

Contently

State of Healthcare Content Marketing

A Prescription For Success



Editor's Note

One of my first memories of the internet was researching health symptoms that would convince my mom to let me take off school; though I'd had strep throat before, I couldn't quite remember how to fake it. Luckily, there was AOL Health, whose answers gave me a blissful 48 hours of playing video games and sucking on ice pops until the results from the doctor came back negative.

Eighteen years later, researching health questions remains one of the most popular activities on the web. As Herbert Lui explains in this eBook, it's even more popular than social media. For healthcare organizations, creating content for the web is a high-stakes game; it's a sensitive, highly-regulated endeavor, but when done well, the benefits can be huge. Read on to discover the trends driving the evolution of healthcare content marketing, the secrets of organizations that are breaking through, and what lies ahead in the next few years. Enjoy.

—Joe Lazauskas
Contently Editor in Chief

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	4
II. Trends	6
III. Best-in-Class Examples	14
IV. Expert Advice	18
V. What's Next	19
VI. Conclusion	22

What do people do online?

The most popular activity is checking email. The second is using a search engine. And the third? Looking for answers to health questions, according to a [Pew Internet survey](#). Indeed, the appetite for healthcare content on the Web is huge;

A whopping 80 percent of respondents to the Pew survey reported going online for answers to their health questions.

And the available information is clearly something people value. According to [a study conducted by Philips](#), 1 of every 10 people said if it weren't for Web-based health information, they'd be dead or severely incapacitated.

For the healthcare industry, content has great power, but—to paraphrase Spiderman's Uncle Ben—it also comes with great responsibility. After all, if you're a healthcare provider, the ramifications of misleading content are much greater than if you're a software company. People's lives are in your hands.

94% OF PATIENTS
SAY BRAND REP IS CRUCIAL IN
SELECTING A FACILITY



26% OF HOSPITALS
CONNECT WITH READERS VIA
SOCIAL MEDIA



The potential benefits of content marketing are huge for the healthcare industry. A recent study [conducted by Google](#) shows that brand reputation plays a crucial role in selecting a facility for 94 percent of patients. [One hospital's media coverage increased ninefold through their brand publishing efforts.](#) As we'll cover later, content marketing has delivered tangible benefits for healthcare organizations such as the Cleveland Clinic, Johns Hopkins Medicine, and the Mayo Clinic.

Still, despite the potential upside, healthcare organizations seem to move slower than other companies when it comes to content marketing. The [Content Marketing](#)

[Institute discovered](#) that the health industry seems to be lagging up to two years behind other industries. Similarly, according [to this infographic from SparkReport](#), only 26 percent of hospitals connect with readers via social media.

Whether a brand is looking to start a marketing initiative or vying to improve existing efforts, understanding the lay of the land can mean the difference between success and failure.

Here is a primer on how content marketing is evolving in the healthcare space, starting with seven emerging trends.

Trends: The Age of Promiscuous Media

Healthcare usage per social media platform

FACEBOOK 96%



YOUTUBE 28%



TWITTER 22%



A [survey conducted by National Research](#) found that 96 percent of nearly 23,000 respondents used Facebook to gather information about healthcare, with 28 percent using YouTube and 22 percent using Twitter. That's not just in healthcare, either; journalist Felix Salmon points out that we're entering an age of what he calls "[promiscuous media](#)," where a monogamous relationship with a single publishing platform simply makes no sense.

"Now we have a multiplicity of options, and it's silly not to take advantage of them," Salmon writes. "Media organizations have generally embraced their journalists publishing ultra-short pieces on Twitter; the future, I think, is going to be ever further in that direction."



What consumers are saying about information gathered via social media

WOULD IT AFFECT YOUR DECISION TO SEEK A SECOND OPINION?

45% Yes, it would

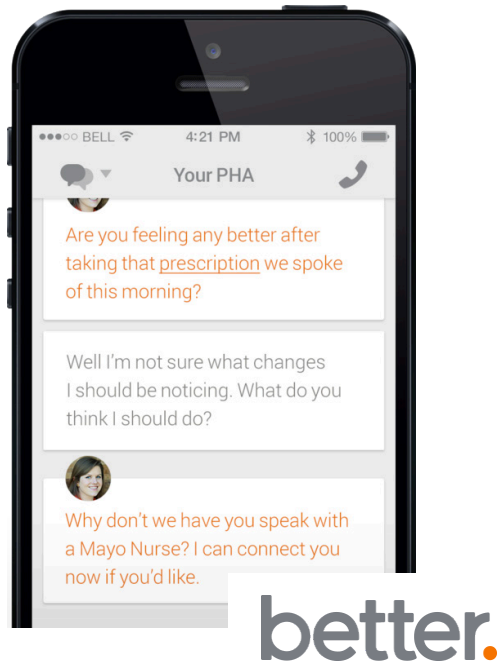
WOULD IT AFFECT HOW YOU COPE WITH CHRONIC CONDITION OR DIET & EXERCISE?

40% Yes, it would

While social media can be engaging for many verticals, it is particularly entwined with healthcare. As [a study by PwC points out](#), “45 [percent] of consumers said information found via social media would affect their decisions to seek a second opinion. More than 40 [percent] of respondents reported that information found via social media would affect the way they coped with a chronic condition or their approach to diet and exercise.”

Some healthcare organizations have begun to take advantage of this trend. For example, the Down Syndrome Program at Boston Children’s Hospital has been [extremely active in engaging its community on Facebook](#), garnering over 5,000 likes.

Strategic Partnerships



A few healthcare organizations have smartly combined their resources to expand each of their content marketing networks. For example, the University of Cincinnati, The Ohio State University, and Case Western Reserve University partnered to create [NetWellness](#), a Q&A site similar to Quora—albeit with a much more retro design.

Strategic partnerships have also been used to create brand affiliations, whereby healthcare provider companies can combine efforts to showcase more credible work. For example, St. Vincent's Medical Center became a member of [MD Anderson Cancer Network](#).

Lastly, healthcare organizations may also invest in their own startups and collaborate with them to better connect content with consumers. This is exactly what the [Mayo Clinic did](#) with their mobile startup [Better](#).

A Focus on Contagious Content

Historically, healthcare content has conjured images of brochures, white papers, and dense reports. However, the best of today's healthcare content is much more shareable. Companies now leverage the data they've collected to become more [transparent and tell patients what procedures actually cost](#). They then format the [information as infographics](#), [SlideShares](#), and newsworthy studies.

The Mayo Clinic has earned a reputation as [the most-trusted resource](#) for medical information, and that helps brand advocates spread the word. A [study](#) found that 95 percent of Mayo Clinic patients stated that they actively promote the Mayo Clinic brand to others.

The LinkedIn Social CEO

No longer will physicians be the only public representatives of hospitals. Much like how thought leadership is important to B2B organizations, it will be important for healthcare CEOs to be thought leaders in their respective fields.

Leaders such as Scripps Health CEO [Chris Van Gorder](#), University Hospitals Case Medical Center Chief Medical Officer [Michael R. Anderson](#), and Mayo Clinic CEO [Wyatt Decker](#) are all active on Twitter—and you can find a list that includes 47 more [here](#).

David L. Katz, MD, MPH fluencer
Director, Yale University Prevention Research Center

253 Posts | 375,384 followers | Follow

Ebola and Rabies Revisited: Of Conditions, and Conditional Probabilities

August 09, 2014 | 4,195 views | 232 likes | 40 comments

Tweet 9 | Share 60 | +1 9 | Share 795

Some people reacted to my prior column on Ebola as if I were comparing it to rabies. I was doing so only incidentally. My primary intent wasn't that comparison, per se, but an argument against a reflexive, "rabid" fear of Ebola closing our borders to the return of Americans rendering care abroad. I used "rabid" as it is often used in the vernacular.

But as a by-product of that rhetorical choice, I did wind up comparing the two viruses superficially. Now that the World Health Organization has declared the Ebola outbreak a public health emergency, we might constructively revisit that comparison.

When I juxtaposed Ebola and rabies, some commenters endorsed the comparison; some protested. The objections had a main theme: rabies is treatable. Ebola is not. I bet to differ.

David's Recent Posts

- Under Our Skin**
August 12, 2014
- Ebola and Rabies Revisited: Of Conditions, and Conditional Probabilities**
August 9, 2014

See all ▶

Top Posts

Today	This Week	All
Jolie Miller, PMP Why It's Okay to Do Laundry When You Work at Home 165,223 views		
Matthew Tukaki The lies people tell on a resume 125,565 views		
Bob Sutton Robin Williams And The No Asshole Rule 97,176 views		
James A. Davis Jr. The Silent Killer 84,369 views		
James Citrin How to Get the Job When You Don't Have the Experience 65,365 views		

See more ▶

Prominent figures like [David L. Katz](#), director of the Yale University Prevention Research Center, and [Steven J. Thompson](#), CEO of Johns Hopkins Medicine International and senior vice president of Johns Hopkins Medicine, have taken advantage of [LinkedIn's Influencer program](#) to amass a large audience for their thought leadership. Katz has [written hundreds of posts](#) (the most recent of which are about health and wellness) and amassed over 350,000 followers on the platform, and Thompson has amassed over 13,000 followers with [23 posts](#) at the time this e-book was drafted.

A Healthy Diagnosis for Video

The Pew Research Center's Internet Project [conducted a study](#) that found that 47 percent of Internet users share photos or videos they found elsewhere. Video has always been an engaging channel for content marketers, and this is no exception in the healthcare industry.

[Children's Healthcare of Atlanta](#) has over a thousand subscribers on their channel, which serves both as a way to engage customers using different forms of media and a method to draw visitors back to their owned media properties. West Michigan nonprofit [Spectrum Health also uploads a new video to YouTube almost every week](#). The Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children has [attributed over \\$100,000](#) in fundraising to their video campaigns.



Fast-growing digital media companies also see social video as the future. As [the Nieman Journalism Lab reported](#), BuzzFeed's strategy now makes their videos more shareable by leveraging a viewer's identity, compelling them emotionally, or interesting them in sharing information. These tactics work well for healthcare organizations. When the [Cleveland Clinic produced a video to encourage its staff to be more empathetic](#), they also brought it to a couple of conferences, where viewers felt compelled enough to share it via social media. After noticing the response at the conferences, the Cleveland Clinic [decided to upload this video to their YouTube channel](#), and it quickly amassed over one million views.

Contributing to Medical Journals

Contributing to medical journals has always been an important content marketing task for healthcare practitioners. Unfortunately, given their lack of time, the activity is often delegated to ghostwriters, who may be better with words but not necessarily as qualified to write about medicine.

The challenge presents a conflict of interest: Hospitals want their healthcare providers to help attract more patients to their facilities, but in order to preserve credibility, these providers must enforce objectivity as a core value and not submit articles that are entirely self-serving. In the long run, objectivity will pay off much more handsomely than the short-term revenue from an article embellishing a hospital's capabilities or treatments.

Although contributions by doctors to medical journals have [helped boost companies' bottom lines in the past](#), they have also led to some severe health problems for

individuals and huge backlashes as a result. For example, [as reported in The New York Times](#), pharmaceutical company Wyeth is being sued over some of the drugs and therapies that have been covered in journals by ghostwriters.

Many of these medical journals fail to [note when articles are ghostwritten](#). Given the sensitive nature of this information and the serious implications it could have on people's lives, healthcare providers submitting work to publications and journals need to disclose relevant information and bylines more transparently. The first organizations to do this will be able to set a better trend for the industry and have an opportunity to establish themselves as thought leaders because of their objectivity.

The Mobile Movement

The whole world is going mobile, and doctors are following suit. [Studies estimate](#) there will be 500 million users of mobile health applications by 2015, and 50 percent of the 3.4 billion smartphone and tablet users will have downloaded mobile health applications by 2018. According to [Becker's Hospital Review](#), the mobile health market reached \$718 million in the U.S. in 2011.

Healthcare institutions see the value of mobile: the Mayo Clinic's investment in Better, Phoenix Children's Hospital's [mobile apps](#), and Eli Lilly and Company's [mobile solutions](#) are all indications that healthcare content marketing will continue to go mobile.

Moving forward, mobile apps and experiences will be the key for healthcare organizations to obtain customer information and tailor content experiences towards each user.

500 mill

MOBILE HEALTHCARE USERS BY 2015

50% of devices

WILL HAVE A HEALTH APPLICATION BY 2018

Best-in-Class Examples: Mayo Clinic Goes Micro

The screenshot shows the Mayo Clinic website's navigation bar with the logo, a search bar, and links for appointments, doctor searches, and patient accounts. Below the navigation is the 'DISCOVERY'S EDGE' section, described as 'MAYO CLINIC'S ONLINE RESEARCH MAGAZINE'. It features eight article cards arranged in two rows of four. Each card includes a representative image, a title, and issue information.

Image Description	Article Title	Issue
Cake with '25 YEARS' on it	Nicotine Dependence Center: Celebrating 25 years of leading-edge addiction research	Volume 10, Issue 1
Person with a large cigarette	Putting the hurt on tobacco addiction	Volume 10, Issue 1
Network diagram of people	Rochester Epidemiology Project: A boon for researchers and patients	Volume 10, Issue 1
CRU building and bus	The road to discovery runs through the Clinical Research Unit	Volume 10, Issue 1
Woman in purple shirt	Reducing the panic of fecal incontinence	Volume 9, Issue 2
Two men in suits	Genomics: The dawn of a new medical era	Volume 9, Issue 2
Person with a glowing body	Early warning system for recurrent prostate cancer	Volume 9, Issue 2
Person with a heart and brain	Gene therapy and regenerative medicine lend hope to diabetes treatment	Volume 9, Issue 2

It would be impossible to examine healthcare content marketing without bringing up the Mayo Clinic, one of the organizations that has gained immense recognition and credibility in recent years. While their entire content marketing strategy is worth looking at, one particular aspect to note is their use of micro-properties.

They [run a blog dedicated](#) to sharing uplifting and inspirational stories, authored by both Mayo Clinic employees and patients. They also have an online magazine titled [Discovery's Edge](#), which is dedicated to sharing information about recent developments in medical science research. Another popular media property is their collection of blogs that details how to live with various types of health challenges (such as [diabetes](#) or [cancer](#)).

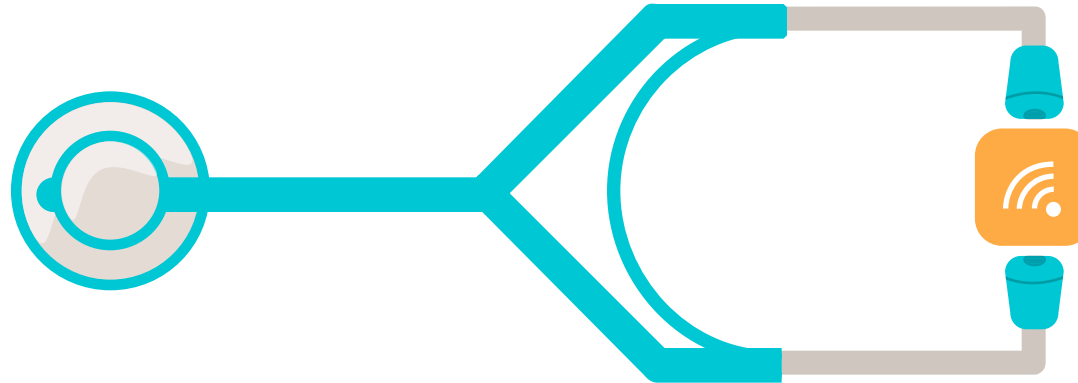
The controversy with ghostwriting and sponsored editorial has led traditional health publications to lose the credibility they once had. That leaves the field clear for other influencers to chime in, and companies such as the Mayo Clinic have done so with much success.

Cleveland Clinic Health Hub

One of the Cleveland Clinic's major digital initiatives is known as [Health Hub](#). It features health and wellness content from 40 of their leading healthcare providers, which not only helps establish the credibility of each provider's credibility, but also bolsters the Cleveland Clinic's own reputation. The Cleveland Clinic also develops their content for [specific types of readers](#).

[According to Ragan](#), the site receives over a million visitors each month. They create extremely high-quality, credible content while considering the shareability of each article. Their process for fine-tuning what their readers want is best exemplified by the site's newsletter, which has 50,000 subscribers and an impressive click-through rate of almost 60 percent.

Johns Hopkins Medical Podcasts



Johns Hopkins Medicine has been running their podcast, [PodMed](#), for nearly a decade. Although podcasts seem like dated media, they're [bouncing back because of the wider availability of hardware](#) and distribution channels. While RSS used to be the main source of distributing a podcast, platforms like SoundCloud, iTunes, and Swell enable people to get their content to audience's podcasts much easier.

As [Swell mobile product manager Semil Shah writes](#), "What makes podcasts exciting right now, in 2014, is that while the battle for consumer attention and eyeballs is fierce on the Web and on mobile, the fight for our ears is more manageable."

Phoenix Children's Hospital Apps

Phoenix Children's Hospital connects with young parents through the [Car Seat Helper App for iPhone, iPad and Android](#). The mobile app is extremely content-heavy but is presented in a medium suited for the evolving landscape. Harvard professor Sunil Gupta [wrote in the Harvard Business Review](#), "People simply don't like ads on their mobile devices. ... [F]or the time being, apps are the best ways to win the hearts and minds of mobile consumers."

Mobile devices are extremely effective in healthcare. A [Google Think study](#) showed 44 percent of patients who research hospitals on their mobile devices scheduled an appointment.

44% of patients

WHO RESEARCH HOSPITALS ON MOBILE DEVICES
SCHEDULED AN APPOINTMENT

Expert Advice

Straight from the front line, here are observations from experts about where healthcare content marketing is headed:

ADAPTIVE JOURNALISM

“Technology is changing so fast, we need to be able to move content from print to Internet to mobile to video in a seamless way.” —Paul Matsen, Cleveland Clinic CMO, in an interview with [Healthgrades](#)

MOBILE, MOBILE, MOBILE

“Mobile must be your priority number one.” —Bart Foster, chief strategy officer and founder of SoloHealth, in a column on [MediaPost](#)

LOOK OUTSIDE THE INDUSTRY

“Every content strategist should constantly be roaming the Web for new ideas, especially outside our own industry.” —Ron Shaull, director of writing and content services at The Ohio State University Medical Center, in an interview with Contently

What's Next

Custom content will be the prescription for healthcare companies.

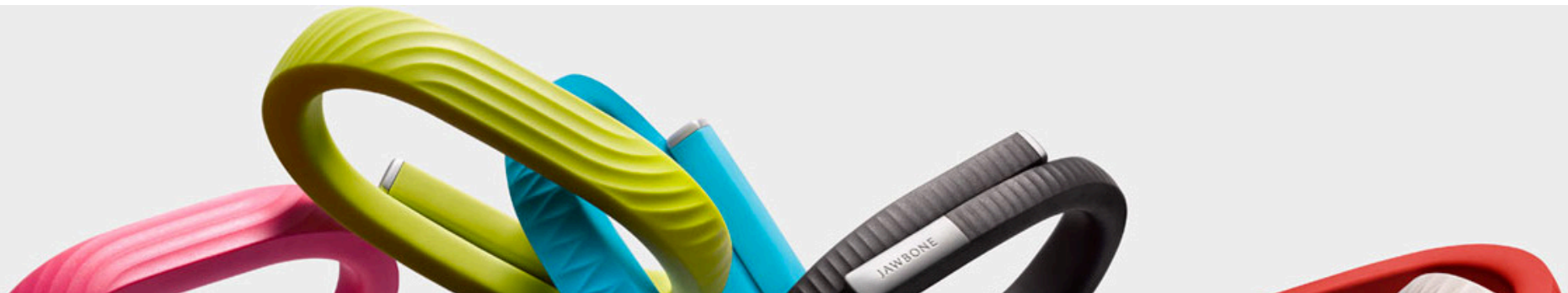
According to [The Drum](#), 78 percent of CMOs think custom content is the future of marketing. This is exceptionally relevant to the field of healthcare. As Shaull said, “More hospitals and hospital systems are looking beyond the role of their websites as one-way catalogs of information to see them as interactive channels focused on the needs of the user.”

A growing portion of healthcare content marketing will focus on tailoring the information specifically to the individual user. For example, [Better](#) is a service dedicated to connecting information with the user, sometimes through live chats with expert doctors and nurses.

Wearable technology will become the new utility content.

The Quantified Self movement is dedicated to better understanding one's body through metrics and regular data tracking. Inspired by this idea, Eli Lilly and Company created a mobile app named [Talking Progress](#), which has a feature “Mood Diary” that helps users track their emotions through metrics: “On a scale of 1–10, how are you feeling?”

With wearable technology, like [Jawbone Up](#), which tracks sleep patterns and heart rates, the opportunities for leveraging Quantified Self are growing. The data collected through wearable technology could be another way to help brands tailor their content to users.



Healthcare will get their curation on

The overwhelming amount of content available on social media and on various healthcare publications opens up opportunities for experts to curate and share the high-quality material with their audiences.

As former SVP and editor-at-large of WedMD Clare Martorana highlights in an [interview with Wisdom Works](#), an effective health professional's role is shifting from one of creation to curation. The Mayo Clinic has [created a platform](#) for aggregating interesting posts via social media and their own experts.

Everyone will look to own, not rent

Although paid marketing has been a reliable method for getting content more exposure, its pricing fluctuations could make it a less sustainable option in the future. For example, Google's PPC click-through rates [hit new highs](#) only a few months ago.

This lack of control means other channels should be used primarily to grow owned media channels. One could look to increase the circulation of email newsletters to grow the audience of a website or blog. While it may not be cheap, the cost of owned media remains constant, and it will be an asset that pays off in the long run.

The wellness wave will swell

As MedCity Media founder Chris Seper [highlighted in a Twitter Q&A](#), wellness is a crucial part of healthcare content marketing. While addressing specific types of illnesses or conditions will always be important, reaching and engaging the masses means shifting the discussion from treatment and recovery to prevention and maintenance.

Advocate Health Care's brand journalism site, [health enews](#), has been featured on Fox News and supported by celebrities like Christina Applegate. In addition to discussing health issues, the site also features content such as "[Moving shouldn't be a pain in the back!](#)," "[3 tips to curb cancer cost concerns](#)," and "[5 reasons to add peaches to your diet](#)."

Conclusion

Content is a vital part of any healthcare organization. Not only does it help inform and engage a huge portion of the human population, it also rewards brand publishers with additional public coverage, enhanced credibility, and increased earnings.

The landscape of healthcare content marketing is evolving rapidly, which provides opportunities for newcomers and established organizations alike to engage readers in more meaningful ways. While it can be challenging, the fruits of this labor pay dividends and could usher in a healthier world—not to mention a healthier bottom line.

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