

Category: 6A: Integrated Communications: Consumer Products & Services
Title: "Aligning the Healthcare Community, Elite Media and Consumers Behind the Need for alli®"
Agency: HealthSTAR Public Relations
Client: GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare
Budget: \$2.6 million (Fee: \$1.5 million; OOP: \$1.1 million)

Situation Analysis

There are 130 million overweight or obese adults in the United States, many of whom readily put their faith in "magic" weight-loss products that don't deliver on their dubious promises. Americans spend \$46 billion annually in their ongoing battle to shed pounds, and much of it goes toward unregulated and unproven weight-loss supplements.

In early 2007, GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare prepared to enter the weight-loss category with the launch of alli (orlistat 60mg), the first and only FDA-approved weight-loss product available without a prescription. As a half-dose version of prescription Xenical (orlistat 120 mg), however, alli faced a daunting legacy of sensational media coverage stemming from orlistat's gastrointestinal side effects in users who fail to adopt a reduced-fat diet.

Through an integrated, parallel-track program of advocacy and patient education, HealthSTAR Public Relations (HSPR) helped to align the healthcare community, elite media and overweight consumers behind the need for an FDA-approved OTC weight-loss product and achieve "blockbuster" status for the alli launch. HSPR overwhelmingly exceeded client expectations, driving an 11-3 FDA recommendation to approve alli for OTC sale, measurably increasing alli awareness and trial and generating 3.1 billion branded media impressions.

Research

HSPR used primary and secondary research to understand physician and consumer knowledge, perceptions and use of weight-loss aids and dietary supplements; barriers to weight loss; the role of key influencers; the media environment; and the competitive landscape. Research included:

- **Landmark Consumer Survey:** This survey of 3,500 consumers was the first to gauge patient and physician experiences and attitudes relating to weight-loss aids, programs and dietary supplements. More than half of those surveyed (54 percent) believe dietary supplements are FDA approved when, in fact, none are.
- **alli First Team:** 406 men and women representing a broad mix of ages, backgrounds, life experiences and geographies were recruited to participate in a community of alli early adopters. This group provided candid feedback and insights regarding their experiences using alli on an ongoing basis leading to launch.
- **Key Opinion Leader (KOL) Interviews:** To gain perspective and enlist support, HSPR interviewed 80 experts, groups and government officials in the areas of obesity, nutrition, pharmacy, eating disorders, cardiology, diabetes and general health, as well as 20 third-party payers, managed-care groups and employers.
- **Analysis of Existing Data:** HSPR analyzed more than 90 sets of clinical and consumer weight-loss data to gain insight into the current public and professional dialogue on weight loss.
- **Media Analysis:** To pinpoint relevant health statistics and better understand the nature of the weight-loss messages consumers typically see and hear, HSPR reviewed hundreds of weight-loss articles and advertisements in consumer media and medical journals, and on government Web sites, such as nih.gov and cdc.gov.

Planning

- **Objectives:** (1) Support brand efforts to gain FDA recommendation to approve alli for OTC sale (2) generate widespread consumer awareness of alli; (3) drive selective alli trial at launch.
- **Target Audiences:** (1) Multi-disciplinary opinion leaders in the areas of obesity and healthcare (2) elite media who influence healthcare policy decisions (3) overweight adults (primarily women, ages 35 to 59) who are committed to losing weight and open to receiving help; who understand that weight loss is their responsibility and requires hard work; and who view moderate weight loss as success.
- **Strategy:** Develop an integrated program of advocacy and patient education that would evolve in stages to coincide with key marketing milestones (pre-FDA approval, approval, pre-retail, launch and post-launch) and that would:
 - Establish the need for safe, effective, FDA-approved OTC weight-loss options.
 - Break existing category conventions, such as before-and-after comparisons and swimsuit photos.
 - Adopt an honest and pragmatic tone to transcend messages of quick fixes and unrealistic expectations.
 - Challenge popular notions about weight loss to shift entrenched and mistaken beliefs and behaviors.
 - Stress that alli is the only FDA-approved weight-loss product available to consumers without a prescription.
 - Effectively convey alli's efficacy: 50 percent more weight loss than through diet and exercise alone.

- Communicate alli's safety, based on orlistat's worldwide use in 25 million patient treatments and 100 clinical studies involving more than 30,000 patients.
- Precondition the marketplace to understand that alli is not for everyone, but for those who are committed to making the diet and lifestyle changes necessary for success (selective trial).
- Use the term "treatment effects" to describe the potential side effects of alli's fat-blocking mode of action, and position them as a sign the product is working and as a "friendly reminder" of the need to follow a low-fat diet.
- Openly confront "treatment effects" to protect the brand's reputation from the late-night television banter and negative word-of-mouth that stunted Xenical's market potential.
- Manage risk by monitoring online discussion and by recruiting multi-disciplinary experts in obesity, nutrition, oncology and public health, who could proactively and reactively speak to product safety and efficacy.

Execution

As integral parts of its campaign to launch alli, HSPR:

- Supported the Reality Coalition, a policy-change initiative backed by KOLs and other third parties. Through op-ed pieces, white papers and events at The Obesity Society's annual meeting, the Reality Coalition helped align the healthcare community and "elite" media behind the need for an FDA-approved OTC weight-loss product.
- Executed a comprehensive advocacy program involving multi-disciplinary opinion leaders in the areas of obesity and healthcare to show high-level public support for alli at the FDA Advisory Committee Hearing.
- Announced FDA approval of alli to build demand for a "legitimate" weight-loss product, earning concurrent coverage by *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, AP, Bloomberg, Dow Jones and Reuters.
- Used an unbranded Web site, QuestionEverything.com, to address consumer skepticism borne of false claims and ineffective products; promote a healthy, low-fat lifestyle; and identify and pre-qualify alli early adopters. QuestionEverything.com was profiled on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal's* Marketplace section.
- Scripted and produced two public service announcements with the American Dietetic Association and American Pharmacists Association advocating healthy eating and lifestyles, which aired 2,872 times nationwide.
- Conducted an SMT with the authors of *are you losing it? losing weight without losing your mind*, an alli-branded, self-help book sold at the point of purchase that promotes healthy weight-loss strategies and the alli program.
- Promoted alli's unconventional marketing approach, which Stu Elliot of *The New York Times* described in an article as "telling dieters a pill works only if they work too."
- Played a key role in the development and execution of the alli Experience: an interactive, experiential "pop-up" exhibit in New York's Union Square to help overweight consumers determine their readiness to lose weight with alli and learn more about the alli program. The alli experience went on to tour five major U.S. markets.
- Publicized the alli Experience by holding press events for national and local media; hosting education and appreciation events for KOLs; disseminating a creative mailer; and posting a virtual tour online.
- Distributed a press release, audio news release, doctor/patient SMT and video B-Roll on June 12 to support the official "on-shelf" product launch on June 15, and to drive consumers to myalli.com to learn more.
- Pitched the alli First Team, the early alli adopters, for follow-up stories to answer the question, "Does alli work?"
- Instituted one of the first pharmaceutical blogs, alliconnect.com, giving overweight adults a place to have online conversations about alli and weight-loss issues in general, further supporting alli's open and honest reputation.
- Wove sales messaging into GlaxoSmithKline's earnings conference calls, to highlight the exceptionally high levels of consumer acceptance and satisfaction. To date, more than 3 million alli starter kits have been sold.

Evaluation

- The FDA recommended 11-3 to approve alli for OTC sale, an exceptional result in today's regulatory climate.
- With no branded advertising until 6/25/07 (10 days after alli was launched at retail), HSPR's campaign – on its own – drove more than \$40 million in retail sales vs. the \$2 million forecast (Nielsen, POS data through 6/23/07).
- The campaign built 24% brand awareness – 38% among overweight women 35 to 59 – vs. the 11% forecast (Evans McDonough tracker data through 6/23/07).
- In December, *Time* magazine named alli one of the "Top 10 Medical Breakthroughs of 2007."
- In just six months, alli went from having no market presence to being, by far, the #1 product in its category (IRI).
- alli sales totaled \$291.6 million in 2007, with repeat purchase and user satisfaction trending ahead of projections.
- More than 250,000 people have enrolled in alli's online behavioral support program, myalliplan.com.
- Roughly 143,000 alli users have posted 156,000 messages on the myalli.com message boards.
- With 8 million visitors in 2007, myalli.com is now the second most-popular weight-loss destination online.
- In 11 months, HSPR generated 12,000 branded media placements and 3.1 billion (gross) media impressions, including every national morning show, evening news program, cable news network, radio network and daily paper.