83bar

Patient Activation White Paper

7 rules to create top-performing social media ads

"...because every one of these patient journeys starts with a digital ad, isn't it worth getting 3.3 times as many clicks? That's the result of a creative ad that works."

Overview

Measuring the performance of social media ads is an essential element in tracking the overall effectiveness of our Patient Activation campaigns. Now for the first time, we reveal the secrets behind how our ads are made to maximize their performance.

We can now quantify how the creative quality of ads is a leading driver of campaign performance. Specifically, 56% of a brand's sales lift from digital advertising can be attributed to high-quality creative, according to a recent Nielsen advertising study.[1]

Despite the fact that quality creative is essential, many other healthcare agencies and advertisers still lag behind. And the numbers shine a light on just how significant the creative gap is. Recent data provided by Wordstream shows the average click-through rate (CTR) on Facebook for healthcare ads is just .83% -- well below the legal industry (1.61%), retail (1.59%) and the average across all industries (.90%). [2]

The 83bar Difference

At 83bar, we approach creative development differently. It's no wonder then, that the results highlight that difference: our four-year historical average CTR across 304 Facebook and Instagram campaigns is 2.7%[3], **nearly 3.3 times higher than the healthcare industry average**.

How is this difference relevant to our clients?

It means 3.3 times more prospective patients moving from passive consumers of healthcare information to active participants in their treatment journey.

In this article, we will look at foundational principles used by 83bar for producing social media ad creative. We will also share examples of some of our best-performing ads from Facebook and Instagram.

Along the way, you'll learn why the 83bar creative approach is able to:

- Increase click through rates
- Adhere to ethical and regulatory best practices
- Provide a positive patient experience that helps patients, providers, and life science companies all achieve their goals

Old meets new: Adapting the AIDA model to "E-B-T"

If you are an experienced advertising specialist, you're probably familiar with the AIDA marketing model - Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. For decades, the AIDA model has been used to describe the complete buying journey, from the first time a user sees an advertisement to when they complete a purchase.

At 83bar, we've adapted the formula and applied it to today's much shorter decision process. It's as simple as Eye. Brain. Thumb. This "E-B-T" model represents the milliseconds it takes for an ad to reach a reader's eyes, then brain, triggering a thumb to hesitate, hover, then tap on an online link in a social media feed.

Let's take a look at the key elements of our ad creative process, and the 7 rules we follow.

How to get attention: catch the eye

In order to make ads stand out and get noticed, we first consider the environment in which they'll be placed. Then, we figure out how to produce something that subverts expectations to create "pattern interruption".

On both Facebook and Instagram, most users across all age groups are scrolling through a vertically-oriented news feed on a mobile phone. As they scroll, users are bombarded with photos of friends and family, articles from news sources, memes, and of course, targeted ads.
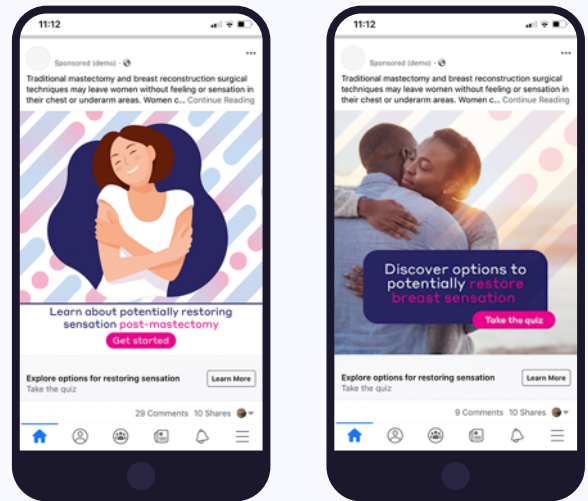
To be effective, it is essential that an ad visually stands out from other content in the social news feed. Even more challenging, an ad needs to stand out instantly, as users are deciding which content to engage with at an alarming speed.

One of our top performing ads (2.89% Link CTR, 3.76% Total CTR) in contrast with a typical stock photo used in pharma ads (.54% Link CTR. 1.76% Total CTR)

Rule #1: Avoid stock photography

Stock photos should NEVER be used without graphical treatment in a social media ad. Why? The images are boring to look at and signify "cheap" or "low quality" content, causing patients to scroll right on by without a second thought.

Stock photos are safe and cheap. They may be seen as a way to humanize marketing campaigns and represent diverse demographics. But they also get fewer clicks.

If you must use stock photography, we recommend graphic treatment or illustrative styling -- to elevate it from generic to branded art. At 83bar, we've found that illustrated ads that contain no stock photography typically outperform all other visual styles.

Rule #2: Avoid the "pharma look"

Pharmaceutical ads have a definitive look. These ads are created using more expensive stock or custom photography in an attempt to demonstrate how a healthcare product helps regular people enjoy a normal life.

In our experience, social media users have built up an immunity to this kind of traditional pharma ad because they look too predictable and over-produced. These ads don't create pattern interruption in a social media news feed; they blend into the background and are easily ignored.

These ads may look polished and fit within established brand guidelines, but they are proven to perform worse than ads that dare to be a bit different.

We often recommend interpreting these visuals with unique depictions of how the product is used or anatomical drawings and clinical figures of the part of the body a product treats. All with the goal of interrupting established patterns and attracting attention.
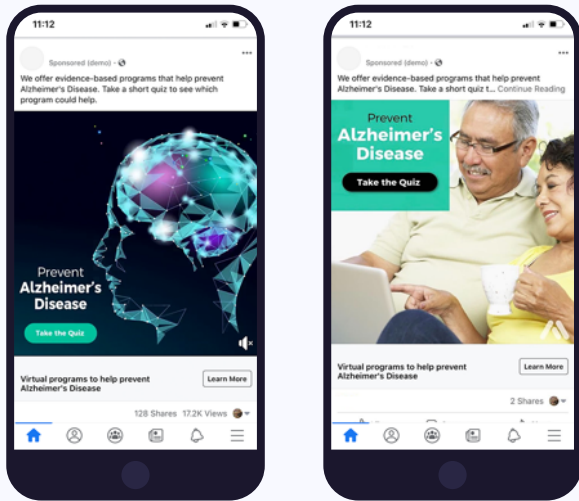
Compare the anatomical illustration of the top-performing ad on the left (2.5% Link CTR, 4.29% Total CTR) with the typical pharma look on the right (2.81% Link CTR, 3.85% Total CTR).

A collection of actual IRB-approved creative from a competitor's clinical trial. These all would go against our learnings of what attracts attention the best.

Rule #3: Don't be punny

How long did it take you to understand the title for this rule? It probably wasn't immediate, was it?

This is a mistake we often see with advertising agencies representing healthcare clients. Copywriters and art directors who are often driven by a desire to win ad awards want to sound clever. But clever ads often rely on high concept wordplay or visual puns that obfuscate what the ad is about or who the ad is for, making it too difficult and time-consuming (even if only by one second!) for viewers to evaluate the message.

At 83bar, we are driven by a different goal: to immediately spark recognition, not delay it. So, we instead challenge ourselves to find the simplest representative words and images that can be immediately recognized and understood by our target audience.

After years of testing, we've found that anatomical drawings, cross-sections, and medical diagrams make very effective ad imagery. The reason? These images stand out in social feeds (pattern interruption) and are immediately recognized as pertaining to a specific health concern.

And for copy, we've learned to never bury the lead. We place the reader's key health concern as early in the ad copy as possible, not beneath other irrelevant text.
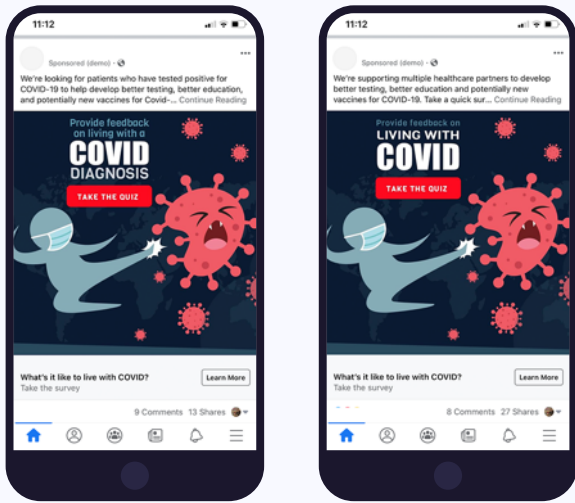
The simple addition of the word "diagnosis" prominently featured in the ad image on the left doubled the rate of qualified leads for a recent clinical study.

How to spark interest and invoke desire: Stimulate the brain

Once you have captured someone's attention, the next step is to engage them with your offering.

In other industries, copywriters can make vague claims using attractive comparative terms like "better," "stronger," or "faster." Retail marketers often create urgency with limited offers and discounts that entice clicks in ways that are difficult (and typically discouraged) in healthcare campaigns.

To make life more challenging, it's not always easy to spark desire in a healthcare product or service when a serious health risk is involved. In healthcare, it is essential to avoid claims that might mislead a potential patient, even by accident.

Rule #4: Apply all the conventional marketing best practices still available after legal, medical, and regulatory have weighed in

The work of healthcare marketers must meet a higher standard, and that's okay with us. Even when some of the more common and effective marketing copy and promotional tactics are unavailable, it doesn't mean that other best practices should be ignored. For example:

- Include social proof. Anything that supports that other patients have used your product or service will help spark interest or desire. It's easier to put testimonials in video ads than in static image ads, but simple numerical statements demonstrating a high number of patients or providers that have used your product or service will work in a pinch.

- Establish credibility and authority. For big name-brand companies with a lot of brand awareness, this could be as simple as including a company logo. For smaller, newer healthcare companies, appeals from the founder may generate much-needed authenticity. For every healthcare company regardless of size, testimonials from both patients and providers always help, as well as any pertinent trust seals from accrediting bodies, awards, or other special distinctions.

Rule #5: Stoke the fire of curiosity

Curiosity is a strong desire to learn the unknown. We aim to produce ads that make it clear there is a gap between what a potential patient knows and what they could know by clicking the ad. This will be more likely to generate clicks and engage potential patients at an improved rate.

For example, we have tracked the use of a call-to-action, "Find out if [insert drug/device/diagnostic] might be right for you." This is documented as one of strongest performing motivators. In one concise line, there is a mini-mystery that can only be solved by the desired action of clicking an ad.

The fact that this information is not only partially obscured, but also implied to be personalized, sparks curiosity and drives action in a way that simply listing all of the information in a one-size-fits-all blurb will not.
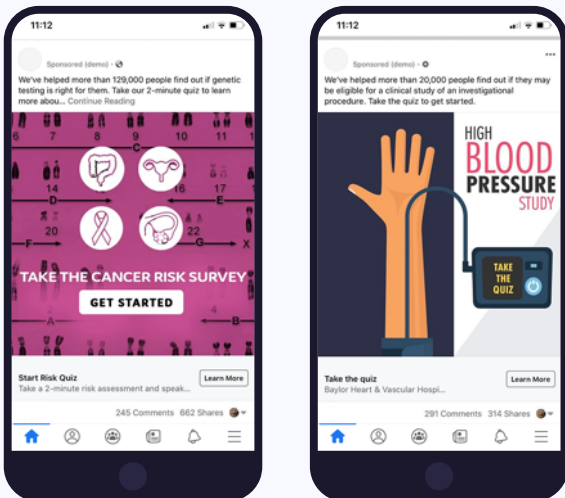
These are two of our best ads of the last four years.

- On the left, this HCS image was the top performing ad for more than 2 years and 100k+ leads. We increase CTR by .5% by adding in the social proof copy at the top of the ad in 2018.
- On the right, Another example of all best practices rolled in one: designed to stand out in feed; primary health concern immediately obvious; use of social proof in ad copy. This is the number one ad for a high blood pressure clinical trial for more than a year.

How to evoke action: Guide the thumb

In digital advertising, the desired action is almost always a click. If ads have been set up correctly to target your ideal patient, with compelling ad copy and imagery to provoke interest and desire, then now is the stage to make sure you provide a good reason for someone to leave the comfort of their curated social media newsfeed and visit your website to get more information.

Rule #6: Design ads to look clickable

83bar has found conclusively that buttons within the ad graphic are more likely to generate a click than without. Additionally, the buttons should stand out with a contrasting color or animation to make it even more obvious that it should be clicked.

Example of a clickable button and an offer that de-risks the click. We're not asking that a user buy a CGM device, but instead, providing free information to educate how much it may cost for them.

Rule #7: De-risk the desired action and minimize the ask

Time and attention are currency on social media. An ad is more likely to provoke action if it appeals to the ease with which desired information can be obtained, and reduces the perceived commitment to take the first step.

Far too often we see advertisers get down on one knee and pop the big question before they've even been on a first date with a potential patient.

"Schedule an appointment today!"
"Speak to a nurse now!"
"Buy our widget!"

These calls to action work well further down in the marketing funnel when a prospective patient is aware of the need, and has had time to evaluate the offer. Any call-to-action that asks for a larger commitment is likely to generate fewer clicks and less traffic to the top-of-funnel content.

Conclusion

In summary, this article has revealed the foundational principles used by 83bar for producing social media ad creative. You have read the detailed elements of our ad creative process with 7 rules we follow, along with featured examples of some top-performing ads. With these principles, we've demonstrated why the 83bar creative approach has a track record of increasing click-through rates, adhering to ethical and regulatory best practices, and creating a positive patient experience.

Admittedly, successful patient activation campaigns require much more than click-through rates 3.3 times above industry average. (Landing pages need to convert. Screeners need to ensure prospective patients are qualified, and post-conversion content needs to be personalized and customized to deliver the right message at just the right time.)

And that's only the digital portion of the patient journey. In 83bar campaigns, our process spans online to offline, from ad to nurse call, from click to appointment, from appointment to procedure, and ultimately from sick to well.

Yet, because every one of these patient journeys starts with a digital ad, isn't it worth getting 3.3 times as many clicks? That's the result of a creative ad that works.

References

1. "Five Keys to Advertising Effectiveness: Quantifying the Impact of Advertising on Sales" Nielsen Catalina Solutions, Aug 2017. http://www.ncsolutions.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/NCS_Five-Keys-to-Advertising-Effectiveness.pdf

2. Data from https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2017/02/28/facebook-advertising-benchmarks

3. Data from 304 campaigns conducted by 83bar Jan 1, 2016 - May 13, 2020.

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Bob is the founder and CEO of 83bar with more than 30 years of consumer–focused healthcare experience and involvement in more than $1 billion dollars in direct to consumer health care transactions. Has a strong belief that educated and enabled health care consumers will permanently change the USA healthcare market for the better. Bob also serves as an advisor, investor and fundraiser with a particular focus on health care, technology and service sectors.

About Patient Activation

83bar has developed a 4-part patient activation system integrated to:

- **LOCATE** prospective patients through risk assessment and health surveys;

- **EDUCATE** them to offer solutions and help them make informed decisions;

- **NAVIGATE** patients to action by appointment scheduling or service fulfillment; and through comprehensive follow-up; and

- **ADVOCATE** on behalf of improved treatment and health care.

Our expertise includes a wide range of medical categories:

- Aesthetics
- Cardiology
- Diabetes
- Endocrinology
- Gastroenterology
- IV therapy
- Men's health
- Molecular diagnostics
- Nutrition
- Oncology
- Ophthalmology
- Orthopedics
- Rare disease
- Surgery
- Urology / Urogynecology
- Women's health

Our Shared Success

- $1 billion+ in DTP acquisition

- 1,000,000+ patient prospects

- 25+ partner companies

- 18% average Facebook conversion

- >7:1 average ROI for partner companies

More information

Visit our website for more information

www.83bar.com