

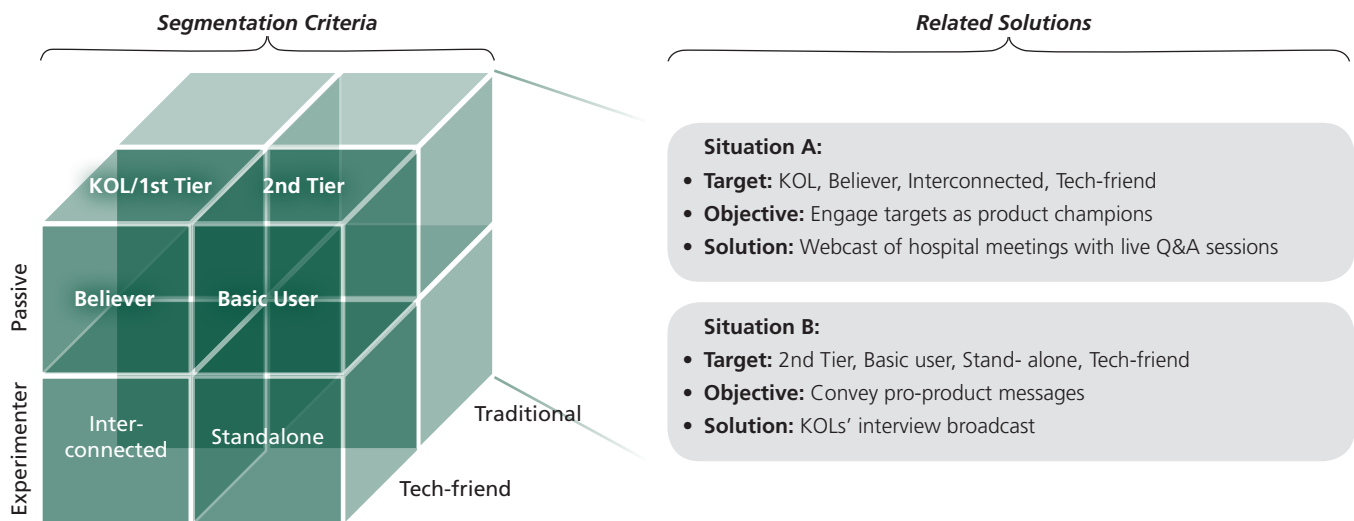
# Unlocking Digital Marketing Opportunities for the Pharmaceuticals Sector: Developing a Long-Term Approach to Digital Marketing

In this final instalment, L.E.K. Consulting looks at maximising the impact of digital marketing across the organisation in order to realise the full potential of this rapidly evolving approach.

Digital marketing presents many opportunities for pharmaceutical companies, but its strategic role and implications for an organisation’s commercial model are still under debate. At present the main focus of digital marketing initiatives is on creating and feeding networks of users (GPs

and specialists, other stakeholders, etc) and on providing them with an increasing array of differentiated services. In the near future, technological developments will enable a large amount of valuable information on users to be extracted. Key statistics such as number of pages viewed, average time spent by page, type of content downloaded or accessed and the level of interactive communication will enable the detailed segmentation and profiling of users, leading to specific objectives, solutions and content by profile (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
**Developing a Personalised Approach to Digital Marketing Initiatives Based on the Most Appropriate Segmentation Criteria**



Source: L.E.K. Consulting

*Unlocking Digital Marketing Opportunities for the Pharmaceuticals Sector* was written by **Max Rubin**, Partner and head of L.E.K.’s Pharmaceuticals practice in Milan, **Clay Heskett**, Partner and head of L.E.K.’s Pharmaceuticals practice in London, and **Andrea Sgarro**, a Manager in L.E.K.’s Milan office. Please contact us at [lifesciences@lek.com](mailto:lifesciences@lek.com) for additional information.

Leveraging the evolution and integration of a company’s CRM systems could lead to an ad-personam approach, with the personalisation of the promotion model and messages, and therefore the greatest promotion effectiveness.

Underlying social trends, including behavioural schemes, represent a further opportunity. For instance, companies can benefit from patients’ increasing tendency to spontaneously form large networks of people for advocacy or informative purposes (the so-called “swarm approach”). By converging these forces in specific digital marketing solutions (e.g. guided forums or patient associations’ social communities), companies can create a strong relationship and a privileged communication channel with stakeholders whose importance is already high in some areas (e.g. OTC, chronic diseases, etc) and whose importance is expected to increase significantly in other specialty areas. The digital marketing model could evolve from a “Share of Voice” to a “Share of Time” approach (see Figure 2), with digital marketing solutions specifically developed for moments not covered by traditional promotion patterns (e.g. lunch, travelling time, night shifts, weekends and other free time).

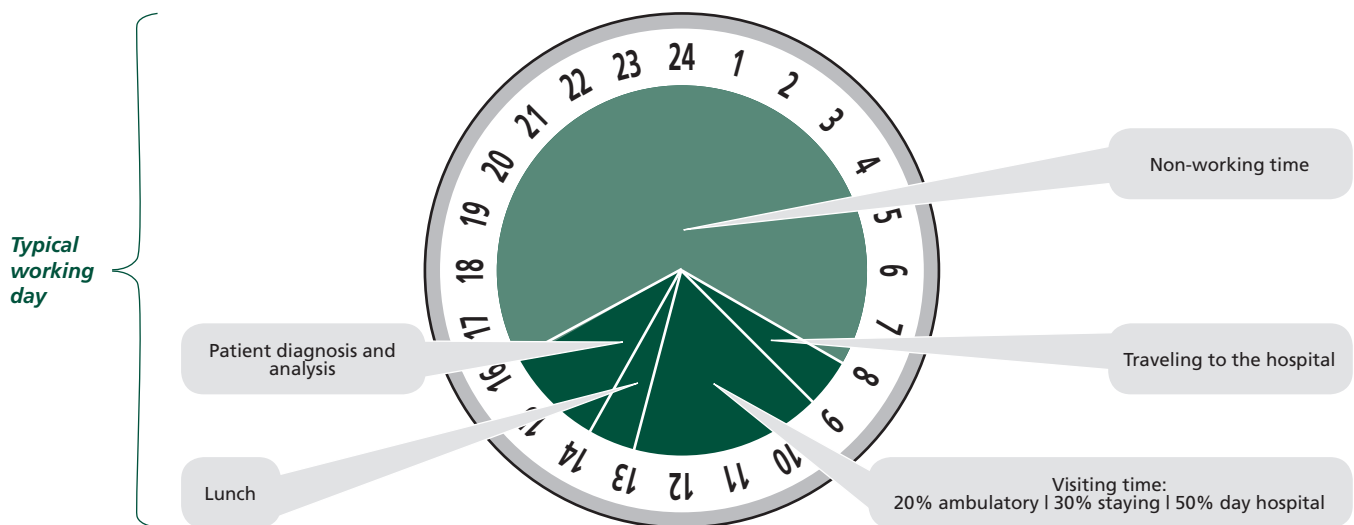
Although the healthcare regulatory environment presents some limitations, it is expected to evolve in line with future customer behaviour, with a positive impact on the full

exploitation of digital marketing opportunities. Used correctly, digital marketing can help to guarantee compliance with the regulatory environment by changing the way companies interact with customers. For example, some companies recently announced that they would no longer be sponsoring physicians to attend international conferences, instead using digital marketing solutions to provide top-level medical education through innovative tools such as remote live e-congresses.

From an internal perspective, the inevitable proliferation of digital marketing initiatives and their integration into the overall commercial approach will ultimately lead to a rationalisation of the digital marketing approach. In particular, the appropriate organisation structure, processes and roles would enable pharmaceutical companies to:

- Coordinate a large number of initiatives from different areas
- Pursue cross fertilisation of digital marketing initiatives
- Maximise internal (e.g. platforms) and external (e.g. on targets) synergies
- Capture and exploit new digital marketing trends

**Figure 2**  
**Representation of Share of Time Approach**



From a strategic perspective, the true potential of digital marketing will only be realised when pharmaceutical companies evolve their business models to take advantage of the opportunities presented. By doing so, organisations can achieve a range of benefits:

- A flexible, cost-effective personal promotion model, with the optimal integration of digital concepts and traditional field force techniques
- Resources realigned across the stakeholders who really matter, by ensuring the right mix of roles, capabilities and effort are appropriately deployed
- The model tailored to local variations in line with specific opportunities and constraints (e.g. tenders)
- Specialised disease area capabilities enhanced by working closely with GPs and other specialists on disease-specific partnership programs (e.g. adherence schemes)
- Increased proximity to patients, using digital media to gain feedback via key stakeholders

## Conclusions

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Technological advancements, paired with increasing use of social media and internet-based applications, have generated a fertile ground for digital marketing in the pharmaceuticals sector. Cost containment measures and limitations on target access in most markets are accelerating digital marketing uptake in light of the emerging need to build an integrated, flexible and cost-effective promotion model through multiple, alternative channels.

Applied to stakeholder management, digital marketing can provide several benefits, including efficiency, flexibility, differentiation and extended target coverage. Companies have started to experiment with digital marketing solutions with mixed results, a consequence of limitations in shared vision, poor integration with the current promotion model, lack of organisational support and a limited long term view of the digital marketing opportunity. Initial indications, however, show that digital marketing reveals its true potential when fully integrated with the company's overall business model.

Future trends, including further technological advancements, evolving regulation and underlying social factors, will enhance the opportunity for innovative solutions. This opportunity can be captured by monitoring the progress of digital marketing and realigning internal capabilities and organisational structures accordingly.

L.E.K. believes that the time for adopting a systematic digital marketing approach has come. Leveraging its extensive experience in this area, L.E.K. can help pharmaceutical organisations to define the vision and strategic role for digital marketing, design and implement fully integrated solutions and develop a robust long term approach that will enable them to achieve the considerable benefits available.

L.E.K. Consulting is a global management consulting firm that uses deep industry expertise and analytical rigour to help clients solve their most critical business problems. Founded nearly 30 years ago, L.E.K. employs more than 900 professionals in 20 offices across Europe, the Americas and Asia-Pacific. L.E.K. advises and supports global companies that are leaders in their industries – including the largest private and public sector organisations, private equity firms and emerging entrepreneurial businesses. L.E.K. helps business leaders consistently make better decisions, deliver improved business performance and create greater shareholder returns. For more information, go to [www.lek.com](http://www.lek.com).

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