Your job involves using social communities to connect with healthcare professionals. What have you learned about creating a relationship with them in social channels?

Clive Roach: You have to be part of the community and create a community. We spent a long time trying to make sure we understood our customers on Twitter and LinkedIn. Once you develop a dialogue and a relationship, you then find that people are happy to talk with you in those social channels. But you can’t just go into those communities and start talking about products. You want to talk about various issues that are important to them, but we also want to talk about the things that are important to us such as access to healthcare and improving patient outcomes. We’re trying to create the future of healthcare.

“Once you develop a dialogue and a relationship, you then find that people are happy to talk with you in those social channels.”

What are the challenges in implementing social media in a business-to-business (B2B) company?

Roach: One of the challenges is understanding what you can do with social media in a business environment and with your target audience. It’s important to understand the maturity level of each group. We have a process at Philips where we encourage and hand-hold people through the process. We see what’s out there already and whether we have to build something new, how we’re going to structure that, what kind of resources we’ll need and how much it will cost. And we want to know the business result that’s anticipated from that whole process.
Once we guide people through that, it’s also important to understand what other companies have done in the B2B social media space, and that’s where eMarketer really helps. For example, I read an eMarketer interview with LinkedIn about the new ways it has allowed people to communicate with its customers, and we’d like to try it. It’s interesting to read about that. It also makes me think I’m going in the right direction.

“We use eMarketer to understand our target groups more.”

**What are some best practices for B2B marketers looking to deploy social media in a more cohesive way?**

**Roach:** The first thing I would say is to try not to boil the ocean. Start small. Just pick one activity in one country and do a case study on that success—how you started, how you ran the program, what the results showed and most important, what the implications are for the existing business process. If you do that, you can knock on the door of another part of the company and gain acceptance and then another, and build from there. Build your resources slowly to match the needs of the group you’re working with. That’s how you grow.

I think it’s much better to do it like that than to try and do something for the whole company and then crash and burn. You don’t often get a second chance. Using an internal social media tool like Yammer or Socialcast can help. It’s a great way for people in the company to learn how to use social networks and how they can submit a question to the company and get an answer back— independent of time zone or language barriers. Then you can see who could potentially play a role in your company’s external social media.

Then you want to make sure you share success with your internal social network so colleagues think: “Wow, is it possible to do that? Can I talk to you about how we can do that for my business?” In addition, you need to make sure that social media is not done in a silo. It needs to be integrated into your business processes.

**Why is eMarketer an important tool for your business?**

**Roach:** It helps me do my job better because I’d say my job is not only about evangelizing and being a consultant, it’s also about serving as a source of information about what’s out there. What are other people doing? What’s a good benchmark? What does success look like? So I depend on sources like eMarketer to provide that input for me.

Understanding what success looks like is really hard. You always have to think about what the expected outcomes should be from social media. The eMarketer interviews are really good for that.

We use eMarketer to understand our target groups more. For example, the Physicians Online report had fantastic data on where physicians go online and their behavioral characteristics. It was my gold standard that I used several times in meetings.

The iPad app is also becoming something that I use weekly rather than on the odd occasion. I can dive into it at any time to find out more about the latest trend and access the weekly updates each Friday. It’s so easy to use.