

Communicating with healthcare providers based on their observed prescribing behavior:

A case-based evaluation of email readership and impact

ConnectiveRx recently evaluated the experiences of clinicians who had been sent branded emails either (1) based on traditional sponsor targeting, or (2) based on observed prescribing behavior. Participants were subsequently invited to complete an online survey to provide feedback about the effectiveness of the message, including recall, readership and impact.

Key findings:



1. Targeting prescribers based on observed prescribing behavior delivered greater impact than traditional targeting



2. Viewing in the PREVIEW pane added 30% to readership



3. “Email from PDR” was (by far) the most preferred digital channel

Introduction

As pharmaceutical representative access to prescribers continues to diminish, email is increasingly recognized as one of the best ways to inform healthcare providers (HCPs) about new products and brand updates. In fact, according to the Healthlink Dimensions *Annual Healthcare Professional Communication Report* for 2018, when receiving industry news, product updates and announcements, or research and educational opportunities from life sciences businesses or insurance payers, “73 percent of respondents said they **prefer email**.”¹ The Healthlink report notes that “consistent findings over the past few years show that email has become firmly established as the most convenient and effective method for directly providing physicians with information.”

Pharmaceutical marketers ask themselves many questions as they begin to plan a prescriber-targeted email campaign. Chief among them are, “Which prescribers will I target?” and “How will I measure the success of the campaign?” Answering these questions with forethought and precision can make the difference between success and failure.

Which prescribers will I target?

Digital campaigns to HCPs are often targeted to a distinct subsegment of the prescriber universe based on geolocation, demographics, specialty or other available criteria. But is there a more exacting and effective method to identify high-value prescribers? As described below, ConnectiveRx recently tested the impact of an email campaign in which prescribers were identified and targeted based on their observed prescribing history over the previous 6-month period. The results are described in the Key Findings below.

How will I measure the success of the campaign?

The success of email campaigns has historically been measured largely on open and click through rates. After all, such metrics are trackable as a proxy for reach and engagement, they provide a mechanism for evaluating the success of one campaign versus another, and they represent an attempt to tell a value story connecting opens and clicks to changes in prescriber opinion and behavior. But do these metrics fully capture the impact of a campaign on your brand’s goals? Recent ConnectiveRx research showed that traditional methods, like open rate, often underestimate the success and value of email campaigns.²

ConnectiveRx messaging expertise and survey overview

ConnectiveRx is a leader in targeted provider communications, specializing in delivering personalized messages sent from The Prescribers' Digital Reference (PDR) to educate HCPs about drug and treatment options and savings opportunities available for patients. PDR has been a trusted partner to providers for more than 70 years, delivering, monitoring and updating important medication information in EHR workflow, email communications, mobile and online. With a total reach that extends to more than 1.5 million providers comprised of MDs, DOs, NPs and PAs in over 300 specialties and subspecialties (over 900,000 of whom we can reach via email), we can also leverage the near real-time prescribing data we see in our network to augment our targeting capabilities so that our branded communications are even more credible and impactful.

To deepen our knowledge in order to help our clients succeed, ConnectiveRx recently evaluated the experiences of 224 clinicians who received

manufacturer-sponsored emails sent from PDR as part of a branded campaign. Of the 224 clinicians, 150 were on the sponsor's target list, while 74 had been observed within our network prescribing the sponsor's brand or another medication in the class within the previous 6 months. Specialties included Family Practice, General Practice, Internal Medicine, Rheumatology, OB-GYN, Geriatrics, Endocrinology and Dermatology. Email recipients were subsequently invited to complete an online survey to provide feedback about their experiences. Both the original branded emails and the follow-up survey requests were sent from PDR.

The study assessed respondents' experiences in consuming the emails (i.e., opened and read, previewed then opened and read, previewed only, saw title or subject line but did not read, did not remember), their recall of the key messages, the messages' potential impact on prescribers' opinions and prescribing intentions, and their preferences for receiving similar information.

Key Finding #1: Targeting prescribers based on observed prescribing behavior delivered greater impact than traditional targeting

While high readership rates are important, the real value of a campaign is how it affects prescribers' opinions and behavior. When asked to estimate the impact of the email messages sent by PDR on behalf of the brand, 54% of email recipients who were targeted based on observed prescribing behavior said they were "more informed about the brand overall," compared with just 37% of the email recipients from the manufacturer's target list (see Figure 1).

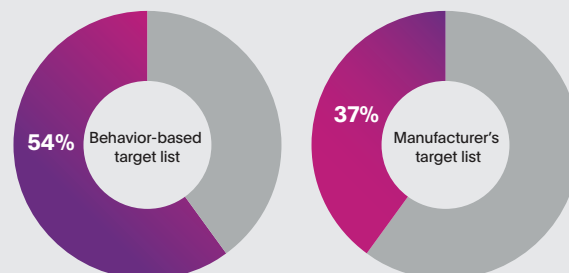
This disparity in response is important. The differentially higher "more informed" rate in the behavior-based group could be attributable to two possibilities: 1) by business rule, all of the participants in that group had prescribed the sponsor's brand or another in-class medication within the previous 6 months and thus may have been more likely to notice and heed the information, and 2) behavior-based targets may not have received as much recent brand communication from the sponsor and were thus more likely to notice and heed the information.

The salient point is this: delivering informational emails to your internal target list can be effective (we deliver such messages for clients every day, and

with great success); but also targeting HCPs based on recent prescribing behavior observed within our network has the potential to substantially increase the value of your campaign.

Figure 1: Prescribers targeted based on observed prescribing behavior are more likely to feel more informed

Percent who felt "more informed about the brand overall"



Source: ConnectiveRx Post-communication Survey, November 2018. n = 71 prescribers on manufacturer list, 24 on behavior-based list (all 95 respondents read Brand email). Q: We would like to understand the impact, if any, of information on Brand that you received in the email.

Key Finding #2: Viewing in the PREVIEW pane added 30% to readership

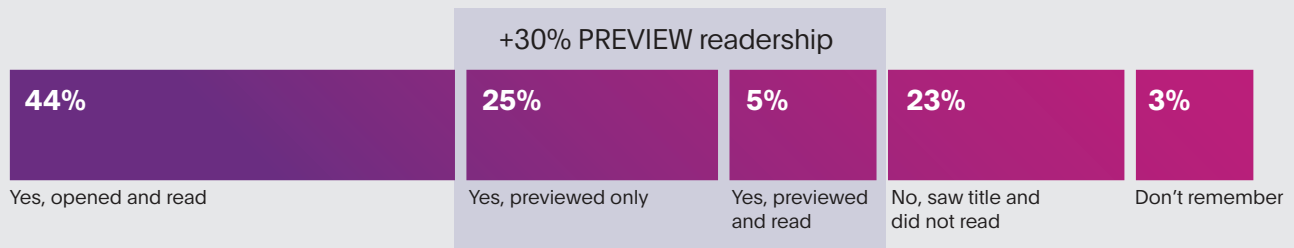
PREVIEW pane readership, defined here as reading an email within a large preview window provided by some popular email service providers (ESPs), yields meaningful engagement with brand content even if it is not captured by traditional methods (see sidebar). “Open rate” is a standard by which emails are judged. But when an email is read in PREVIEW it is not recorded as an open by the ESP. What’s more, if an email is clicked in PREVIEW, the click is recorded by the ESP but it may not correspond to a recorded open. It is in these cases that traditional email reporting may not reflect how readers are actually engaging with email content.

In our recent study, 30% of all respondents who recalled seeing an email reported viewing it in the PREVIEW pane, boosting total readership to nearly three-quarters (74%) of those who recalled seeing an email (see Figure 2).

In an analysis of a behavior-based sponsored email sent to over 76,000 prescribers in May 2018, nearly 20% of the unique clicks occurred in PREVIEW and did not have a corresponding tracked open (see sidebar). Not only did this add 4% to the overall unique click-through rate for the email, it more importantly demonstrated that PREVIEW readers did indeed consume the content and engage with a click to learn more.

Figure 2: Among respondents who recalled seeing an email, viewing in the PREVIEW pane added 30% to readership

Consumption of Branded Email



Source: ConnectiveRx, post-communication survey, November 2018. n = 94 target and 35 non-target (those who recalled an email).

Q: Did you read the email? Please select one only: Yes, I opened the email and read it; Yes, I sampled the email in “preview” mode only; Yes, I sampled the email in “preview” mode and then opened it to view more; No: I saw the Title/Subject Line but did not read the email; I don't remember.

PREVIEW readership yields meaningful engagement with brand content, even if it is not captured by traditional methods

Some very popular email service providers offer a PREVIEW pane that enables users to read emails more expeditiously.

Depending on a user’s local setup and the layout of the email, the majority of a message may be read in PREVIEW, especially if viewed on a larger screen.

In this example, all of the information and the single call to action appeared within the email service provider’s PREVIEW pane when viewed on a large (desktop) screen. Upon analysis, we discovered that 20% of the overall unique clicks occurred in PREVIEW and did not have a corresponding tracked open.³



Example of sponsored email creative consumed in PREVIEW mode.

Key Finding #3: “Email from PDR” was (by far) the most preferred digital channel

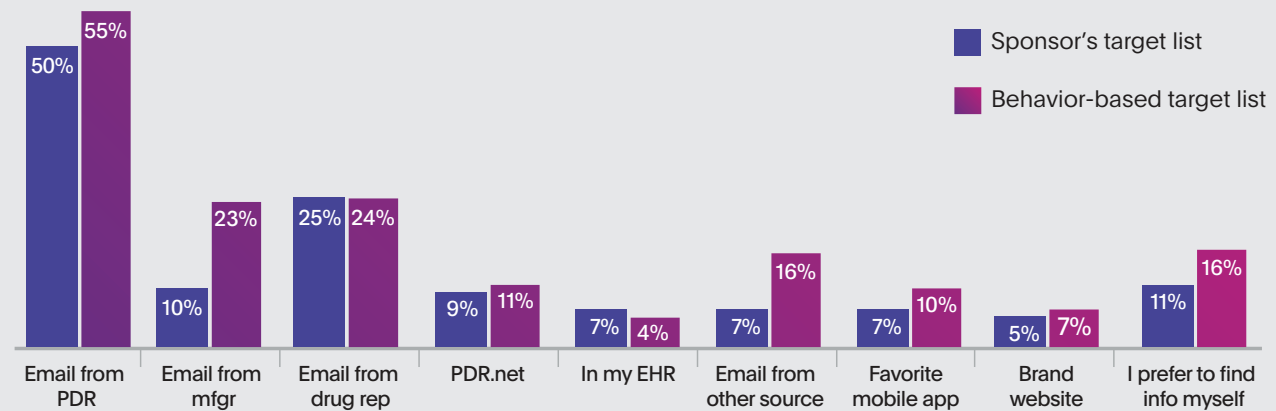
We asked each survey participant, “How would you prefer to receive similar clinical updates of disease and drug information, such as the information contained in the email you received? Please select all that apply.” Response options included a range of digital channels, including apps, websites, email from several sources, etc. At least half of both groups said they preferred to receive such updates via “email from PDR” (see

Figure 3). Indeed, when asked what prompted them to read the original promotional email, nearly 40% said “general interest in PDR communications.”

These findings highlight the fact that the FROM field can affect your audience’s perceptions of your messages and can impact the ultimate decision to take (or not take) action after the message is read.

Figure 3: “Email from PDR” is the most preferred digital channel

Preferred information venues



Source: ConnectiveRx BBE post-communication survey, November 2018. n = 150 target and 74 non-target (all respondents).
 Q: How would you prefer to receive similar clinical updates of disease and drug information, such as the information contained in the email you received? Please select all that apply.

Nearly 20% of unique clicks occurred in PREVIEW and did not have a corresponding tracked open

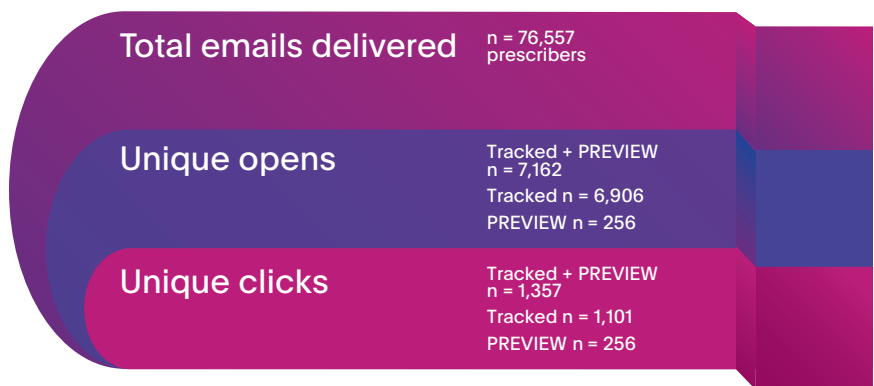
16% Unique click rate from tracked opens

+4% Unique click rate from PREVIEW

20% Total unique click rate

Methodology: Email opens are reported by email service providers. While all clicks are reported, readership in PREVIEW mode is not. Because “traditional” open rate is calculated using unique clicks and unique opens, clicks in PREVIEW were manually added as opens to calculate a more accurate click rate for this email.

Case study of a sponsored email sent to more than 75,000 prescribers



“Unique” is defined here as the number of times that an email was opened (unique opens) or a link in the email was clicked (unique clicks) by individual users. Repeated opens and clicks by the same individual are not included.

Source: ConnectiveRx analysis of PDR behavior-based sponsored email sent in May 2018, n = 76,557 emails delivered to prescribers

In view of these findings, ConnectiveRx offers specific recommendations, as follows:

FOUR CORE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Consider both traditional and behavior-based targeting.** While delivering information to your internal target list can be effective, communicating information that really matters to those who are actively prescribing your brand or a drug in its class will add power to your message.
- 2. Think beyond the traditional metrics for email success.** Reconsider how your audience interacts with your messages, including the frequency of reading and clicking in PREVIEW. If a relevant message received at the right time from a trusted sender motivates recipients to take action, measuring success by the open rate alone may underestimate the true value of the campaign. We can design your program to compare observed behaviors before and after your campaign is delivered, making it possible to more directly evaluate how your messaging affected behavior.
- 3. Reimagine the FROM field of your next campaign.** The source of promotional and informational email can affect your audience's perceptions of your messages, which can in turn impact readership and alter the ultimate decision to take (or not take) action. Emails from a trusted sender like PDR are preferred by clinicians.
- 4. Contact ConnectiveRx to learn more about behavior-based messaging opportunities.** Because of our extensive EHR and pharmacy networks, we have the unique ability to observe prescribing behavior and deliver messages that matter directly to a prescriber's inbox from a trusted sender. This method of identifying high-value prescribers can substantially increase the impact of your campaigns. And our ability to compare observed behaviors before and after your campaign is delivered helps you more accurately measure its impact.

For more information, please visit [ConnectiveRx.com](https://www.connectiverx.com)

References:

1. Healthlink Dimensions. Annual Healthcare Professional Communication Report 2018: <https://www.healthlinkdimensions.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2018-Annual-HCP-Communication-Report.pdf>. Accessed January 16, 2019.
2. ConnectiveRx white paper, Two ways to reimagine email communications to healthcare professionals: Case studies reveal impact of PREVIEW and FROM field, available at www.connectiverx.com.
3. ConnectiveRx Case Study #64, analysis of PDR behavior-based sponsored email sent in May 2018. n = 76,557 emails delivered to prescribers.