continuously share examples and best practices with internal stakeholders to make the case for emerging media. Organizations such as Humana and J&J are respected healthcare entities, and stories like theirs can galvanize support for launching innovative programs. Other implications:

1. Healthcare brands should focus on consumer behavior programs in addition to awareness campaigns. Unlike traditional promotional efforts, which can be useful but are often short-lived, behavior programs continue to pay dividends: engaged consumers, word-of-mouth buzz, and improved patient outcomes.
2. Healthcare organizations must identify ways to build relationships with online influencers. Increasingly it is the bloggers, video fanatics, and forum moderators who encourage content to spread online. Tactics such as “blogger summits” have been used in pharma to grow ties with influencers. It is essential for us to help our clients define which kinds of influencers are important to influence, with which techniques, to achieve which end goals.
3. Time after time, SXSW and SXSH panelists demonstrated the power of impromptu or focused communities to gather and organize themselves around educational topics and use self-organized groups to drive behavior change.
4. Innovative programs could benefit from pilot launches. Pilots allow internal stakeholders to “kick the tires” with minimal risk, while giving project sponsors the chance for small wins and momentum.
5. Creating compelling content, focused around consumer needs, should be a priority for healthcare organizations. Brands should conduct research to identify content gaps, consumer priorities, and topics that might create “pass-along” behavior. During the digital development process, content should be granted the same importance as design and technology.
6. Whether tapping an established industry heavyweight like CommuniSpace or using a more low-key, on-the-fly approach, we can leverage today’s community-building tools to find avid, highly targeted, specific groups of patients and conduct research as never before. A small number of forward-looking healthcare organizations have used communities to validate messaging, content, brand identity, and educational tactics, and this trend is sure to grow substantially.
7. Healthcare brands must understand the measurement challenges posed by new media, and they must embrace these challenges in order to justify experimental spending. Until the value of a Facebook friend or a retweet is accepted industry-wide, marketers can use any number of available tools to begin benchmarking on their own.



About HealthEd

HealthEd is a specialized agency that uses education to help people develop the knowledge, skills, motivation, and confidence to manage important health decisions and activities, and ultimately achieve better health outcomes.

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Appendix: Vendors Worth Watching

One of the most popular SXSW destinations is the trade-show floor, where hundreds of technology vendors hawk their innovations. The most interesting vendors clustered into 2 topical areas, Analytics and Community Building. We provide brief thumbnail sketches of some standout vendors in these 2 topical areas below.

Analytics:

Pear Analytics. Pear's free assessment algorithm calculates a Web site's "SEO score" based on a combination of fairly standard search optimization characteristics. Pear offers advice and techniques for improving the ranking, with the goal of appearing higher on search engine results pages.

(<http://www.pearanalytics.com>)

Thoora. In real time, Thoora identifies news topics that are gathering the greatest volume of discussion in both traditional and social media channels. Driven by a proprietary ranking algorithm, Thoora takes input from news coverage, blog posts, Twitter, and other discussions, avoiding the "voting" trap that social news-rating sites can present.

(<http://www.thoora.com>)

Luglron. Provides a comprehensive analytic platform that purports to "truly understand" what is happening in the online community/social media environment. Using a proprietary set of tools and algorithms, Luglron assembles a picture of a client's online landscape, then identifies where influence begins, where it travels, and how it disperses to the broader community interested in the product or topic.

(<http://www.luglron.com>)

Community Building:

Bloomfire. With an interesting twist on adult learning, Bloomfire bills itself as a "Collaborative Social Learning Community." It helps clients establish communities with common interests (multiple myeloma, high blood pressure, atrial fibrillation, etc) and uses social media tools to disseminate learning modules that clients create.

(<http://www.bloomfire.com>)

Traackr. Helps clients identify, track, and engage important online influencers (ie, mavens and connectors). Useful for brands that want to begin understanding how their category's most important influencers are shaping discussions and opinions online. The tool's

foundation is its rich data feed about each key influencer.
(<http://www.traackr.com>)

MyEmma. MyEmma provides software to support e-mail-driven, pass-along activity. In Austin, staff showed off the MyEmma engine for online surveys and response tracking, including the ability to see which recipients forward e-mail communications and to whom.
(<http://www.myemma.com>)

Awareness. Tools intended to help brand managers better guide how their brand is discussed online. Awareness tools help with publishing, managing, and measuring across all forms of social media to form a broad, connected picture and identify venues where client interventions could help lead to positive impact for the brand.
(<http://www.awarenessnetworks.com>)

Genius. Provides tools and guidance for using social media and online communities to build leads and sales.
(<http://www.genius.com>)

Flavors.me. A “social aggregator” that allows thought leaders to create simple landing sites with all of their social profiles and feeds in one place.
(<http://www.flavors.me>)