

## How pharmaceutical brands can succeed on Social Media The 5-Minute Expert Interview

Lisa Skelly is the Director of Client Services at ICUC who works closely with its pharmaceutical customers. Unlike other industries, the pharmaceutical industry faces a unique challenge with social media. Pharmaceutical communication is highly regulated and the penalties for violations are severe. Lisa explains the challenges her accounts experience and how ICUC helps them leverage social media effectively to reach their goals.

### What are the challenges unique to the pharmaceutical industry?

While most businesses have one or two audiences they are trying to talk to, the pharmaceutical industry has three very different groups: buyers, physicians, and patient groups. This makes social media much more challenging for pharmaceutical companies.

### What are your client's goals?

Our client's goal is to provide better patient care. Specifically, the goal of the department we work with is to educate and activate patients living with moderate diseases. So if you ask me, "Has the client asked you to increase sales?" No, they have not. Their goal is bigger than that: They want to educate patients and improve their quality of life. We use our digital and social platforms to help them with that.

### How can social media help your client?

It sounds surprising, but we don't talk much about our client's products. The customer groups we target all focus on ailments. (We never mention the drug.) We segment an audience by ailment group, then we'll bring in experts. Not just physicians, but people who have and live with the ailment. These people are experts because they bring interesting storylines that the community will connect with. Our goal is to develop active communities, and there's probably no better tool for that than social media.

### Why is community management so important?

First off, this is where their audience is. Their audience is on social, but the challenge is that you can't advertise drugs on social media. But it's not as easy as "build it and they will come." We want to be deliberate in creating content for our client.

A lot of it is education-based, since these communities have the potential to drive traffic back to our client's website where they can get even more education. It's true that our client manufactures medications, but their goal is patient care and advocacy. Through social media they are able to provide resources that are useful and life-changing for these ailment groups.

### How did your client come to ICUC?

Before us they were using multiple agencies, which is typical for pharmaceutical companies. Our relationship started with adverse event monitoring, but eventually our client understood how a single agency could look at (and improve) the totality of the relationship of the brand to the patient.

There are a few benefits to this approach: From a risk standpoint, we understand their vulnerability because of our consistent monitoring. At the same time, we are learning about and understanding their audience, which lets us engage more effectively. Now we take it a step further and add reporting and analytics: this lets our client understand their audience as well as we do.

## How is ICUC's approach different?

What a lot of agencies might do when there are a lot of brands under one portfolio is to adopt a "cookie-cutter approach" to ensure consistency across brands. We didn't take that approach. We individualized the scope for every one of their brands, that is, each ailment group. Instead of saying, "this is what you should do overall," we've opted to dive deep into the needs of each individual group.

## Can you describe some insights your client discovered?

After we started providing our full solutions, and helping them use data to better target their audience, we began building out their content strategy, creating their content, and delivering it. Now our client can better facilitate conversations. They have more insight about where they should allocate resources. Should they make new content? Use UGC? Who are the influencers to target?

For example, there are lots of doctors, but are they actually influential on social? Social media isn't a pharmaceutical conference, so your brand needs to think audiences carefully. Genuine experiences let the audience know you're you're talking with them, not talking at them.

## What other opportunities exist that pharma brands might not know about?

User generated content is very under-utilized in pharma. There are lots of ways to use it but it's important to understand the legal aspects of it. Where you can go wrong and where there is risk. There's a lot of legwork.

We understand why our client might be nervous about taking on this additional piece, but fortunately they have us. We take care of the hard part.

## Can you summarize ICUC's solutions for pharmaceutical companies?

Our reporting and analytics helps our client truly know their audience and audience potential. We can help them understand competitor scope, and illuminate the influencer market for particular communities.

Because we are community management and content experts, we can also teach clients how to push the envelope (if you will) to stand out from the competition, while staying within regulations.

And most important is our ability to be a global operation. "Social doesn't sleep," so we are available to report adverse events, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We're proud to be able to provide that level of scale.

We Would Love To Talk  
To You About Your  
Social Media Strategy  
1.800.710.2713