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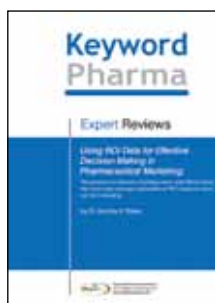
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Surviving in the Social World

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Surviving in the Social World: *the changing mindset of pharmaceutical sales and marketing*

By Karen Winterhalter

Executive summary

The rapidly evolving world of social media is bringing about another stage in the metamorphosis of the pharmaceutical industry. In the social world, driven by supportive thinking and open and random behaviour, the traditional focus of pharmaceutical sales and marketing has no place. The industry must ditch old habits and move towards a new marketing model. But it must do so within the constraints of apparently restrictive regulation.

The old key opinion leader influencer model of marketing is no longer fit for purpose. A new generation of healthcare decision makers has emerged and is already collaborating online, seeking, sharing and being influenced by the opinions of networks. Pharmaceutical companies are waking up to the fact that they need to develop their own voice in these discussions, and to build a transparent and trusted online reputation with their followers. Many are developing social media policies that allow them to lead their own conversations, and build their social capital.

In recent years there has been an increased interest in how pharma can use social media to engage with its customers while remaining compliant with existing regulations; but there has been too much of a focus on what cannot be done, rather than what is possible. In the UK, the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry Code of Practice provides huge scope for companies to market themselves effectively online, but to exploit this, the industry must adopt a different mindset.

This Expert Review, *Surviving in the Social World: the changing mindset of pharmaceutical sales and marketing*, looks at the pharmaceutical industry's progress in the world of social media. It provides examples of pharma's first tentative footsteps into a new world, explores what can be done within the current regulations and, more importantly, why the industry must develop a new 'social strategy' – before it's too late.

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About the author



Driven by an innate passion and desire to deliver communications programmes that really make a difference to healthcare, Karen founded Onyx Health in 2003, a company that has been at the forefront of developing digital marketing programmes within health communications. In 2010, Karen completed her training to become the first ecademy digital coach specialising in the healthcare and pharmaceutical communications sectors, as she realised that the industry needed to develop a greater understanding of how best to use the new channel of communication.

Karen has over 25 years' experience within the global pharmaceutical industry and healthcare communications field and has developed programmes which have brought about real change and improvements in healthcare. Her experience covers a diverse range of areas, including opinion leader contact at the highest level, market access, advocacy development, social marketing, health policy, issues and crisis management, media relations and strategic management of communications programmes.

She has held several senior positions within global communications companies. These include Chair of EMEA Healthcare at Burson Marsteller and European Director of Healthcare at Weber Shandwick. Within both roles she was responsible for the strategic growth and development of the business and worked directly with clients, helping them address the ever-changing, and ever more complex, communications environment within the healthcare sector.

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