

Medical Corporate Publishing – A Success Model

“Prophylaxedialog” Journal Addresses the European Dental Profession

Corporate publishing media are justifiably regarded by many of the target groups as primarily a tool for advertising. Indeed many publications, even from renowned companies, would confirm the suspicion that the focus is firmly on the company and its products, the contributions originate exclusively from the staff at the company’s PR agency and the design is more evocative of a corporate brochure than a journal. However with “Prophylaxedialog”, which is now available across the whole of Europe, and the journals which have been spun off from it, GABA, the specialist for oral care, has broken new ground.

From a Brochure to a Journal

“Prophylaxedialog” started off life as a regularly published brochure which essentially provided dentists with information on the latest studies and products as well as other news from the dental field. The 8 to 12-page brochure, which was initially only published in Germany with a circulation of 5,000 copies, was advised by a scientific board. Up to and including 2003, Prophylaxedialog went to print twice a year and came with a filing device.

The key question during Prophylaxedialog’s relaunch was how it could be turned into a proper journal, both in terms of content and design. Together with the advisory board, the content was realigned to focus on the latest, and sometimes controversial, issues from the world of dental medicine. The changes included increased input from professional societies as well as articles of appropriate length written, on the whole, by renowned experts. Today, three of the most distinguished dental societies in Germany contribute a one-page article to each issue of Prophylaxedialog: the German Society of Periodontology (DGP), the German Society for Dental, Oral and Maxillofacial Medicine (DGZMK) and the German Society for Conservative Dentistry (DGZ).

Thanks to a redesigned cover picture, publication details, contents and leaders, Prophylaxedialog was made to resemble a journal more closely. Furthermore, by increasing the number of visual elements, it was made easier to read (well structured headers and sub-headers, easy-to-understand columns with recurring topic blocks, text highlighted in colour,

summaries in boxes, significant use of pictures – including, wherever possible, and visuals to accompany scientific content). As a result of these measures the journal was expanded to 28 pages.

The result was almost immediate: the number of subscribers rose by around 1,000 to today's level of over 9,000. Total circulation fluctuates between 18,000 (on a regular basis) and up to 40,000 (to date the largest circulation with 2 reprints due to the great demand).

Media Family: Apothekendialog and Special Issues

The Prophylaxedialog journal for dentists resulted in a spin-off for pharmacists, namely "Apothekendialog". In addition to dental topics (taken from Prophylaxedialog), it also covers subjects such as range design, presentation of goods as well as general articles on marketing. Both university experts and authors from two renowned brand consultancies have contributed to the journal (Institut für Markentechnik in Geneva and Brandmeyer Markenberatung in Hamburg). The authors dealt with topics such as "The Pharmacy as a Brand" and gave advice on category management in small areas. A qualitative survey of readers of Apothekendialog produced a surprising result: pharmacists would like even more dental articles to be included and gave a number of suggestions for subjects which would be of interest. The publication is read by up to 6 people at the pharmacists and is passed on for reading during emergency pharmacy hours. Apothekendialog is also published twice a year and has a circulation of up to 18,000 copies.

There are also a number of special issues. For example during the International Dental Show (IDS) in Cologne, the world's largest dental exhibition, a four-page "IDS Special" was published featuring articles on the new products on show at the IDS, for example elmex Junior toothpaste for mixed dentition between the ages of 6 and 12, and a map of the trade exhibition halls with directions to the GABA stand. 9,000 copies were distributed during the five-day fair. The scope of the product-related articles in this edition was both regarded as appropriate for a trade fair and understood by readers. At the same time the high level of acceptance which the regular Prophylaxedialog journal enjoys served to increase interest in this special edition for the IDS.

Further special issues are published in conjunction with, for example, the scientific GABA symposia (e.g. with abstracts of the presentations and an opportunity to order printed and audiovisual documentation from the presentations) or on certain topics where broad research has been conducted (e.g. the special issue on amine fluoride, the superior active ingredient in elmex products, which featured reports from 6 distinguished international experts on clinical studies and long-term clinical experience).

Internationalisation

The extremely successful Prophylaxedialog journal was also of interest to other countries in the GABA Group, and today it is available in the national languages of the following countries; Switzerland (French and German), the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, France, Austria and Poland. As such, a total of 80,000 to 100,000 copies of each edition are printed. The design of the common section, with contributions from renowned authors, is the same in all the countries (the articles are translated). The various country issues have a smaller national section (e.g. with contributions from the professional societies of the country in question or special topics which are currently under discussion in that country). Special issues are published internationally for subject areas of international interest. These issues are also translated into English, the language of international congresses.

Moreover, in Switzerland a dental care journal by the name of "Zahnpflegedialog" for pharmacists and druggists is published which is similar to the German Apothekendialog.

In light of the internationalisation of the journal, and the acceptance it now enjoys across Europe, design and structural guidelines are becoming increasingly important. The layout is therefore prepared in Germany on a centralised basis and all changes (e.g. larger cover picture and use of colours) and different language versions are implemented in accordance with those guidelines. The recognisability and consistently high standards in terms of the quality of the contributions have ensured that today, for example, there is significant demand for the international special issues of Prophylaxedialog and issues for symposia, even in countries in which the journal is not regularly available.

The journal's international recognisability can also be attributed to the cover picture. A microscopic photograph of a scientific image is used for each issue, e.g. the well-known active ingredient amine fluoride or the tiny ends of the bristles on the meridol toothbrush. This use of pictures goes against all the theories of pictorial communication. Yet Prophylaxedialog is not about hype, Prophylaxedialog is a scientific journal which offers interesting and, at times, surprising insights into the world of dentistry and does not employ potentially manipulative techniques (e.g. for its pictorial communication). Indeed, today readers have come to recognise this medium by the fact that pictures of people are not used on the cover page – a feature which is not seen in other national or international journals.