

## Why marketing is critical for health care plans

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*With the rise of increased data and shifting consumer demands, health care marketers are at a critical time for their industry. Educating customers and reaching them with targeted, specific messages will help plans remain relevant and offer better service.*

*In this post, we talk with Lizzy Feliciano, head of health care marketing strategy for LexisNexis Risk Solutions, about changes in the industry and how marketers can best adapt to stay relevant.*

### **Why is marketing as important in health care as in other industries?**

When leveraged appropriately marketing can become a business's lifeline. I see examples

every day of good and bad marketing practices, but none irritate me more than dollars spent sending a good message to the wrong audience or an inappropriate message to the right one! These are mistakes that are costing businesses, especially health care organizations, millions of dollars every year. The Affordable Care Act has created a highly competitive landscape in which payers, providers and vendors alike are all scrambling to differentiate themselves from the pack, win new business and retain the old. It's a race to get the right message in front of the right audience in a timely and cost-effective manner. All of this is to do one thing: influence behavior.

In health care, regulations like Medical Loss Ratio (MLR) make getting marketing right that much more important. When dollars spent on administrative activities are limited, you need to rethink every move and stop frequently to make sure your efforts are yielding return on your investments.

### **How is it different?**

Health care marketing must be highly personalized. You are talking to people about the most important thing they have control over: their health. Whether you are promoting a benefits plan, encouraging them to enroll in a wellness program or educating them on new medical devices or treatment options, you need to make sure the communication is relevant to those reading it. It's not an industry where generic messaging or mass campaigns do the trick.

Targeted marketing is a must in health care. Understanding your audience, the channels through which they consume information and, more specifically, who they are as a person is crucial to crafting highly effective communication strategies. Furthermore, those strategies must evolve with the targets. For example, sending the right message to a family who has a child reaching the age where she qualifies for her own coverage can result in her enrolling in your plan instead of a competitor's. Another example is sending tailored preventative messages to members of a family based on their needs.

### **What role does data play?**

Data alone may not solve many problems. But the analysis and application of data will. With millions of consumers entering the health care system, understanding buying behaviors, household composition and other demographic and socioeconomic factors can help guarantee that your marketing efforts will outperform those of your competition.

Maintaining and managing constantly changing data is critical. A study by Pitney Bowes says that 12% to 17% of the U.S. population moves every year. Yet, only 60% inform the US Postal Service® of their relocations in a timely manner. Why does that matter? The same study confirms that most organizations do not realize that there is a 40-cent to \$1 cost on every piece of mail sent. Do the math! Bad data eats away at your marketing returns.

Capturing data that can get you to your audience effectively and help you deliver a targeted message is not a luxury. It's a necessity.

### **What are some challenges that are unique to the health care industry, and how can**

## marketers overcome them?

The biggest challenge is understanding the generation we are marketing to. Millennials now make up the majority of people who are insured and using the health care system. One of the key characteristics that differentiates millennials from their predecessors is their familiarity with how personal data is shared and used. Marketers must master the art of distinguishing tailored messaging from flat-out creepy messaging.

## Do you expect that data will continue to change the way marketers do their jobs? If so, how?

Absolutely. Marketing is one of those disciplines that could wither away if it does not embrace the use of data to better understand audiences, define the buyers' journeys and confirm optimal channels for communicating value.

*Lizzy Feliciano is an avid brand and customer ambassador. She currently leads health care marketing strategy for LexisNexis Risk Solutions. Lizzy has spent the past 20 years helping health care technology organizations transform their brand, customer acquisition and retention strategies, and messaging approach. She works closely with product, sales and strategy teams to refine go-to-market efforts and optimize marketing spend.*

*Lizzy holds an MBA with a double concentration in Business Management and Marketing from Rollins College's Roy E. Crummer Graduate School as well as a BA in Organizational Communication from Rollins College in Winter Park, Fla. She currently resides in Florida with her husband and 5-year-old twins.*

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