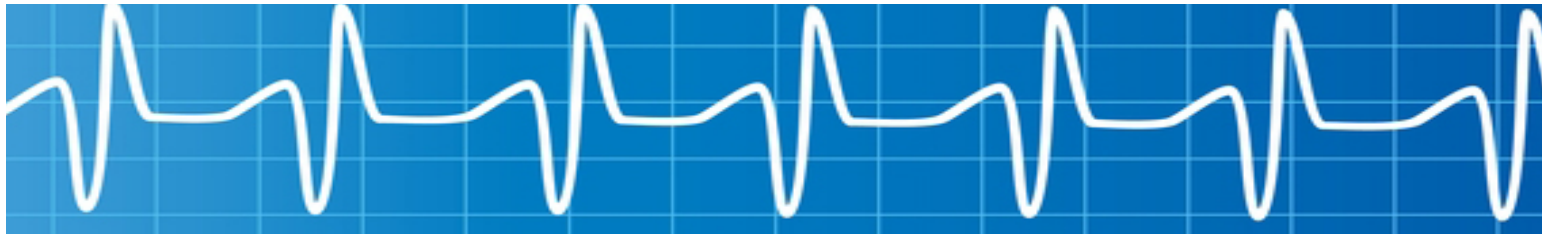




5 CRITICAL CHANGES TO Emailing Healthcare Providers



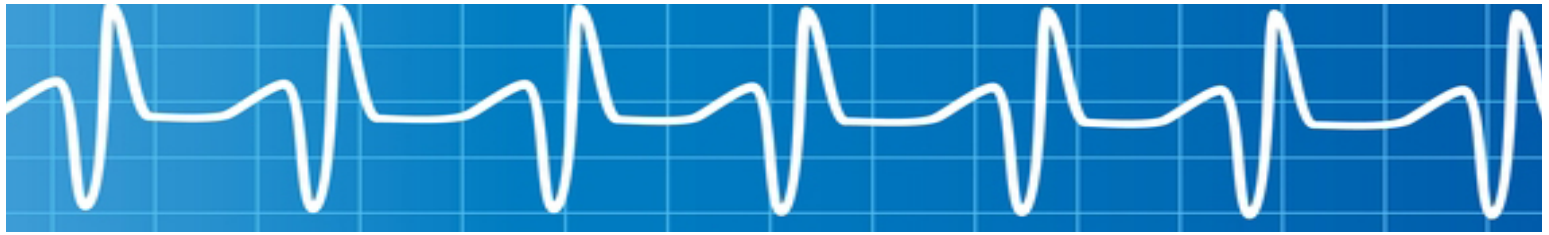
INTRODUCTION

Email marketing remains one of the most valuable tools in the healthcare marketer's arsenal for establishing relationships and increasing sales. But with so many changes occurring at the regulatory, technological and organizational levels, Physicians and other healthcare providers are facing new challenges that must be taken into consideration when approaching new and potential customers.

Doctors and other healthcare providers are grappling with a changing environment where mergers, acquisitions and new partnerships are becoming the norm. More Physicians are now employed by or affiliated with health systems and hospitals and are no longer the primary decision-makers. The HITECH Act and the use of EHRs have changed the daily routine of Physicians and other clinicians. And the millions of newly insured patients puts added pressure on Physicians and other providers to manage heavier workloads and improve patient outcomes while adjusting to new technologies, processes and regulatory demands. Under these conditions, healthcare providers no longer have the time nor the patience for emails that do not offer some sort of relief from their challenges. This is the healthcare marketer's challenge.

User behavior with and expectations of emails are also changing. According to recent statistics, 62 percent of all emails are now read on a mobile device. Video is also in demand. SocialTimes reported that emails linked to landing pages with video can increase conversions by nearly 90 percent. Customers are also savvier. Recent reports show that 80 percent of B2B buyers do research online and are 70-90 percent through the buyer's journey before they reach out to a vendor.

This information has important implications. In a nutshell, changes in the healthcare environment and changes in email behavior demand critical changes from healthcare marketers.



Understanding Provider Challenges

A 2012 Biennial Survey of over 630,000 Physicians by the Physicians Foundation revealed the state of Physicians' minds today: Amid an environment of shrinking reimbursements and growing regulations, more than 77 percent of Physicians surveyed have a pessimistic view of the medical profession.

According to the survey, the top challenges that Physicians face today are:

- Monopolization – The rise of large hospital networks and health systems
- Regulatory Burdens – Meeting Meaningful Use, ICD-10 and Physician Quality Reporting System requirements
- Confusion about newly insured patient coverage
- Lack of progress in other areas, such as Medicare payments, tort reform and “defensive medicine”

A survey by Medical Economics also showed that stress, uncertainty and workload are affecting Physicians, who work an average of 51-60 hours per week, 36 percent of Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) moonlighting on second jobs.

The surge of new patients with access to healthcare adds more pressure to Physician workloads, along with the additional burden of non-payment: about 80 percent of newly insured patients are considered at risk of non-payment.

Technology costs are an additional burden for solo practitioners who are unable to transition to electronic health records (EHR) and receive the financial incentives offered by the government.

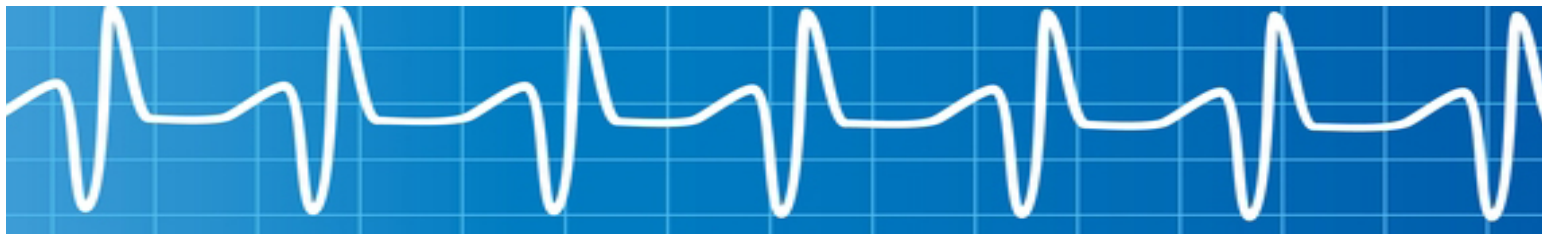


Not all is bleak, however.

Primary Care Physicians (PCPs), perhaps more than other healthcare providers, are in a favorable position to benefit from the healthcare changes.

As hospitals and health systems merge, form partnerships and acquire private practices, more PCPs become employed as a result. This bears out on the outlook of employed PCPs, who tend to have a more positive outlook on healthcare in general and the medical profession in particular than solo practitioners.

Female Physicians play an important role in the outlook. The Physicians Association's Survey revealed that female Physicians, who work fewer hours and are more likely to practice Primary Care, generally have a more positive outlook on the state of healthcare and the medical profession than do male Physicians over the age of 40.



Email Marketing: Alive and Kicking

Email marketing still ranks as one of the top methods of B2B marketers: With an estimated ROI of 4,300 percent, email marketing outperforms PPC, content marketing, social media, offline direct marketing, affiliate marketing, online display advertising and mobile marketing.

Email marketing can't succeed on its own, however. Deeper integration of email marketing with content marketing and social media is increasing for good reason: the majority of prospects perform online research before making purchases, and email with social sharing buttons increases click-through rates by more than 150 percent.

Although email marketing is expected to grow – an Advertising Age study showed that more than 64 percent of B2B marketers planned to raise their email marketing budgets in 2014 – few marketers are confident that they are doing email marketing right.

Rather than continue the same approaches to email marketing healthcare marketers must leverage the challenges Physicians are facing in order to develop and nurture relationships, establish industry authority and increase sales.

To do this, we recommend making five critical changes to emailing healthcare providers:

- 1. Master the 3Ps**
- 2. Go Mobile**
- 3. Think Multi-Level**
- 4. Embrace Video**
- 5. Add a Feminine Touch**

3Ps:

Participation
Personalization
Prescription



CHANGE #1: MASTER THE 3Ps

Email marketing is not a one-way street. The most successful email campaigns master the 3Ps: participation, personalization and prescription.

Participation allows prospects to use their voice. The easiest way to allow prospects to engage is to integrate social capabilities into your email. (Remember: Adding social sharing buttons can increase click-through rates by more than 150 percent!) Include social comments from your Twitter or Facebook profiles to boost credibility and trust among busy healthcare providers.

Personalization is all about making emails relevant to healthcare providers. Personalization is more than just addressing a prospect by his or her first name; it shows you know who you're talking to and where they're coming from. Here, it's critical to look at your analytics for personalization cues, such as gender, location and the time of day when emails are read. Also look to social media to figure out what people care about, and use that information to craft new email content and campaigns. *Tip: 37 percent of health system Physicians report that their compensation is directly tied to productivity.* How does your product or service help them meet this challenge?

Prescription gives control to your prospects. Give them the option to customize the content they receive from you – and make it easy to opt out. But also be sure to give them compelling reasons to stay.

64%

of decision-makers
open their emails on a
mobile device



CHANGE #2: GO MOBILE

If it seems like you've been hearing this for forever, there's a reason. When it comes to emails, mobile matters – a lot. In 2013, 62 percent of emails were read on a mobile device. Mobile searches have increased 248 percent. Physicians and other clinicians have long been early adopters of new technologies, and the same applies for mobile technologies: According to EPG Health Media, 91 percent of doctors in the U.S. owned smartphones in 2012, a 10 percent increase in just two years. And guess who else uses mobile to read emails? Decision-makers.

But to do mobile right, emails must be responsive in design, user-friendly and relevant to healthcare providers. A skinny, single-column format that adapts to multiple screen sizes, easy-to-read fonts and large buttons are musts for smaller screens. Remember: Physicians and other clinicians are under pressure to meet new regulatory demands, see more patients and improve patient outcomes in a measureable way. What can you offer them that either helps them meet these challenges easily and cost-effectively?

Employed
Physicians are
rarely the sole
decision-makers.



CHANGE #3: THINK MULTI-LEVEL

The number of Physicians in private practice is dwindling. In 2012, 20 percent of U.S. Physicians worked for a hospital – a 10 percent increase in the last six years, according to the American Medical Association. Today, with hospitals and health systems merging, partnering and acquiring other health organizations, thousands more Physicians are finding themselves employed by either a hospital or health system.

This shift is critical to email marketers in a few ways. First, employed Physicians are not sole decision-makers but are part of decision-making teams involving cross-departmental stakeholders in non-clinical departments such as IT and administration. Second, the compensation of employed Physicians is often tied to productivity. And third, non-clinical decision-makers often have non-clinical goals.

Thus, a multi-level approach to email marketing is critical. Where Physicians and other providers were once the sole or primary decision-makers, many of them may now be a point of entry to or a multi-level influencer among a broader team that is also concerned with issues like efficiency, interoperability and economies of scale.

Given this environment, healthcare marketers must develop strategies that aim to solve the challenges of multiple stakeholders at different times.

42%

of B2B customers
watch videos to
research new
products and services



CHANGE #4: EMBRACE VIDEO

If you're a video marketing non-believer, it's time for a change. All the fuss about video email marketing is bearing fruit. B2B Vital Statistics reports that 82 percent of B2B marketing professionals said video has a positive impact on their business. A Forrester Research study found that video in email increases click-through rates by 2-3 times. And Experian's 2012 Digital Marketer Benchmark and Trend Report found that simply including the word "video" in an email subject line can increase click-through rates.

Before jumping on the video bandwagon, keep a few things in mind:

- **Match the video to the target** – Senior decision-makers and mid-level influencers should receive different content. CEOs may be more interested in the big picture, CFOs in numbers, and healthcare providers in efficiency and productivity.
- **Keep it short** – A Forbes Insight report shows that the majority of C-suite executives prefer 3-5 minute videos, but a quick search on YouTube or Google reveals that most B2B videos with the highest hits are only 90-120 seconds long.
- **Make sure you have an interesting story** – Think back to the 3Ps. Is the story relevant to the providers you are trying to reach – e.g. new research, a new case study or even something humorous? If not, don't waste your time. Consider developing regular content that healthcare providers can look forward to receiving on a weekly basis.

1 in 3

U.S. Physicians is
female

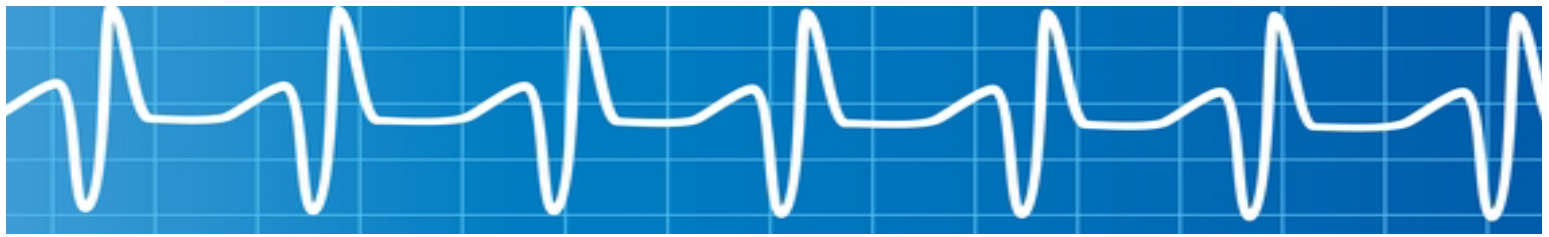


CHANGE #5: ADD A FEMININE TOUCH

From 1980 to 2009, the number of female Physicians rose 430 percent. Female Physicians differ from their male counterparts in a number of ways. They are more likely to practice Primary Care, are younger on average and generally have a more positive outlook on healthcare and the medical profession. Female Physicians also work fewer hours and are more likely to have a better work-life balance.

These facts make it obvious that healthcare marketers need to ensure that emails are not strictly geared toward male Physicians. Using “hero shots” of female Physicians and including female personas in videos are two critical changes that can have a powerful impact on click-through rates and conversion. Including testimonials from other female customers, interviewing female thought leaders, showcasing Q&A sessions with female Physicians, and offering solutions that can help female Physicians solve important clinical and business problems are other ways to appeal to female Physicians.

Be careful to avoid clichéd feminine touches, such as the use of pink. Remember that female Physicians are highly educated, well-trained professionals who should be regarded and treated as such.



CONCLUSION

By all accounts email marketing is not dead. It continues to be one of the favorite tools of B2B marketers in general and healthcare marketers in particular, and is expected to continue on an upward trajectory in the coming years. A 2012 Harvard Business Review found that email marketing elicits a 23 percent response rate – just 1 percent less than direct mail but with far fewer costs.

But healthcare marketers must keep pace with the changes in the healthcare landscape, particularly as those changes impact healthcare providers and other decision-makers. While email remains a preferred contact method of healthcare providers, marketers must be flexible, dynamic and personal in their approach. Email marketing is not a monologue but rather a tool to facilitate engagement and action.

This entails understanding the challenges providers are facing, possessing the business intelligence to discern who the decision-makers are – oftentimes within a labyrinth of organizational linkages – and delivering the emails to the right targets at the right time.

The five critical changes to emailing providers contained in this whitepaper are a starting point for healthcare marketers.

To learn how Healthcare Data Solutions' provider databases, organizational linkages and email marketing services can help you increase response rates and sales, call 1-877-397-4114.