



# Is there substance behind your style?

## iPads alone cannot complete your closed-loop strategy.

---

The visual sales aid has a new competitor. Talk to any pharmaceutical sales rep today (one who still has a job), and you'll find someone who either has or is expecting to receive a shiny new iPad. No, it's not the latest in sales incentives; it's the newest way of presenting the lowly sales aid—the "digital detail." But is it really something new and creative, or is it simply old wine in new wineskins?

---

Actually, presenting visually interesting content on these electronic devices is the least of our challenges. Creative agencies will fix that. The real issue is that the mobile device alone doesn't address the fundamental pharmaceutical sales and marketing problem—physician relevance.

The business challenge is well documented. The door to the physician is closing, and marketers are turning to new so-called closed-loop marketing technology and the tablet for their promise to reinvigorate the sales experience.

Closed-loop marketing means that data from every customer touchpoint are captured, analyzed and packaged into insight to create more valuable and personalized physician experiences. If the tablet is not part of an authentic closed-loop strategy, however, it simply replaces a glossy presentation with a shiny presentation. It's like replacing a traditional hammer with an auto-hammer: it's cool, it's electric, but in the end it still does the same thing.

Instead, mobile tablets should be one component in a larger strategy to listen, learn and build more personal relationships with physicians. The iPad is a medium for content, yes, but just as important, it's a tool to capture physician insight in the field and feed it back to marketing. But if that insight loop isn't closed, if we're not listening and learning and changing in response to what we learn, then the expensive iPad deployment is just, well, a cool, electric way of doing what the sales aid did. With the same results.

There are three things that pharmaceutical marketers need to think about as they spearhead device rollouts to ensure they are closing the loop and providing value to physicians.

### **1. Marketing needs to take the lead with closed-loop marketing.**

First of all, there aren't any "no see" docs out there. There are "no see me" docs. Physicians are accessing medical content every day, but it's happening through channels that might not include a field sales force. Fixing that is a marketing problem. Sales and IT play important roles and manage big budgets, of course, but that doesn't mean they should be setting the strategy. That's what marketing should be doing: finding new ways to achieve physician access and delivering greater message relevance. Marketing teams, lead.

“The real issue is that the mobile device alone doesn't address the fundamental pharmaceutical sales and marketing problem—physician relevance.”

### **2. To create personalized physician experiences, stop, look and listen.**

Second, your pre-school teacher was right. When approaching a dangerous intersection, you should stop, look and listen. Closed-loop marketing and promotion must be approached the same way. Tablets, portals, eDetails and mobile apps are listening posts first and presentation devices second. The quality of data from these interactions is profound and offers marketers a view into their customers' behavior, attitudes and preferences, a view that never existed before. The ability to decode that data stream into actionable, predictable insight and compelling marketing messages will require new capabilities in analytics and imagination, but it will give brands a competitive advantage and sales forces a right to exist. Marketing teams, listen.

### **3. Closed-loop marketing is a social contract.**

Finally, closed-loop promotion is not another marketing channel. It's a way of doing business across every channel. A commitment to providing personalized and relevant value to healthcare professionals when and where they want it. A social contract that trades data for respect. When physicians begin to see content that's focused on their specific needs and presented in a way that respects their time and business needs, even if it doesn't promote the brand, then you've established grounds for a relationship. Marketing teams, commit.

#### **A first step to personalized physician experiences**

Whether you are currently implementing or still contemplating a mobile device rollout, there is a way to close the loop. Hire a quarterback. This could be a closed-loop marketing consultant, but it's more likely to be a specialized agency that will help you lock down your customer strategy, define your success metrics, analyze the new data stream and then help you manage the interests and integration needs of multiple internal stakeholders and external agencies.

True closed-loop promotion is a new paradigm for the pharmaceutical industry. For those who truly "close the loop," it can be transformative. But it will require commitment, investment and leadership. Putting iPads into the hands of sales reps without the right support is like fielding a Ferrari without a pit crew; it's fast off the starting line and looks good for a few laps, but it's not sustainable and will not win any races.

Closing the insight loop will provide the market intelligence to help both sales and marketing achieve customer relevance and personalization, leading to lasting physician relationships.

## David Ormesher, CEO



David Ormesher provides leadership and direction for closerlook, inc., a strategic marketing agency serving healthcare. As founder and CEO, Ormesher has taken

closerlook from a small, creative media boutique and grown it into a recognized leader in creating innovative relationship marketing solutions that help pharmaceutical and health-insurance companies get closer to their most important customers.

Since founding the company in 1987, Ormesher has created a rich, cohesive culture at closerlook by maintaining a hands-on approach to building client success and sustaining lasting account relationships. He has guided the growth and evolution of the firm, attracting a world-class team of account strategy, user experience, design, technology and relationship marketing services experts.

Ormesher is a frequent speaker at marketing conferences and is a recognized thought leader in the areas of interactive and relationship marketing for healthcare.

In addition to his entrepreneurial leadership, Ormesher is also active on several non-profit boards. He serves on the boards of the Lyric Opera of Chicago; i.c.stars, an innovative business and leadership training program for inner-city youth; and Global Relief and Development Partners, building the capacity of entrepreneurs in emerging economies. He is also an adjunct professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology Stuart Graduate School of Business, where he teaches Customer Relationship Management.

---

**Want to continue this discussion? Get in touch with DAVID ORMESHER at [dormesher@closerlook.com](mailto:dormesher@closerlook.com) or follow him on Twitter [@ormshr](https://twitter.com/ormshr)**

A version of this article, titled “The closed loop has a leak,” appeared in the March 2011 issue of *PM360* magazine.

