

Timothy White, Head of Digital Commercialisation Novartis Europe

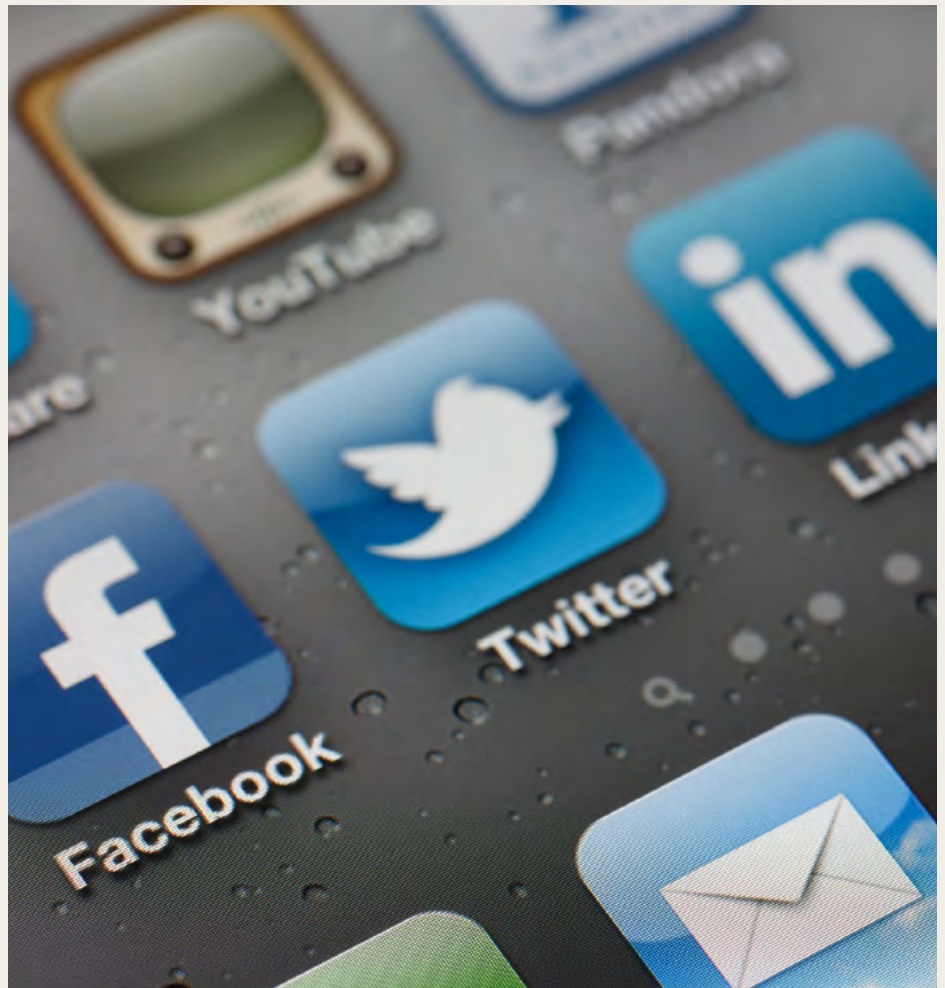
Timothy White is the Head of Digital Commercialisation at Novartis Europe. He is an industry leader and specialist in health-related new media with a focus on eMarketing, eLearning, Social Media Marketing and eHealth. >>

Nigel Wright caught up with Tim to talk about his vision for digital and e-marketing at Novartis, as well as how the broader pharmaceuticals and healthcare industry is adapting to the new age of digital communication.

The digital marketing channel is generally undeveloped in the healthcare and pharmaceuticals industries, compared to other consumer facing industries. Why has Novartis chosen to invest in the channel and what does it hope to achieve from its investment?

Throughout the past decade, greater restrictions regarding how you can market pharmaceuticals have come into place from government and regulating bodies that prevent us from marketing in the way that we had for years prior. In particular, restrictions have had an impact on our traditional field-force activities in terms of the access they can have to physicians for discussion regarding our products. Finally, within Spain the profile of our customer is also drastically changing. We are marketing to a new generation of stakeholders that have grown up in the digital world. Because of this, we have looked further into the digital channels to allow us to be more creative (innovative) in how we engage with our customer base – we can maximise our impact while expanding our reach.

What digital and e-marketing challenges are specific to your sector compared to the consumer products sector in general?



The field of medicine and healthcare is all about information, it's a very technical and complex field and this has to be communicated very clearly through the digital (or any other) channel. Additionally, we have a very informed customer base which means we can't just come at them with flashy brand-heavy marketing messaging. It's all about data and science and making sure that the customer has the right information on our products and services at the right time (considering legal requirements). This is quite a different objective than other industries such as technology or FMCG where you can creatively sell your brand messaging and expect to have an impact on sales. For us it's more about making sure that our entire healthcare offering is of added value for our customer's practice and for the patient's health and is clearly defined, as such, to our various stakeholders. This offering is our portfolio of products and services that will help us to both care and cure for patients better.

Tell us about some of the digital marketing initiatives you have been involved with during your time with Novartis Spain? What about the wider business, what else has Novartis been doing globally to reach customers via digital?

There are two key areas of focus within our strategy. One is to change the way we communicate in front of our customers with our field force, face to face. The second is the more traditional eMarketing approach, when we are not in front of the customer (web, mobile, eMail, social, etc...). In terms of the first area, this was a project that was initially launched in Spain and is now a global initiative – to provide all of our field-force reps with iPads, ensuring that they have the most up-to-date and impacting materials and evidence for the right stakeholder at the right time. This also allows marketing to have a better understanding of what is the focus of discussion regarding the product, for development of future marketing and service offerings to our customers. This is a 'closed loop marketing' strategy which has been the hope for a long time within the pharmaceutical sector, and we feel that we've finally achieved it.

The 'outside of the visit' based strategy is first about redefining our web presence. For example, when I assumed my role, we had a very abstract and diffused web presence with over 35 individual sites or portals, each with fairly low adoption and user base. These sites

didn't focus on service, but rather were simply a way of communicating our product offerings in the traditional manner. Now we have been developing, and are very near to launching, our first unified customer service portal; a site that will share not only product information across the portfolio, but also service offerings and up-to-date healthcare information all in a personalized and customized way. Additionally, this new site enables us to have true '2.0' conversation with our customers; encouraging them to actually be content contributors and participate with us on the co-creation of the portal experience.

At the core of both of these strategies is still the idea of putting our sales-force at the centre of our communication. For example, eMail actions from Novartis don't come from spamming customers with content and messaging from a generic eMail account – i.e. from me in eMarketing - but rather from giving the tools and content to the sales reps for them to deliver it directly to customers as needed. In this way our reps become more like consultants to the physicians in the online world as well as offline. We truly feel that this model is strengthening the role of our representatives and enabling us to offer a superior level of service to our stakeholders.

How do you measure the success of digital and e-marketing at Novartis Spain?

Digital marketing can be measured both from the top-line and bottom-line perspectives. On the one hand, it is clearly a more cost-effective way of commercializing; allowing us to have more communication with our customers for the same (or less) investment. I think that the more innovative way of measuring eMarketing is to look at how it has allowed us to have more effective discussions with our customers. The digital channels allow us to have more individualized and personalized communication ensuring that the correct stakeholders are receiving the correct information at the correct time.

You have been in e-leadership roles for almost six years - first at Merck and now with Novartis Spain - how has the digital and e-marketing leadership role evolved during that time?

After an early career in the music industry, I joined Merck Pharmaceuticals, based in the USA, in a global eMedia/digital role. During

my time there I experienced the transition from what I consider 'old digital' to 'new digital' within the industry.

The old digital marketing role was basically about supporting products with traditional marketing messaging, simply brought into the digital world: tools like online visual aids, static product promotion sites, banner advertising etc. It has gradually moved away from that to



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the new model that we have today, which is all about engaging and serving our customers online – using a range of tools to create a two way channel for communication. This new role is more commercial and analytical (less IT driven), focused on finding out more about our customers and then using this information to serve them more effectively both online and in the real world.

As a digital and e-marketing expert, what is the attraction of working in the pharmaceuticals sector?

Pharmaceuticals and healthcare are strong and stable industries and in terms of digital they are starting to go through a great deal of change. The attraction therefore is the opportunity to work in an environment where you are focused on getting people to think in a new and different way. This wouldn't necessarily be the case if say I was working for a traditional digital-



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friendly company such as Google or Amazon. It's an exciting time for pharma and in my role I see it as a fantastic opportunity to shape the industry in terms of how it uses digital for the future.

Do you think businesses are still trying to work out where digital fits in the wider organisation, or is there a more coherent structure and place for digital now?

Until fairly recently digital used to be a bit of a guru role – “this is my digital marketing guy” - but now it's becoming very much a key part of a business and it should be treated as importantly as any other functional leadership role, whether it's marketing, sales etc. You have industries that 'get it' and others that don't. Pharma is currently somewhere in the middle and in that respect it's similar to how the music industry was when I worked in it. For example, some companies are still trying to understand the true value of the digital channels in terms of how they can apply to their business, whereas others, such as Novartis, have understood the necessity and are applying it to the company strategy for both the present and the future.

How much influence do you have across the wider business? Is part of your role to convince others of the benefits of digital marketing or is that something which is generally recognised across Novartis?

I feel Novartis is a company that is at the forefront of digital in the sector. Both our global CEO and our Spanish General Manager are visionaries in terms of seeing the importance of technology to revolutionize our commercial area. I report directly to our General Manager within Spain with a small but expanding team. My task is essentially to define our digital strategy, lead our key digital actions, and help prepare the commercial organization for what it will look like in 3-5 years time. This is exactly the type of remit that any digital leader should have.

Which areas of digital and e-marketing do you anticipate increased investment over the next few years?

The whole world is doing two things – its going mobile and social. From Novartis' perspective we want to try and leverage this trend to offer better tools and services to our various stakeholders. We're continuing to look at offerings such as e-health tools, patient applications, and interactive educational offerings that will bring more value to physicians, patients, and the healthcare system in general.

On the topic of social media, I feel that there's often confusion that Social Media is just about Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc... Within Pharma, there has been a great deal of struggle to grasp the importance of these more popular social channels. For us, it's more about the 'socialisation of media' - creating those two way channels where your customers are directly involved in every step of your commercialization process. This was the general practice that led to the strategy behind our aforementioned new customer service portal.

Additionally I think one of the big areas in this respect is also the way in which we engage with 'influencers' in the sector – this is certainly a key method in our traditional commercial model: to identify the 'key opinion leaders' and partner with them to better communicate our offerings. The social world can expand

this on an unparalleled level. If we can better understand where the online conversations are happening regarding our products as well as who the 'key influencers' are, we can partner with them to better communicate our offerings to a much broader and diversified audience.

77% of respondents to our recent survey on digital marketing indicated that they believe consumer businesses must increase investment in digital infrastructure if they want to survive. Would you agree? Does this apply to the pharmaceuticals industry as well?

Businesses will fail if they don't get on the boat. If you look at the industries that have been slow to adapt – music, television, or publishing – they're now realising that they have some catching up to do. Industry by industry, digital is coming live a wave and you have to basically decide at what point of the wave you want to be on. I see my job at Novartis to basically make sure that we are leaders within the industry in terms of our digital strategy; I wouldn't want us to be the business that decided to wait and see what happens.

Is there a talent shortage of people with the necessary skills to drive digital and e marketing strategy in your sector? Or generally? What is the outlook, in your opinion, for businesses seeking to hire, retain and develop digital talent?

In Spain there is certainly a shortage of digital marketers within the sector that really 'get it' – those that understand the new digital model rather than the old one. It's not necessarily a 'techie' job anymore and the digital leaders that I have met who come from a more technical or IT background tend to get pigeonholed into that old 'guru' role within their businesses. Those that come from a commercial background and have a commercial mindset tend to be much more successful. Businesses will find that if they can't bring the right kind of talent into the organisation, training traditional commercial leaders, for example, to become digital marketers can be a viable option. Digital should not be passed off as a segment of IT. It has to be driven by commercial people within a commercial environment.