



SANJAY PINGLE

*Sanjay Pingle is the President of Physicians Interactive, LLC (PI). PI provides digital sales and marketing solutions for life sciences companies.*

# UPCLOSE

with Sanjay Pingle, President, Physicians Interactive

BY JON BRULLOTH

Pingle heads the company's pharmaceutical business unit and specializes in the development of new, integrated digital marketing tools, products, and services to effectively reach and support healthcare professionals.

**PM360: Physicians Interactive has made several acquisitions over the last few months; how have your services evolved?**

**SANJAY PINGLE:** Our premise is to acquire companies and create an integrated offering that allows for a higher quality of interactions between physicians and other healthcare professionals and the pharmaceutical industry, creating true scale in digital pharma marketing. The products and services we offer participate in a new paradigm of pharma marketing that moves away from the sort of overt promotion to one where there's a higher equation of value exchanged between the prescriber and the manufacturer.

Our most recent acquisition was Skyscape, one of the leading companies in clinical information delivered over the mobile platform. This mobile acquisition is key because we foresee mobile becoming one of physicians' preferred channels of interaction for this kind of information.

**How can PI help brand managers reach more physicians with pharma messaging?**

We're focusing both significant investment and effort into building messaging around the physician, nurse practitioner, and physician's assistant. We are building tools to help with their practice, with the end result being a much greater degree of connectivity and interactivity—particularly on the mobile platform.

Physicians are interacting with our applications multiple times a day. Practitioners value us for our quality information resources and tools, and we believe that we can translate this value relationship to pharmaceutical marketing interactions.

**How does your information expand reach within the healthcare professional community?**

Our practitioner interactions, online behavior data, and mobile platform data enable us to deploy alternative targeting models that complement our clients' targeting efforts.

We have data about physicians' web programming response and usage; the activities they engage with on the mobile devices; in which specialty areas they express interest; and what kinds of searches, clinical resources, and information they're researching and querying. Using our data, we refine the desired practitioner profile to determine whom best to target.

**What is the network's size right now?**

We touch the majority of U.S. prescribers, but we don't publish total reach numbers. Typically, we develop a target list starting with a specified event or using the client's sales force target. We add to that our behavioral targeting model. The integrated target generated by this process typically touches well north of 50% of an audience.

**CALL FOR CASE STUDIES** contact Liz Roberts at [liz.roberts@PM360online.com](mailto:liz.roberts@PM360online.com)

“The more medical information has been digitalized, the easier it is to communicate and share.”

Every month our network grows by thousands of new web and mobile users. Our expanding network alone creates new avenues through which the pharma industry can reach ever-greater numbers of healthcare professionals.

### **How can a life sciences company offer more value to healthcare professionals?**

This is critical: Reorient your company to align with a physician-centric mentality, and start thinking beyond a brand-centric one. Provide seamless ease of use and access to a digital resource structure that integrates all of your divisions' data.

Every interaction, piece of communication, conference, speaking opportunity, e-detail, and email that's created must deliver real clinical or economic resources to the physician: something that we're helping them to do better; provide better care, stabilize, or save money. By consistently asking ourselves, “How will this next action benefit the practitioner,” we can vastly improve quality, frequency, duration, and response rates to our interactions.

Customer self-service via the web and mobile presents pharma with a great opportunity to create a pharma resources “menu” or directory, and making that available to a physician or the office staff. Physicians will appreciate and utilize that resource.

### **What types of information are healthcare professionals requesting, and to which are they most responsive?**

They have an urgent need for the latest clinical information, trial results, guidelines, formulary changes, drug interaction information, indication changes, and new dosage strengths. Additionally, more physicians are asking for contextually linked clinical information—they want to know how items of interest interrelate.

### **What are some of the new tools with which life sciences companies can achieve scale in driving sales?**

The mobile platform is going to be the transformative factor over the next couple of years. We already have about 64% of U.S. physicians as users of one or more platforms. We project that will quickly translate from the web to 100% mobile—smartphones. All of the new devices overtaking the market have Wi-Fi or wireless web functionality, so that they're always connected to the Internet. So over-the-air connectivity will become pervasive.

The story that has yet to be written is how social media evolves into a promotional vehicle for pharma—nobody has yet accomplished that. It's been somewhat successfully used to date as a focus group/market research tool. I think that social media's marketing potential is founded in a traditional manner of doing things, which is often that physicians learn from other physicians. Peer influence, discussion, and meetings should be translated to this media and leveraged using all of the medium's available new technology.

### **What further trends do you expect to take shape over the next few months and/or years?**

Healthcare reform will be implemented over the next few years, and that will impact tremendously the primary-care world. Imagine, several million new patients' lives coming into the insured market—which means that there's going to be, at any given point, at least several million new people eligible for and seeking care.

### **That's an extremely positive thing for pharma, isn't it?**

Absolutely, but it will exacerbate demand upon the primary-care practitioner's already overstressed resources, from information to services. If you go to any doctor's office today, you'll prob-

ably find that they're behind schedule, with five or six people in the waiting room. We think this “problem” will create a greater role for nurse practitioners, nurses, and physician assistants. Needless to say, this is an opportunity for us to serve the needs of those people. We also see pharma evolving in a macro way from a traditional sales force model and into new models of sales force-prescriber interactions and continuing to refine a true scale in non-personal, commercial, and digital interactions.

### **How has pharma and healthcare market globalization affected your company's focus—and how do you think it will do so in the future?**

We fully agree that in the not-too-distant future health information globalization is going to accelerate. Most medical schools around the world learn in English, with the exception of a handful of countries. The more medical information has been digitalized, the easier it is to communicate and share. The other thing that's wonderful about being in the U.S. is that we have the world-leading source of clinical research whether academic, corporate, or government funded. Many of the new medical trends, treatment paradigms, drug therapies, and so on, originate here. It's interesting from my standpoint because we do serve a global end-user base. A significant portion of our total mobile users are actually international users.

We have user downloads from over 50 countries, and the pace of adoption is increasing as their mobile technology—their connectivity—improves, so as more people have 3G or 4G networks, and smartphones, we're seeing rapid uptake in our global downloads and subscriptions of our information tools on the mobile device. Interestingly enough, we typically only focus on industry in the U.S. and, at some point, overseas opportunities will be a growth area for companies in our space. ○