



# Three Qualifiers for DTC Champs in 2013: Exceptional Brand Stewardship, Superior Integration, Outstanding Curating

*Champions have a “constant restlessness that disallows the arrogance that we’re fast or agile enough.” In today’s consumer-driven marketplace, what will make for a successful DTC brand champion this year and beyond?*

BY ELLEN HOENIG-CARLSON

In 2013, pharma and biotech DTC Marketers face a tough balancing act among three compulsories that weren’t on the original scorecard to the same degree when most of us learned our craft:

- **Exceptional brand stewardship** to keep a brand’s promise fresh, pristine: true to the brand’s image and values at every brand intersection point despite the increasing number of specialists working on a brand.
- **Superior integration** of brand assets, data and learning that is consistently applied across channels and customers.
- **Outstanding content curating** that truly invigorates learning and conversation through relevant and valuable information.

Healthcare consumers face many of the same issues that challenge marketers. They’re stressed from a higher cost of living, being inundated with information, overwhelmed with communications and spam from every which way, tired from working long hours (or looking for work), with insufficient time to enjoy the simple, healthful things in life. And when they finally do get to a doctor, s/he isn’t likely to be able to spend much quality time with them.

Pharma and biotech marketers may have a more strategic view of relentless change, but our long hours, scarce resources yet bigger deliverables, and ongoing generic and cost containment pressures are similarly stressful and mind-numbing.

Champions find ways to ensure that stress does not sully their performance. Good marketing still rests on slowing down enough to articulate clear objectives, deep customer insight, and positioning that differentiates. Certainly smart marketers view DTC far beyond traditional TV ads: as the crux of all consumer engagement. But the mantra for brand champions is new: the connections that will power your brand’s vitality can’t be bought – they must be earned. As we move into 2013 and beyond, how can DTC Marketers win this new competition, accelerating brand engagement, growth, and loyalty? Challenge yourself with these three questions:

**1. Are you effectively leading your brand?** In a world of increasing specialists, every brand faces the imperative to bring numerous internal and external specialists together for true collaboration without letting go of laser brand stewardship and without acquiescing to each specialist who may want to exercise their own mark on the project. Where do you stand on the brand marketer’s “control spectrum”?

Top notch brand stewardship starts with an inspiring and clear vision for the brand and its community. It is a special kind of leadership challenge, requiring facilitation, providing scope, tools and resources, and opening the doors to opportunity. It means guiding where necessary, but avoiding imposing a “heavy hand” or “command and control” attitude. It means creating an environment that is open, supportive and agile in its own learning and interactions. It means that every action

you and your teams take at every level of the organization reflect and support the essence of your brand. Anything less makes it easier for competition to steal share and growth by creating stronger relationships with your customers.

Don't let a long "to do" list curtail the time and effort you place here. In a time when everyone has too much to do and not always enough focus, this is an opportunity to excel: for a brand lead to be an exceptional brand steward.

## 2. How well have you mastered the art of integration?

How seamless is your brand experience across programs and channels and between customers? How well are you synthesizing and employing "big data" into new learning that is leveraged throughout or across touchpoints? How well are you bringing integration to diverse high-potential consumer segments that might not otherwise get value from your brand?

*For brand managers today, Integration is the new "hub of the wheel," and essential for brand innovation and transformation.*

"Brand Integration," initially meant to use someone else's TV program content to drive your brand. The term dates back to when the Lifesavers brand was integrated into the 1932 Groucho Marx movie "Horsefeathers," National Geographic had a starring role in the 1946 movie "It's a Wonderful Life," and Spielberg's "E.T." featured the first paid candy integration with Reese's Pieces, or when Proctor & Gamble and Unilever sponsored soap operas.

Today, though, in a progressively complex and digital marketplace, customer experiences and business value are being determined by how seamlessly a company can integrate and collaborate with its customers and a diverse set of business partners. This requires a more adaptive, open and diverse network that must work to achieve seamless, efficient learning and application real-time. When brands aren't well-integrated across customers, channels, partners, or even country management, brand power is limited, opportunities for transformative growth are negated. Don't do your competition any favors by overlooking:

- Consistent messaging and "look and feel" across channels and/or customers. This includes telling a consistent story at every touchpoint ever time. It cannot be achieved with siloed functions and partners.
- Building a centralized inventory of approved brand assets and content elements, such as claims, messages, patient quotes, relationship marketing content, video, images, style guides, etc., enables different teams to execute new campaigns across channels, segments and customers more nimbly and productively while ensuring consistency and uniformity of brand promise and branding elements.
- Digesting learning from year to year, study to study, tactic to tactic, country to country, in a deliberate manner. Institutionalizing the use of data analytics is essential if you are to better employ "big data" and turn it into action-

able insights and outputs. Additionally, the transfer of best practice knowledge and experience to each team working on a brand can help elevate marketing performance and bring consistency and uniformity to marketing practices and results.

- Leveraging growing customer diversity and bringing along different customer segments so the end result is a stronger but unified brand. This can help to encourage diverse advocates for the brand.

## 3. How good are your content strategy and curator skills?

Do you have your eye on creating content that is relevant, that helps customers learn and make decisions? Are you still thinking you can fool consumers with your messages vs. what they want to know?

This is the age of earned media, Seth Godin's definition of "remarkable content" is how winning brands create relevance and spur action. It's the door to the personalization that customers now expect. Content is no longer a tactic, it has become a brand's lifeblood. Champion marketers are inventing and adjusting content strategy every day, knowing that content creation and delivery – when done well – are competitive levers that harness and nurture loyal fans.

"People see more than 34 billion bits of information per day – an equivalent of two books a day." [From the book "The 24-Hour Customer."] Exhausted consumers don't have tools to filter information down to the most useful bits with minimal effort. How much are you genuinely helping them navigate exploding information? Are you succeeding in deepening your relationships with customers?

*Where do you fall on the "selling" vs. "valuable educating" continuum through customers' eyes?* In today's increasingly open, digital, and social environment, the more companies can focus on conversations, and providing some give and take between writer and reader, the greater the opportunity to get closer to your customers and build deeper relationships. DTC Marketers are forewarned not to turn "content marketing" into what Shel Israel calls "message mongering": just another way to get the message out. Rather, use it to listen to what your audience wants and needs – let them make you smarter. That is the win for the 2013 DTC champ. **DTC**

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