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# The Importance of KOL Content in a Digital Transformation

Marketers are working to reimagine how they leverage key opinion leader support during COVID-19

**D**ue to restrictions during COVID-19, marketers now face greater challenges in communicating their brand messages to target healthcare professionals (HCPs). More traditional promotional tactics, such as personal selling, conferences, and key opinion leader (KOL)-led meetings, have been significantly impacted—some to the point of no longer existing.

Marketers are pivoting to create brand engagement via webinars and other tactics aligning to virtual conferences. Additionally, they have been looking to integrate brand opinion leaders into more traditional, non-personal multichannel campaigns to maintain share of voice with their key clinical messaging.

## HCPs TRUST CONTENT PRESENTED BY KOLs

In clinical practice, HCPs look to opinion leader experts to provide unbiased, clinically relevant information that guides their treatment decisions. A recent HCP Digital Education Survey indicated that 83% of HCPs are likely to prescribe a new drug if it's endorsed by an opinion leader. This finding was further reinforced at a Cardinal Health Specialty Solutions summit meeting where 156 community oncologists stated that national opinion leaders have significant impact on their treatment behaviors.

Data also shows that HCPs are much more likely to engage with content that is KOL-derived. A ZS Associates study found that emails containing opinion leader clinical insights were the most likely to be opened by HCPs, by a significant margin. In the HCP Digital Education Survey, 85% of the 3,985 HCP respondents ranked KOL-derived content materials as having high educational and clinical value.

## CRITICAL TO THE OMNICHANNEL MARKETING MIX

A comprehensive omnichannel marketing plan requires brand resources to impact target HCPs at all stages of their product adoption curve. Whether a brand is launching or more mature, physicians' interests in brands vary, and different messages resonate with different physicians. A critical time in physicians' adoption of a brand is when they are truly evaluating brand benefits and considering a trial with a new patient.

Currently, HCPs need to be familiar with the core brand story (e.g., mechanism of action, efficacy, dosing, safety, access), as well as seek to understand how opinion leaders and peers are using the brand (e.g., in what patient types will this brand be most effective?). It is then that opinion leader content can clinically educate with a high level of trust. Effectively delivering this KOL content, in a more clinical format and often in collaboration with trusted third-party engagement partners, fills an important role in a comprehensive omnichannel plan.

## LEVERAGING KOLs IN THE NEW NORMAL

In today's market, we are seeing brands with a renewed focus on delivering opinion leader messaging through omnichannel campaigns. With all the increased digital activity in the marketplace due to COVID-19, KOL campaigns can help brands cut through the clutter and continue to drive high levels of brand engagement.

Additionally, digital transformation is creating innovation in the structure of opinion leader campaigns. Innovative ways to leverage KOLs in your omnichannel marketing efforts include:

- Personalized journeys (message, channel, segmentation, geography)
- Virtual KOL video recordings
- KOL roundtables
- Interactive learning modules
- Social media channels
- Regionalization of campaigns with local KOLs
- Providing sales reps with marketing assets featuring KOLs

Digital marketing activities are at an all-time high as brands emphasize non-personal efforts and empower their sales reps to engage virtually. These activities have a significant impact on the amount of messaging received by target HCPs. To execute successful marketing campaigns, brands need to be precise, efficient, thoughtful, and personalized.

Equally as important are the types of messaging that marketers leverage from traditional branded content to more clinical KOL-derived content to drug coverage and reimbursement information. Be sure your partners can help drive the most relevant omnichannel user experience for your customers. **PE**