

**OWNED,
EARNED &
PAID MEDIA**
S T R A T E G Y
*for Healthcare
Companies*





The healthcare industry has a brand recognition problem.

According to a recent study of the leading brands worldwide, only one healthcare-specific brand lands in the top 100: Johnson & Johnson, at number 81.¹ The top three? Not surprisingly, Apple, Google and Coca-Cola, each with brand equity worth north of \$75 million.

So why are healthcare brands so unknown?

And how do healthcare marketers fill this gap?



Healthcare Marketing *Is Unique*

Building brand awareness is a challenge for any marketer. But if you're a healthcare marketer, it's even harder. **You have to know how to build brand awareness while also navigating strict regulations on:**

- **Patient privacy**
- **Risk information & fair balance**
- **Claim substantiation**
- **Off-label promotion**

Add to that the challenge of dealing with an extremely complex set of buyers – comprised of healthcare providers, payers and patients, each with their own needs and expectations – and it's no wonder healthcare marketers are lagging behind their peers.

As the healthcare industry continues to be rocked by change, as consumers become more involved with making their own healthcare decisions and as regulatory uncertainties are redefining the market, you can no longer expect the same results from the same old marketing methods. **In order to stand out today, you must place a priority on authentically and meaningfully connecting with your customers.**

Fortunately, it is possible to fill that gap and build that brand awareness. You simply need to understand what your brand has to say and where you need to say it.

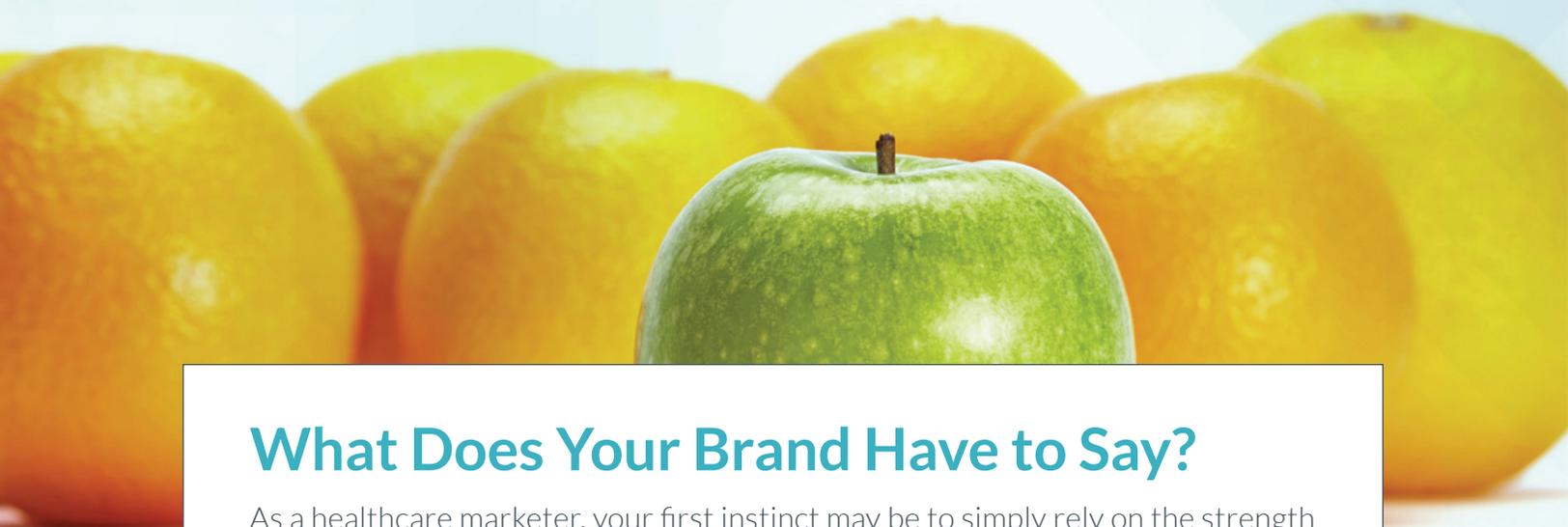


About Your Brand

The first step to building brand awareness is to understand what your brand really means. Your brand is how customers distinguish your company from all the other competitors out there. It could be the result of your company reputation, the outstanding products and services you offer, or even just a stellar spokesperson or ad campaign.

It's more than just name recognition. Your brand *elements* might include your company name or logo, but your *brand* is the concept your customers connect with. Your brand is what your customers think of when they hear your company's name.

Your brand is the most valuable asset you have.



What Does Your Brand Have to Say?

As a healthcare marketer, your first instinct may be to simply rely on the strength of your products or services. But in today's world of savvy consumers, building brand awareness requires building relationships. And building relationships means you must have something to say that is informative, valuable and even entertaining, rather than self-serving and focused on the sale.

In other words, building brand awareness starts with content marketing.



Overview of Content Marketing

As explained by the Content Marketing Institute:



Content marketing is the art of communicating with your customers and prospects without selling. Instead of pitching your products or services, you are delivering information that makes your buyer more intelligent. The essence of this strategy is the belief that if we, as businesses, deliver consistent, ongoing valuable information to buyers, they ultimately reward us with their business and loyalty.²



And they do. In fact, content marketing holds such potential that as many as 60 percent of North American marketers plan to increase their investment in it over the next 12 months.³

There is perhaps no industry better suited for content marketing than healthcare. After all, few other environments place such a high priority on education. Your content marketing strategy should reflect this natural need for buyer education, by focusing and amplifying your efforts.



Getting Started with Content Marketing

So how do you know what your brand has to say? Here are some questions that can lend the clarity you need to get started with content marketing:



THE AUDIENCE

- Who is your audience?
- Are multiple stakeholders involved?



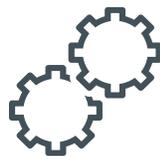
THE PROBLEM

- What problem does your audience face?
- Is your audience aware of this problem?
- Does each stakeholder have the same problem?



THE SOLUTION

- How do you help solve this problem?
- Are there different solutions for different stakeholders?



THE CONTENT

- What information can you use to educate your audience about ...
 - > The problem?
 - > Your solution?
 - > How other solutions compare to your solution?

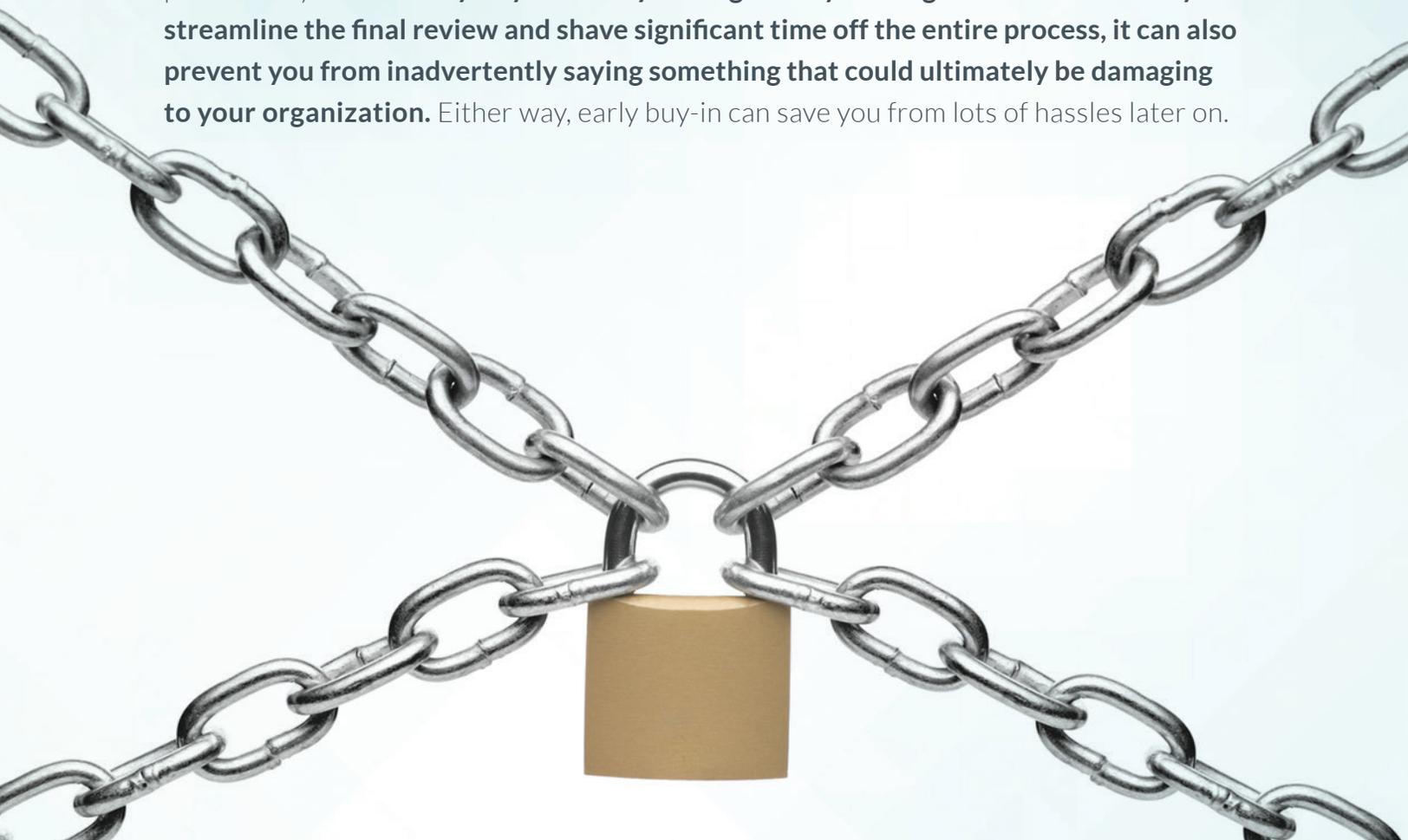
Your answers will point you in the right direction to create the content your audience wants to see. This content may take the form of blog posts, white papers, case studies, videos, press releases, articles and more. **Develop the content that makes sense for your audience, and focus on being educational, not pushy.**



The Regulatory & **Legal Review Process**

Healthcare marketers are highly regulated in what they can and can't say. FDA restrictions and government regulations such as HIPAA privacy requirements still apply in every aspect of your content marketing. Your content should never, ever mention anything specific to a patient or a patient's treatment. And when making any statement that could be considered a claim, be sure you can back your statement up with verifiable data.

If your organization has a regulatory or legal team, it's critical you involve them early in the content creation process. FDA and government fines are no laughing matter, and some penalties can potentially shut down your entire marketing department for a specified timeframe. Therefore, it's a good idea to solicit feedback on your content as soon in the process as you can. **Early buy-in from your regulatory and legal team can not only streamline the final review and shave significant time off the entire process, it can also prevent you from inadvertently saying something that could ultimately be damaging to your organization.** Either way, early buy-in can save you from lots of hassles later on.





Where Does Your Brand Need to Be?

When you're building your brand, you need a messaging platform that will link buyers with your company and your products or services. The problem is these buyers may be all over the place; they may be online, on social media, listening to podcasts, visiting conferences, reading medical journals, reading consumer magazines...

the possibilities are nearly endless.

TOO MUCH, TOO SOON?

As a result, many marketers make the mistake of trying to be everywhere at once. In fact, the average enterprise brand uses 17 different tactics to distribute their content.⁴ And yet as many as six in 10 feel they are not being effective with their strategy.⁵

While establishing your brand in as many platforms as possible may be a good goal to ultimately strive for, it's best to start out slowly. Choose one initial platform and master it; only when you feel comfortable with this platform should you add another.

In the pages that follow, we explore 4 possible platforms: **owned media, earned media, paid media and shared media.** Not all of these platforms will be right for your brand; each has its advantages and disadvantages, so consider them all and make the choice that's right for your brand. **Whichever platforms you choose, leverage them strategically to promote your content and build the brand awareness that will attract and retain customers, drive sales and increase profits.**





Build Brand Awareness Through **OWNED MEDIA**

Owned media is content you create yourself and have total control over – your company website or blog, for instance.

As you proceed in your content marketing strategy by creating new, unique and informative content, you should always promote this material on your owned media.

YOUR WEBSITE

Your website should be the hub of your entire brand awareness strategy. Everything you do with your content should point customers back to your website for more information.

Here are a few tips for building a website that also builds brand awareness:



Focus your home page. When customers come to your home page, the first thing they should see is your brand message. Every customer should immediately understand what your brand stands for. Anything else on your home page is secondary to this priority.



Link to foundational content. Next, make sure a strong call to action showcasing your biggest and best content – possibly a white paper, special report, eBook or other major piece of foundational information – is highly visible. You may want to require customers to provide an email address before they can access this information, which will allow you to send additional information to the customer, such as a newsletter or links to blog posts.



Build a library of resources. Don't stop with this foundational content. Keep developing more content that educates your audience about its problem, your solution and how other solutions compare to your solution. Your goal is to build a rich arsenal of informative materials in many shapes and formats. Group these resources together on your website so readers can easily find this content.



YOUR BLOG

Your blog can be an incredibly powerful brand awareness tool – as long as you do it well. It's critical that you invest the time and effort to develop the right volume of smart, strategic blog content.

((Marketers with blogs generate **67 PERCENT** more leads.⁶

Consider this point: Marketers with blogs generate **67 percent more leads.**⁶ And yet marketers with small blogs (fewer than 10 posts) generate results similar to those with **no blog.**⁷ In other words, if you can't do it right, don't do it at all.

How often should you add blog posts?

The answer is whatever frequency is realistic for you to consistently maintain. The more the better – so long as it is steady. Decide what schedule will work for you and then make it a commitment.



What should you write about?

Look around and you'll find potential topics everywhere:

- **Think about aspects of the audience's problem it might not know about.** What impact does this problem have on patients, physicians, hospitals or healthcare in general? Create several posts that drill in on each stakeholder perspective.
- **Think about recent industry news your customers might not be aware of.** Is there new medical research in your service area? New statistics on the impact of a disease your product helps manage?
- **Look at data, including keyword research and analytics on your website, to find topics your customers are interested in.** If a standout blog post gets a ton of traffic, then keep writing about that topic!

How do you build a community with a blog?

It just takes a few additional steps to build a community of brand believers:

- **Encourage readers to share your post** on their social networks by including social sharing buttons.
- **Encourage readers to leave comments** by ending blog posts with an open-ended question and asking readers for their thoughts.
- **Encourage readers to stay on your website longer** by including links to additional content on the same or similar topics.

SECOND



Build Brand Awareness Through **EARNED MEDIA**

Earned media is content that someone else creates – for example, word of mouth reputation or articles written about your company. Earned media is an important platform for building brand awareness because it carries with it a lot of credibility. This is particularly important in healthcare, where credibility is everything.

Earned media is challenging because you have absolutely no control over it. At the end of the day, you have no say in what a journalist writes about your brand or whether the editor decides to publish it. This loss of control can be a concern for healthcare marketers who face strict regulations as to what they can and can't say in their marketing.

Also, be prepared to spend some time on this. Earned media doesn't happen by accident; it requires a deliberate strategy for building trust and creating communities.

However, the payoff with earned media can be tremendous. Consider this: Nielsen research has found that earned media is overwhelmingly the most effective source of information impacting consumers at all stages of the purchase process.

A whopping 92 percent of the world's population trust the recommendations of other people about products and services.¹⁰ Even more

impressive, articles from credible journalists lifted brand familiarity 88 percent more than branded content and 50 percent more than user reviews.¹¹ In other words, earned media is simply too powerful to ignore.





Accessing Earned Media

With earned media, you work to influence people to write about or publish information about your company. Your goal is to gain a reputation as a leader in your industry by being mentioned as often as possible by other industry leaders.

There are multiple ways to do this:

PRESS RELEASES

Traditionally, earned media was the realm of public relations, and its primary tool was the press release. Even in today's digital age, the traditional press release is still critical for accessing earned media. Most editors are hungry for great content, and their needs far exceed what they could ever possibly produce themselves. This means they want to see your press release. And it presents a huge opportunity for you.

If you can provide an editor with a great idea for a story – or better yet, provide the actual story – you'll not only position your brand as a leader for the publication's readers, you'll position your brand as a hero to the editor.

GUEST BLOGGING

Earning guest blog posts can also enhance your other media outreach and can allow you to reach even more people and create a bigger impact for your brand.

Look for blogs relevant to both your industry and your audience, ideally with a good-sized and engaged audience. Once you've identified some targets, take time to become familiar with the blog. If it feels like a good fit, pitch the editor of the blog with an idea you have for a guest post. You'll need to be clear that the post will be educational and engaging, not just a thinly veiled advertisement.

WORD OF MOUTH

This can include everything from good old fashioned customer referrals to online product reviews and mentions on social media. Whatever the platform, you want to create "brand evangelists" who are so excited about your product or service that they're willing to do your marketing for you.

How do you do this? By engaging with your customers. Give people a reason to get involved and a clear way to contribute. Ask for their opinions. Let them tell you what matters most in their eyes. And, most importantly, listen. Work to build a community that believes in what your brand stands for.



Build Brand Awareness Through **PAID MEDIA**

Paid media is content you pay a channel to promote. Traditionally this has meant paid advertising, such as print ads or television/radio commercials. But in today's digital world, paid media often refers to display ads, paid search and native advertising.

What is native advertising, you ask? It's the latest buzzword for an old print publishing technique formerly known as advertorials—but with a twist. Today, native advertising is more likely to refer to sponsored content, such as sponsored posts on Facebook feeds or sponsored articles on a magazine's website.

PROS AND CONS OF PAID MEDIA

Paid media, in all its formats, can present you with a real opportunity to take your brand to the next level, by achieving a larger scale and reaching potentially millions of people with the content you produce.

Paid media is also often expensive and lacks the credibility of earned media or even owned media. In some cases, search engines will penalize your website if a paid advertorial is not properly disclosed as such. All of this means paid media is a hotly debated topic right now within marketing circles.

Nonetheless, with so much “noise” out there consumers must wade through, building brand awareness increasingly requires an integrated approach that leverages every channel available: owned, shared, earned and paid. If you can find a strategic opportunity with a reputable publication or trusted social network, paid media may make sense for your brand.

After all, even the most relevant content won't promote itself.



With that in mind, here are some guidelines for adopting a paid media strategy that won't sacrifice the credibility that is so important to healthcare marketers:

KEEP IT HIGH QUALITY

The trick with paid media is to apply the same high standards with your content as you do with any other media channel. Your customers want content that educates, informs or even entertains. They don't want commercials.

KEEP IT TRANSPARENT

Your readers are smart. Don't try to get away with something by tricking them into thinking they're reading unbiased, journalistic content. Be clear and conspicuous with your disclosure to avoid aggravating your readers and possibly being penalized by search engines.

KEEP IT ALIGNED WITH YOUR BUSINESS GOALS

Understand how your sponsored content keys off of your other content so all of the individual puzzle pieces fit together to form your larger, cohesive brand awareness strategy.



FOURTH



Build Brand Awareness Through **SHARED MEDIA**

Shared media is content that is co-created through social interaction. It's a user review on Yelp, a conversation on your Facebook page or a series of retweets on Twitter.

Shared media can propagate quickly, spreading from one individual's social network to others, giving your organization the necessary "word of mouth" marketing it needs in today's digital world. But you can only garner this sort of positive attention if you are first concentrating on owned, earned and paid media. You cannot skip directly to engaging comments and five-star reviews without a strong content marketing strategy already in place.

ACCESSING SHARED MEDIA

To capitalize on the power of shared media to build your brand awareness, you must be active on social media. But the sheer enormity of social media can present both exciting opportunities and daunting challenges. On average, marketers leverage as many as six different social media platforms to build brand awareness, the most popular being Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.⁸ How do you know which one is right for your brand?

Each channel has its own nuances, approaches and personalities. Brenda S. Stoltz recently tweeted a terrific analogy: "I like to say that Twitter is like a bar, Facebook is your living room and LinkedIn is the local chamber of commerce."⁹





Obviously, that still leaves a lot of room to cover. But healthcare consumers tend to be highly active on social media platforms, so you'll need to figure this out. **As you try to decide which platform to leverage, here are a few thoughts to consider:**

FOCUS

It's best to have a tightly defined strategy. Trying to be all things to all people is a recipe for disaster. Find out where your top customers are, and focus on making sure that's where your brand is, too. If you're not sure if a platform will yield results, put it off until you have more social media experience and can better assess the pros and cons of that channel.

LISTEN

Success with social media requires more listening and less talking. Dip your feet into the social media waters by paying attention to what your customers are saying online and responding to them. This will give you the best insights into what's most important to your customers. Then you can gradually introduce content and spark conversations around these issues your customers care about.

REPURPOSE AND AMPLIFY

Social media works best when you have something interesting to say. Fortunately, you don't have to recreate the wheel here. All that content you've added to your website? Repurpose it for social media! Announce new blog posts to your followers on Facebook. Take key thoughts from white papers and tweet them. Share videos on YouTube. Use social media as a bullhorn to amplify the content you're already creating.

BE CONSISTENT

Participating in social media is more like running a marathon than a sprint. This is a long-haul strategy that will take time. But if you consistently produce amazing, high-quality content and work to build your audience of engaged, high-quality followers, you will eventually achieve a critical mass. Once that happens, you'll be amazed at how quickly your efforts will spread. Your followers will reach out and share your content with their followers, who will reach out to others... and before you know it, you'll have caught lightning in a bottle.



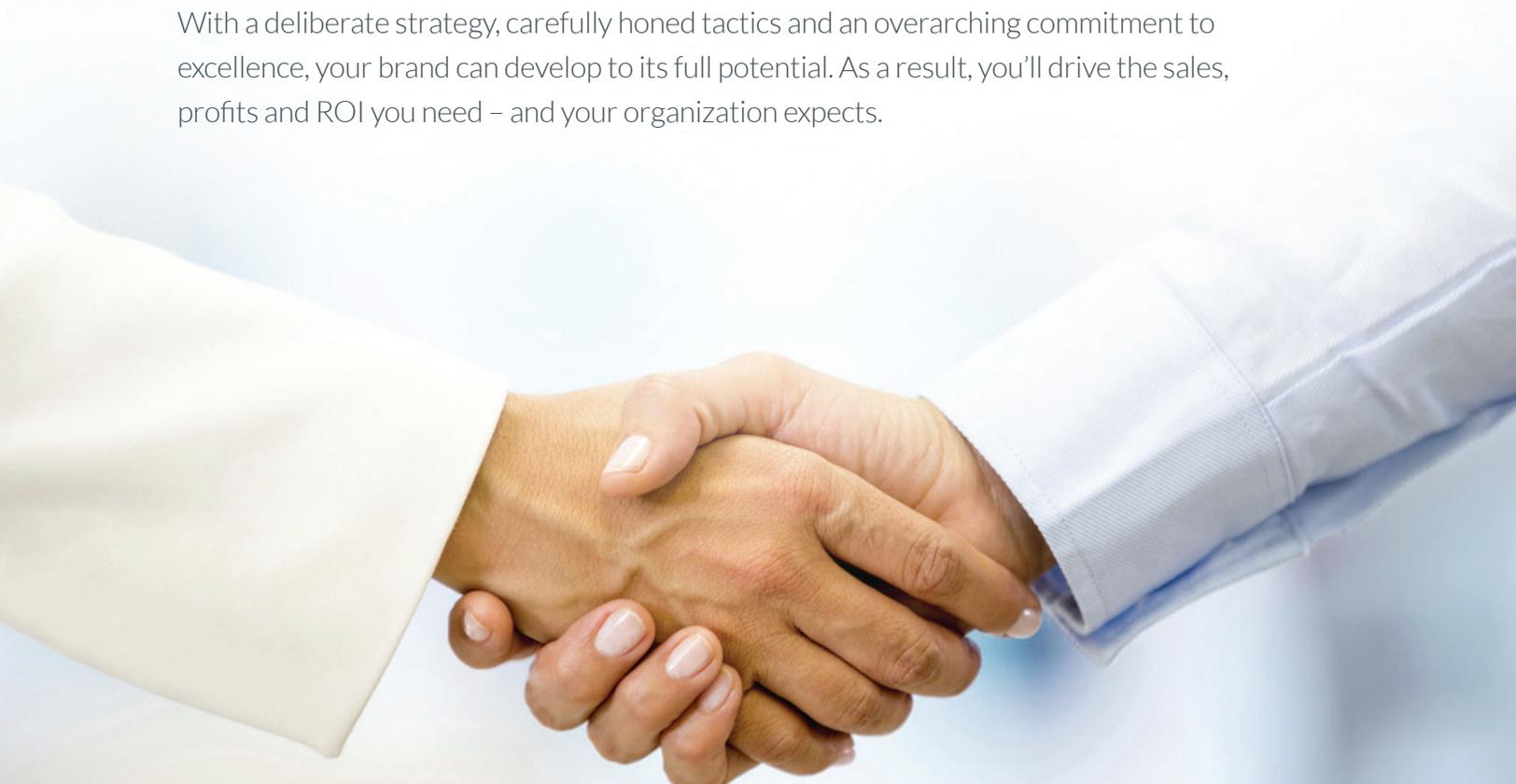
It's All About Trust

Although healthcare marketing has been behind the curve lately, the industry is quickly approaching a tipping point. Finally, healthcare marketers are starting to recognize that their customers are smart, technologically savvy and hungry for answers. As healthcare marketers start to meet this demand for great content, and as they continue to leverage all of the content platforms available to them, awareness for healthcare brands will only continue to grow.

Ultimately, building brand awareness in the healthcare market is all about building trust. The best way to build that trust is to be informative, helpful and trustworthy – using every tool you can:

- **Begin with a rock-solid website** that makes your brand message crystal clear.
- **Build trust by helping journalists and editors** promote your brand as a credible expert.
- **Reinforce this message and keep your brand visible** through careful paid promotions.
- **Share your brand story on strategic social networks** to connect and engage with customers.

With a deliberate strategy, carefully honed tactics and an overarching commitment to excellence, your brand can develop to its full potential. As a result, you'll drive the sales, profits and ROI you need – and your organization expects.





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