

Pre-conference Highlight Reprint # 53-01

The European eMarketing Scene: Desperately Seeking Strategy

By John Mack

This May, eyeformpharma is hosting the two-day [Online Marketing & eDetailing](#) conference in Berlin, Germany. Keynote speaker Len Starnes, Head of E-Business, Europe for Schering Germany, notes that this event marks the 10-year anniversary of European pharmaceutical eMarketing. "Ten years ago," said Starnes, "a European conference on pharmaceutical eMarketing was a major event with very senior pharmaceutical people attending."

Starnes was speaking at a recent [Pharma Marketing Roundtable](#) conference call on the subject of physician eMarketing in Europe. Other experts on the call included:

- **Francesco Convertini**, Web Product Manager, Sanofi-Aventis
- **Vincent DeChellis**, Principal at NHHS, an independent healthcare consultant based in the US
- **Mark Millar**, Director, PraeMedica, a technology-based physician communications agency based in Ireland
- **Robert Nauman**, Principal, BioPharma Advisors Network, a consultancy based in the US
- **Pascal Vancoppenolle**, CEO and co-founder, MediQuality, an online sales & marketing application provider and consultancy based in Belgium
- **Kay Wesley**, Global Director eMarketing, AstraZeneca

"Ten years ago we had great expectations," said Starnes. "Some people made a lot of wild predictions such as 'we can forget the rep because now, with the Internet, we have reps 24/7.' Since then, we've been through the trough of despair in 2000 and now we are coming into a much more realistic phase."

Strategically Challenged

"In Europe, not all pharmaceutical companies are using the Internet strategically," said Vancoppenolle. "There is a tendency for some companies to employ eMarketing on a project by project basis. They have an idea and then

implement it, followed by another idea, etc. There is no coherent strategic vision. Consequently, Europe, unlike the US, has not yet moved away from eDetailing because eDetailing has not been widely implemented."

"I agree," said Wesley. "The industry up to now has been tinkering about with pilots and not doing a great deal of strategic work in the online channel."

"Many of the approaches adopted by brand managers," said DeChellis, "are pretty much very tactical as opposed to weaving the Internet into their overall strategic mix and looking at the overall spend to determine what is the appropriate amount. Instead of looking at online vs. offline marketing, we should be looking at marketing in general and ask what is the right mix."

Europe Lags Behind the US

Despite its 10-year history, European pharmaceutical eMarketers still concede that they lag behind their US counterparts by 2 years or more at least when it comes to eDetailing. "In Europe there is still some misunderstanding about what eDetailing really is," said Starnes. "For some product managers, eDetailing is simply seen as a Web site."

The group considered the upside of being followers rather than leaders: "Being behind the US is sometimes a good thing," one said. "We can learn from your mistakes or we can see what the trends are and prepare ourselves for what's coming."

Commercial vs. Educational eDetailing

Yet in some ways, Europe is ahead of the curve and more forward thinking at least when it comes to commercialized vs. educational eDetailing.

As recently as two years ago, pharmaceutical companies in the US routinely gave cash-equivalent incentives to physicians for completing commercial product eDetails. Recent OIG and PhRMA guidelines, however, has led to the demise of the practice in the US.

Continued on next page...

"Incentives are what drove a lot of the curiosity in eDetailing by physicians in the US initially," said DeChellis. "The good thing about the OIG and other guidelines on incentives is that the content must now be more compelling in order to attract physicians. The companies providing eDetailing in the US now realize that they cannot simply repurpose sales aids or vis aids and that's why they are heading more into eLearning. The likelihood of physicians coming back is dependent on how valuable they find the information and whether it was time well spent."

"Some markets in Europe do permit the offering of honoraria for participation in eDetails," said Wesley. "Nevertheless, there is less acceptance of a highly-commercial eDetailing approach in Europe. Many European physicians value 'interactive product education,' so eDetails in Europe may be positioned slightly differently and have a more educational 'tone.' As a matter of fact, we've observed that doctors who are interested in eCME are also interested in eDetailing. We should encourage this 'educational' positioning of product information and help all prescribers find it when they need to, rather than restricting its use to specific campaigns with incentives."

Implementation Issues Abound

Europe has its own unique problems in terms of deploying eMarketing solutions. Although the EU may be likened to the US federation of states, Europe is still comprised of separate countries with significant cultural and language differences.

"Unlike the US, Europe is not a single homogeneous market," said Millar. "There are many variations in regulations as well as licensed indications for pharma products."

Starnes agrees and sees a north-south divide in how countries interpret directives. "Member countries adapt European directives for their local needs. We tend to see some of the north European countries (eg, Netherlands, Scandinavia) being more liberal in their interpretations of the directives. The further south you go, especially the Mediterranean countries, interpretations are stricter."

This difference seems to align with the cultural differences relating to freedom of access to information. These differences are quite deeply rooted and apply not only to consumer-directed information but also to physician-directed information. The cultural differences not only apply to regulators

AstraZeneca: Brand Globally, Communicate Locally

"Pharmaceutical companies brand globally, but communicate locally," says Kay Wesley, AstraZeneca's Global Director of eMarketing. "Although pharma companies are very good at global branding and global product strategy, the communication has always been very sales rep based and you don't get much more local than a rep visiting a doctor! "Using the Internet for marketing, therefore, is an interesting new paradigm for the industry.

"Pharmaceutical companies are not as disciplined as other industries in implementing communications planning across the global-local divide. Some pharmaceutical companies have been entirely localized where everything is done at the local level. This results in pockets of excellence in certain markets, whereas other markets are not doing anything at all from an 'e' perspective. Other companies are extremely centralized with everything running from the home office. Needless to say, this doesn't sing in the hearts of European physicians.

"A Different tone of voice, a different approach is needed in all these markets, which are culturally unique. The very centralized approach has a lot of global clout but whether it has a lot of local impact is another question.

"AstraZeneca is trying to bring a global economy of scale and best practices to bear but still implement and communicate locally. In the online channel, the whole notion of thinking globally and acting locally comes into fruition only if you work smartly as an organization in order to execute well.

"We've just begun to scratch the surface of the potential the e-channel offers. The potential for the global organization to learn is great. To get insights from what's happening on the ground, you really need an integrated approach to customer relationship management (CRM) across all channels."

in different countries but also to product managers within the pharmaceutical companies themselves. Most agreed that it comes down to what is an acceptable level of risk.

Changing Regulatory Landscape

"The situation is dynamic rather than static as well," said Starnes. "We are seeing quite a change in what regulators will allow us to do from year to year as new concepts are explored. For example, compliance programs for patients are not addressed at all in the EU directives and if we actually have the chance to talk to regulators, in some markets they often will change their views and allow us to do things we couldn't do before."

An example would be regulations relating to physician access to medical information on the Web provided by pharmaceutical companies. There are some markets – Sweden, for example – where passwords are absolutely not necessary. "In

other markets it's really up to the product manager to determine the degree of security necessary to access Web sites," said Starnes. "In some markets, such as France, pharmaceutical companies must really limit access to *bona fide* physicians."

Some pharmaceutical companies are very much committed to only provide pharmaceutical professional information to European physicians behind a password. This may be done for several reasons. One reason sometimes stated is to protect patients. A more important reason, however, is to provide as much personalized information to physicians as possible. This is where online marketing can enhance customer relationship management (CRM). Indeed, many European pharmaceutical company eMarketers work within CRM departments.

Continued on next page...

Sanofi-Aventis: Italian eDetailing Success Story

Product: ENTEROGERMINA®

Enterogermina®, an oral suspension of bacteria spores offered in single doses, restores the intestinal bacteria balance in case of an intestinal disorder. Enterogermina® can be used for preventive or curative treatment. In Italy, Enterogermina® is the leader in its market and achieved OTC product status in 1999.

eMarketer: Francesco Convertini, Web Product Manager

Project: Deploy an eDetailing program to support a product that has a long history in the marketplace. Prove that it works.

Problem: Determining the effectiveness of an eDetailing program is difficult. Usually, you don't know if increased sales are due to eDetailing or to advertising, which is allowed for OTC products, or to pharmacy marketing. [In Italy physicians are important OTC influencers, accounting for 25% of sales.]

Test Methodology: Divided Italy into 2 areas: in one area all 10,000 physicians were eDetailed; another area was divided into 2 panels: one for eDetailing, one without eDetailing. A call center conducted physician interviews prior to the eDetailing to determine brand awareness, share of voice, etc. The eDetailing lasted for 6 months, after which follow-up interviews were conducted.

eDetailing Implementation Specifics: Every month a print newsletter was sent by mail to physicians. Each issue of the newsletter discussed a feature of the product and provided an overview of topics accessible on the Web site. The newsletter had an average reading "redemption" of 90%; that is, of 10,000 physicians receiving the newsletter, 9,000 entered the eDetailing Web site mentioned in the newsletter.

Results: Once on the general Web site, 60% of physicians clicked through to the formal eDetail. eDetailing proved to reduce loss of market share with a Top of Mind of 50%, increasing the attitude towards prescriptions.

"eDetailing gives us much more information about what the physician needs," said Convertini. "And we get this feedback much more quickly than we can get from a sales rep. The next hurdle I face is working with consumers via the Internet."

Not only are there different regulations to contend with, but cultural differences also call for different delivery approaches. "We have seen different models of eDetailing work in different markets," said Wesley. "In some Scandinavian markets we've had success with shared-screen eDetailing in which a rep talks the doctor through the detail on the phone. In most other markets, however, the virtual, self-directed eDetail model is prevalent."

Organizational Issues

In the US, most pharmaceutical companies have disbanded their "e" departments and disbursed Internet-savvy personnel to brand teams. This has not happened – yet – in Europe. Why is that?

The experts agreed that US marketing teams have much bigger budgets and more people with Internet expertise than do local European markets.. In Europe, they contend, it is impossible to place an eBusiness expert in each product team. Resources are so limited in some small markets that product managers are responsible for more than one product! What's needed is at least one specialist per country that can work with all the product managers to guide them and help them to put the right marketing mix and campaigns together.

"We've actually just changed our eMarketing structure," said Wesley. "All our global eManagers are now in the brand teams so that each brand has an eMarketing manager, who we see as having a strategic role in getting the brand as a whole to leverage the channel from global 'congresses' through to e-selling on the ground and patient disease awareness. These global eManagers still work together on global capabilities."

"Although I have an eBusiness title," said Starnes, "I spend 50% of my time in customer and patient relationship management. I am actually part of the CRM team. The positive thing about that is I can talk about the e-channel in a completely different way that is more relevant to the CRM folks."

Integrating eBusiness expertise into the brand team is one thing, but talking the talk and walking the walk as a marketer is another. "Many pharmaceutical companies jumped into the Internet early on, but put the Internet under the IT umbrella instead of Marketing," said Vancoppenolle. "The result today is a lack of Internet marketing knowledge among marketers."

"To push eDetailing is a really tough job," said Convertini. "Product managers are not that familiar with the Internet and don't understand why it has to be included in the marketing mix. That's why I invest so much effort in research that demonstrates the effectiveness of eDetailing in terms that are understood by marketers. If you only talk about 'clickthroughs' and 'unique visitors', and so on, marketers will not understand or pay attention."

The Future

"The day will come when marketing is not "e" or online and offline, it will be just marketing," said DeChellis. "As it stands right now, the complexity of online marketing is still somewhat daunting to marketers and their agencies. Specialists are still required to deal with things that marketers don't fully understand or don't want to deal with. Consequently, we still have a siloed online/offline approach when we should have integrated marketing of a brand."

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