



PEOPLE WANT MORE PERSONAL, EXPERT “HEALTH ENGAGEMENT,” GLOBAL STUDY REVEALS

The New “Health Info-entials” Wield Greater Influence on Companies, Brands, Organizations and Other Stakeholders

October 16, 2008, New York – A 5,000-person, five-country study released today by Edelman shows that people want more active, trusted, and personal health interaction with companies, organizations and brands, effectively rewriting the “rules of engagement” in health. The Edelman Health Engagement Barometer finds that to win a “license to engage,” companies must, above all, help people address their specific personal health concerns and help them maintain their health through prevention and care. They also must provide people with thorough, transparent, and specific information; engage them through personal and health-expert channels, online and off; and address personal issues like health and well-being before larger societal concerns.

The study also found that one-fifth of people comprise a highly influential group—the “Health Info-entials.” Health Info-entials are involved, informed and engaged in health. Health Info-entials have more stakes in health than the general population: they are more likely to work in a health-related field (26 percent vs. 18 percent), suffer from a severe or chronic health condition (41 percent vs. 34 percent), be a caregiver (17 percent vs. 11 percent), and take prescription medications (47 percent vs. 41 percent). Health Info-entials span all ages and walks of life. The Health Info-entials also are, overall, more trusting of companies and organizations involved in health (69 percent vs. 58 percent) and more likely to listen to and take positive actions on behalf of a company or organization in health than the general population (81 percent vs. 63 percent).

“We’re seeing the democratization of communications,” said Richard Edelman, President and CEO, Edelman. “The new Health Info-entials have a voice based on their personal experience and willingness to share their points of view with friends and the broader community.”

According to the study, effective health engagement can build trust and, conversely, trust is the key to deeper engagement. “Health engagement and trust fuel each other,” said Nancy Turett, Global President, Health, Edelman. “However, engagement is not fully reciprocal -- the perceived balance of power is not equal -- so companies seeking to engage effectively in health must foster trust.”

New Rules of Health Engagement

Health engage me: In the study, people said that they want personal, honest engagement and dialogue on the health issues that affect them personally (54 percent). And the higher the personal stake in the issue, the higher the desire for engagement. The study also found tight alignment among people's personal health and public health priorities, and the priorities people expect companies involved in health to have (i.e., provide access to affordable healthcare, solve chronic health problems and prevent disease were top three priorities).

Health expertise is prime: The most credible source for health information is "my doctor or healthcare professional" (96 percent). Yet even for the most credible source, the Health Info-entials turn to other sources to validate information they get from their doctors (88 percent).

My health and well-being come first: Above all, the study shows people care most about protecting and maintaining their health: "maintain health and well-being" (74 percent), "solve chronic health problems" (66 percent) and prevent disease (61 percent). People reported that these personal health concerns are more important for health companies to address than other issues such as fostering innovation (41 percent), protecting privacy (40 percent) and addressing environmental impact on health (47 percent). People also defined their health and well-being holistically (e.g., personal appearance, financial health and social connections with others).

Interact everywhere. Health influence happens across all channels. No one channel, or set of channels, is turned to more than others for credible health information. The channel named most frequently for companies and organizations to communicate with people -- "through my doctor or healthcare provider" -- is only 30 percent. For a company or organization in health, this means it is not a matter of whether it should be "in" interactive channels or not, but a mandate to contribute to the conversation before it gets defined by others.

Engage with Health Info-entials. With their high influence and vanguard position, Health Info-entials are leading the conversation about health issues, companies, organizations and brands, and they illuminate the future channels, topics and sources that will wield the most health influence.

"This growing group of individuals is a critical audience for companies and organization involved in health to understand," said Jane Sarasohn-Kahn, Founder, THINK-Health and an advisor to the Health 2.0 Conference. "The imperative is to communicate with them across multiple channels with health expertise and personally relevant content."

About the study

The Edelman Health Engagement Barometer surveyed adults age 18-75 in five countries (China, Germany, Russia, UK, and US) and explored the concept of engagement along three dimensions: emerging topics that are most important to health stakeholders; emerging influencers who are participating in conversations and activities related to those topics; and emerging channels through which communications on these topics is most effective. Additional in-depth interviews with nearly 50 traditional health influencers also occurred concurrently. The study was designed by StrategyOne and fielded by Greenfield Online in August through September 2008.

About Edelman

Edelman is the world's leading independent public relations firm, with over 3,200 employees in 54 offices worldwide. Edelman was named PRWeek's "2008 Large Agency of the Year," Holmes Report's "2008 Global Agency of the Year," and listed as top-10 firm in Advertising Age's "2007 Agency A-List," the first and only PR firm to receive this recognition. In 2007, CEO Richard Edelman was honored as Agency Executive of the Year by Advertising Age and "Most Powerful PR Executive" by PRWeek. For more information about Edelman visit www.edelman.com.

For more information about health engagement, visit EngageInHealth.com.

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A Webex on the study results will be held on Thursday, October 16 at 11:00 a.m. ET. Please see below for dial-in information and how to access the presentation online:

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