



In regulated industries, red tape abounds. Here's how four content marketers sliced right through it to become cutting-edge.

By Matt Alderton

Regulation Migration

Red

is an angry, urgent hue. The color of blood, Satan, sex and sirens, it's the universal pigment of peril, equally savage and salacious. As both literary symbolism and literal signpost—a scarlet letter or a stop sign—it screams in one emphatic breath: “Warning!”

It's no wonder that marketers in regulated industries have a reputation for being skittish. Faced with reams of red tape, they can't help but flinch at the first blush of vermilion.

And make no mistake: Many of them *do* flinch—especially when it comes to content marketing, suggests a 2012 survey from digital marketing company IMN. Although regulatory compliance is a major challenge for just 18 percent of all content marketers, IMN finds, it's a much greater handicap in the most heavily regulated industries, such as insurance, financial services and banking, in which 50 percent, 33 percent and 29 percent of content marketers, respectively, cite regulatory compliance as a major concern. In those industries, especially, scrupulous legal reviews often lead to content that is hopelessly dated or tragically diluted by the time it's finally published.

That is, if it's published at all. Because in many cases compliance isn't just a concern; it's a deterrent. Consider, for example, the results of a 2012 survey conducted by the Content Marketing Institute (CMI): Health care marketers on average spend less than a quarter (23 percent) of their total marketing budget on content marketing compared with nearly a third (31 percent) of marketers overall. These findings suggest that marketers in regulated industries aren't just adopting content marketing more reluctantly than their peers in other sectors, but they're doing so more slowly.

Regulations designed to reduce risk, it seems, also are reducing marketing innovation and agility.

Yet some companies have found a way to overcome these hurdles. Here, we profile four companies in highly regulated industries—health care, insurance and finance—that managed to create forward-thinking, and at times agile, marketing programs. Confronted with red tape, their organizations didn't

cut and run from innovation; they just cut—achieving valuable marketing objectives in spite of regulatory roadblocks.

Cleveland Clinic: Brand Familiarity

The Cleveland Clinic is a world-renowned academic medical center that's consistently ranked among the top four hospitals in the United States by *U.S. News & World Report*. There's just one problem: It's in Cleveland.

“The Cleveland Clinic draws patients from all over the world, but we're not like Starbucks. We're not on every corner,” says CMO Paul Matsen.

Although it enjoys high brand awareness, credibility and prestige, its location means the Cleveland Clinic struggles to drive brand engagement. “Most people are satisfied with their local physician and their local hospital; they're not top-of-mind thinking about a national health care provider like the Cleveland Clinic,” Matsen continues. “What our research has told us is for people to consider coming to us when they need us, we need to move people from awareness to familiarity. We have found that meaningful content is the best way for us to do that.”

Producing meaningful content is easier said than done when you must contend with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which establishes strict standards for the protection and confidential handling of consumers' private health information.

“The No. 1 concern that we have is patient privacy,” Matsen explains. “That's a risk for any medical provider who's producing



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content in a medical environment. We're not allowed to practice medicine in this environment and give comments or feedback or diagnoses on specific cases."

A popular content marketing strategy—case studies—is therefore off-limits for health care brands, which must search for creative ways to engage patients without betraying their trust.

The Cleveland Clinic found exactly that in April 2012, when it launched HealthHub, a digital library of custom health care content that's produced and maintained by more than 30 Cleveland Clinic doctors and nurses. In its first year, the site logged 200,000 visitors. Now, it attracts 1.7 million visitors per month.

Matsen attributes HealthHub's success to the following ingredients:

- **Originality:** While many health care brands use syndicated content from services like Healthline, the Cleveland Clinic leverages its own subject-matter experts to create original content. "The essence of the Cleveland Clinic brand is our staff. Our nurses, our doctors and our leaders make us who we are," Matsen says.
- **Mobility:** Social media and the mobile Web are critical, according to Matsen, who says 70 percent of HealthHub's traffic comes from smartphones. To leverage this behavior, the clinic posts to Facebook and Twitter at least four to six times per day; most posts link back to HealthHub, a mobile version of which automatically loads when users access it from their mobile device. "Given the amount of time people spend with their smartphone in their hand, it's the biggest marketing opportunity we have to promote our brand right now," says Matsen, who plans to launch a new app for Apple and Android devices this spring.
- **Credibility:** All HealthHub content is consumer-driven—focused on patient health and wellness, not corporate

communications—and evidence-based. "We have a physician review for all of our medical content," Matsen says. "That's critical."

• **Planning:** The only way to reconcile frequency with credibility, Matsen says, is to produce content early and often. "We have an editorial calendar," he says. "We plan and build content months in advance."

• **Collaboration:** And yet, HealthHub manages to be extremely timely and relevant. When Angelina Jolie (who is not a Cleveland Clinic patient) announced her preventive double-mastectomy in 2013, for instance, the clinic published an article about her decision the same day. It achieved this thanks to the collaborative relationship between staff writers and physicians; because both work on-site, they can easily connect to research, write and review breaking news. "Because we have an employed-staff model here, our physicians are well known; they work very closely with our teams," Matsen says. Another important collaborative fixture, he adds, is the Cleveland Clinic's Social Media Council, consisting of media, marketing, ombudsman and physician staff who arbitrate social media questions and conflicts according to a HIPAA-sensitive social media policy. "For example, we're constantly monitoring Twitter; if someone asks about a medical condition, we have protocols for responding to that."

As notable as the preceding factors are, perhaps the most important catalyst for innovation at the Cleveland Clinic is executive buy-in. CEO Delos Cosgrove even maintains his own leadership blog on LinkedIn.

"A lot of health care organizations, hospitals and providers are very cautious, whereas here we have a culture that really encourages intelligent risk-taking and entrepreneurship," concludes Matsen, who says the results ultimately speak for themselves. "What we've seen in the last several years is that over 25 percent of our national awareness now comes from digital sources. So we know that this is contributing to our national clinic reputation, which downstream contributes to volume."

UnitedHealthcare: Multimedia

Because it also is governed by HIPAA, UnitedHealthcare faces the same logistical challenges as the Cleveland Clinic, according to Brian McGuire, senior director of consumer marketing and communications.

"With most companies, there can be challenges in the review process, production lead times and, of course, the budget," he says. "But with proper planning and using an effective strategy, we can develop and produce high-quality original content that consumers want to receive."

That last part—"content that consumers want to receive"—is especially challenging for companies like UnitedHealthcare, as regulated industries aren't usually known for their fun factor. "We're not typically a high-interest category," McGuire says. "People don't typically want to engage with a health insurance company unless they need us—meaning they are experiencing a health-related issue."

Therein lies an entirely different kind of risk. "This isn't a time to be cutesy or fluffy," McGuire continues. "In what often is a highly emotional state of health concerns or issues, we need to make sure we're on our game, providing accurate and concise information."

Simply put: UnitedHealthcare must handle delicate issues in a way that is innovative enough to engage consumers, but sensitive enough to avoid offending them—all without breaking the rules with respect to health care regulations.

UnitedHealthcare achieves this delicate balance through diversification and segmentation. Instead of casting a wide net that could send the wrong message to the wrong person, getting it in trouble with patients or regulators, it produces a



diversity of content in a variety of formats, delivered to the right customers at the right time based on their immediate needs.

"We understand the importance of communicating to a wide range of people who have different preferences," McGuire says. "Everyone learns differently: Some people prefer to read, some want to hear, some want to see, others want a combination. The key is making all of our communications available in as many forms as possible, then delivering them in the medium that the consumer is most comfortable with."

One of UnitedHealthcare's content vehicles, for instance, is Health Care Lane, a website established in 2009 to help consumers navigate their health benefits. The site depicts a virtual village whose residents explain health insurance topics during short, conversational video segments. The

site also features a variety of "storefronts," where information and tips are presented in an engaging and easy-to-understand format, McGuire says. "Health Care Lane enables people to pick and choose what health topics to learn more about based on their particular interests and preferences," he says. "As their health needs change, we anticipate that they will return to learn more."

An entirely different approach is UHC TV, an online network launched in 2012 that features original programming on a variety of topics, ranging from health and wellness to insurance.

"Videos are served to consumers wherever they are, using the technology they prefer," states McGuire, who says UHC TV has more than 1,300 original videos, averaging over 60,000 views per month. Programming includes *Health Inspired*, featuring motivational talks by speakers such as *Today* show nutritionist Joy Bauer and Olympic gold medalist Scott Hamilton; *Sidewalk Talk*, which features man-on-the-street interviews about health insurance terms; *Laugh Rx*, which

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offers stand-up comedy designed to reduce stress for a healthy heart; and *The Better Cook*, which shows viewers how to make healthy meals.

“UHC TV is our attempt at reaching consumers when they are not dealing with a health issue,” McGuire explains. “By providing light, interesting video, we hope to move health care up the ladder from low interest to at least moderate interest.”

Health Care Lane assists with practical decision-making, whereas UHC TV is “edutainment.” Having both helps UnitedHealthcare maximize opportunity and minimize risk by offering something for everyone—including the company’s lawyers. Although they must review all content, they generally don’t interfere with it, as McGuire’s team has become adept at developing creative content within the confines of HIPAA regulations.

“It largely comes down to what we’re trying to communicate,” he says. “General information and educational content is pretty easy to make happen; we still go through all the reviews—legal, medical, compliance, etc.—but as long as we’re not addressing a specific topic, person or situation, we have some latitude. As a rule, we don’t provide any health advice or diagnosis; it’s more about helping people understand where to go, questions to ask, and how to connect with the people, tools and resources that can benefit them.”

Because it is, in fact, benefiting customers, content marketing has received an endorsement from UnitedHealthcare leadership that McGuire says will catalyze further innovation. “With the successes we’ve seen with

UHC TV and Health Care Lane, it’s become easier to push the envelope and create new and relevant content,” he says. “As long as it’s being consumed, there is support to continue delivering it.”

Farmers Insurance Group: Social Butterflies

When she joined Farmers Insurance Group in October 2013, Michelle Magoffin, the company’s director of social media, was worried she’d have to wrestle with corporate lawyers—and that corporate lawyers ultimately would win.

“Because we are in a regulated industry, every piece of original content that we produce has to be approved by legal before it goes out,” Magoffin says. “That actually was one of my concerns coming in: I had worked in a non-regulated industry prior to this and was able to basically do whatever I wanted on behalf of the corporation on social media.”

To be sure, those days were gone. To her surprise, however, Magoffin’s relationship with legal is a lot more like dancing than wrestling. Which is to say that by working together in a synchronous fashion, each can maintain balance and poise in pursuit of common goals.

“I was really pleased to discover when I came here that Farmers has a very unique and expedient workflow process that allows us to get content out quickly,” Magoffin says. “Our content producers and our legal team really collaborate closely.”



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—Michelle Magoffin, director of social media, Farmers Insurance Group

Their successful collaboration starts with clear objectives:

Because people buy insurance from brands they trust, relationships are Farmers’ No. 1 priority. Content, the company believes, and social content in particular, is the mortar that holds those relationships together.

“We need to go where our customers are, and our customers are on social media,” Magoffin says. “We are increasing our production on Facebook so that we are posting multiple times daily. Same with Twitter. And we are expanding our strategy to include LinkedIn, Pinterest and Instagram so that we’re reaching our customers on every platform they’re on.”

What Farmers posts is just as important as where Farmers posts. For instance, regulations forbid the company from giving advice about its products and services. Instead of persuading consumers, therefore, the company tries to inform them.

“The kind of content we aim to produce is anything that will make our consumers smarter—not just about insurance but about life,” Magoffin says. “For example, did you know that if you take a picture of your car key with your cellphone, a locksmith can reproduce your key from that photo if you lose your keys? Things like that are relevant to our business, but they also make people smarter when they come into contact with us.”

Still, the line between “information” and “advice” is sometimes razor-thin. That’s where legal comes in. Although legal review is mandatory, Farmers has established a process and protocol to prevent bottlenecks: When they create content, producers upload it to the company’s social media management system, Sprinklr, which

notifies a dedicated legal rep that there is new content to review.

“The platform we use has a mobile app, so even if he’s not in the office, he’s able to get a notification immediately when there is a piece of content for him to approve,” Magoffin explains. “He reviews the content on his desktop or mobile device, and with one click he can approve it or send it back with comments if we need to change the language slightly for compliance issues. It already has a schedule attached to it, so once it’s approved by our legal rep, and with one more check from my team, it can go out immediately.”

In the event of breaking news, the team can complete the entire review process in approximately an hour. “We like to stay fairly nimble, so we do about two weeks’ worth of content at a time,” Magoffin continues.

“But for timely content, we’re very much in tune with legal; we have ongoing communications with our legal rep so we can get things out very quickly.”

The process is slightly different for Farmers’ network of 15,000 insurance agents, many of whom have their own Facebook business pages. “The content that agents produce for themselves does not go through any legal process, but is monitored after the fact by our compliance group,” Magoffin says. “When an agent produces content that is outside the regulatory guidelines, the compliance group contacts us and

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contacts them, then we get it removed and talk to the agent about why they cannot post that text.”

Although she worried that compliance would stifle creativity, Magoffin says the opposite has proven true.

“I find that when you have to innovate within certain constraints, it really pushes you to work harder and be more creative,” she concludes. “I take it as a personal challenge to produce content better within guidelines than I could without them.”

Association for Corporate Growth: Regulating Regulators

The Association for Corporate Growth (ACG) is made up of more than 14,500 “middle market” professionals focused on investment and growth, including investment bankers, attorneys, auditors, accountants and lenders, all of whom are subject to rules from regulatory bodies like the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). And yet, regulation was a major motivator when it decided to create *Middle Market Growth*, a digital magazine that launched in April 2013.

“The private-equity industry in general is understated—we are not hedge funds and we are not traders. Our members invest in companies to grow them, not flip them, adding jobs and growth to local economies. So we felt our organization needed to do a better job of telling its story,” explains Kristin Gomez, ACG’s vice president of communications and marketing. “The magazine is a really controlled way for us to get



unable or unwilling to disclose the terms of their private-equity deals. ACG solves this challenge by telling stories that aren’t about transactions, but rather their impacts.

“A lot of times, our writers are not allowed to report on a deal’s specific numbers,” Gomez says. “And that’s fine, because that’s not where the story is. The story is how private capital has been infused into companies that

across our messaging and tell stories that we don’t feel are being reported in the media.”

Like most association publications, *Middle Market Growth* is available to members. It also is distributed to more than 15,000 nonmembers who receive a push notification when a new issue is available for download through the magazine’s mobile app. Among those nonmembers are many congressional staffers, who work for lawmakers with direct influence over regulatory bodies.

“In terms of being in a regulated industry, we find that telling our story over and over through the magazine is a great way to talk to Capitol Hill,” Gomez says. “A lot of people don’t know about finance or about private equity, specifically. They don’t know what the middle market is and who it serves, so it’s been a really helpful educational tool.”

By educating lawmakers about private equity—which it says is an economic stimulant and job creator—ACG hopes to ultimately reduce the burden of regulations on its members.

Although they don’t affect the association directly, those regulations do have implications for its content. For example, the companies featured in *Middle Market Growth* often are

really needed it, and in turn created a better product.”

The stories and the digital format in which they’re published represent a major shift for ACG, whose members typically are more conservative than contemporary. The promise of increased advocacy, however, made a compelling case for innovation. “Telling a group of people, ‘Hey, we’re going to publish a magazine, but it’s not going to be printed,’ was a challenge, but we’re trying to be forward-thinking,” Gomez says. “In order to get the readership we wanted, we knew we needed to have a fresh, modern take.”

Although results so far are mostly anecdotal, the approach seems to be working. “Recently we did an interview with David Chavern, who is the executive vice president and COO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. His staff loved it; they put it on the U.S. Chamber website and they’re actively sharing it with people,” Gomez says. “He’s not a politician, but he’s in that realm. For him to understand what we are doing, and share it, is really big for us.” ■

Seeing Red

Here’s the thing about the color red: It can portend danger—in automobile races and on beaches, red flags warn of hazardous conditions—or it can suggest opportunity: In China, red is the color of good luck. It’s all a matter of perspective. Faced with tape of the red variety, therefore, marketers in regulated industries can yield, or they can sharpen their scissors. As these case studies prove, strict boundaries don’t have to squash innovation; they just force organizations to get a little creative.