



Human-First Storytelling in the Age of Social Media



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WHERE INNOVATION MEETS INFLUENCE

If AdWeek's Social Media Week 2025 made one thing clear, it's this: brands can no longer afford to be faceless, static entities in a fast-evolving, human-first digital landscape. Across industries, the message was resounding— audiences crave authenticity, relatability, and real-time relevance. For those of us who work in health and pharma, the urgency to adapt is not just a trend; it's essential.

Let's dive into five key takeaways from this year's event, alongside strategic insights for healthcare marketers looking to lead with purpose in a digitally native world.

The Follower Count is Out — Relevance is In

Gone are the days when success was measured by the number of followers. Today, it's all about resonance over reach. Cyntia Leo, Head of Brand Marketing and Communications of Urban Outfitters said it best: "The era of the follower is dead."

In health and pharma, this means showing up where real conversations are happening—whether it's in niche patient forums, comment sections, or creator-driven content on TikTok. Visibility now depends on algorithms, engagement, and timing. Relevance is earned by delivering content that informs, supports, and genuinely connects with real people at the right moment.

Don't Rent Trends — Build Equity

Jumping on every fleeting trend might drive short-term spikes in visibility, but it rarely builds long-term brand value. Hassan Ali, Senior Director of Brand Creative and PR of Hootsuite reminded us that many marketers are still building on "rented land."

For pharma and health brands, the imperative is to create owned narratives that can scale. Think Duolingo's mascot (and their brilliant marketing stunt): quirky, consistent, and instantly recognizable. This created a huge buzz, increased brand awareness, and community engagement. What's our equivalent in healthcare? What stories can only we tell?

Creators Are the New Credibility

Influencer marketing is no longer reserved for lifestyle and beauty brands. In 2025, 50% of marketing budgets are predicted to go toward creator partnerships. Why? Because people trust people.

In our industry, creators are patients, caregivers, HCPs, and advocates. These voices bring lived experience, authenticity, and credibility to the table. They're already shaping perceptions and driving decisions. It's time to get creative with how we weave creators into the stories we tell for our clients.

Strategy Tip:

Rethink KPIs. Prioritize meaningful engagement and conversation over passive reach. Use social listening platforms such as Hootsuite to identify patient pain points and plug into ongoing conversations.

Strategy Tip:

Invest in evergreen content pillars that build emotional and educational equity. Develop visual and narrative assets that are uniquely yours—and make them recognizable across campaigns and platforms.

Strategy Tip:

Curate a unique bench of creators aligned with your brand purpose. Consider long-term partnerships over transactional posts. Highlight lived experiences, and don't be afraid to co-create campaigns with those who know the community best.

React Fast, But Stay Aligned

Speed is the new currency—yet it can’t come at the expense of brand integrity. Being nimble and culturally aware is essential, all while staying true to your values and mission. By all means, jump on the moment—just don’t forget who you are.

Pharma is often seen as slow-moving; however, social teams are closest to the consumer and can act as real-time cultural pulse-checkers. Embedding social intelligence into your workflow allows you to move quickly and stay aligned with your brand’s course.

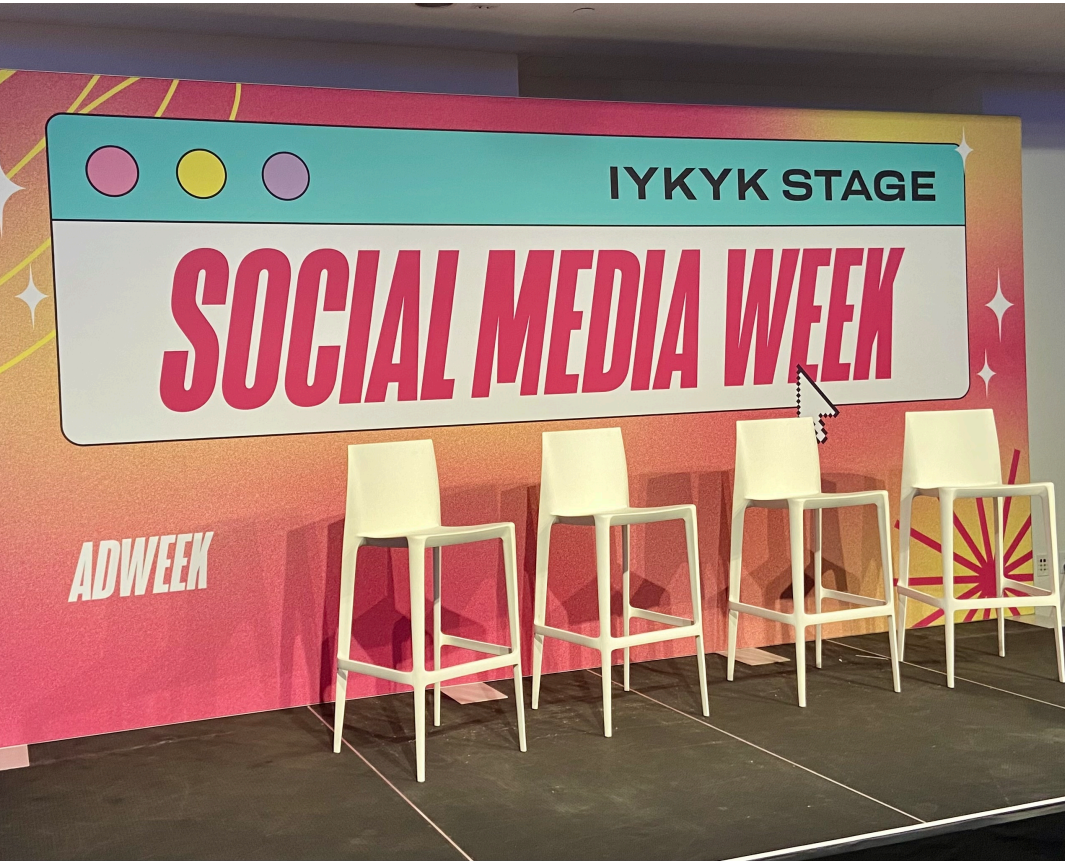
Strategy Tip:
Empower social teams to act as strategic advisors. Build flexible frameworks that allow for agile content creation without bypassing compliance. Use rapid insights to inform omnichannel planning.

LinkedIn Influencers Are on the Rise

The LinkedIn renaissance is here, and it’s more human than ever. From executives sharing team wins to employees spotlighting their day-to-day experiences, LinkedIn is evolving into a platform for storytelling, not just networking.

Health and pharma brands often underestimate the power of internal voices. Yet, subject matter experts, employees, and even interns can become powerful brand ambassadors. What matters most is authenticity and a strong point of view. Start using your voice!

Strategy Tip:
Develop executive visibility programs and employee advocacy strategies. Encourage leaders to share not just insights, but experiences. Make storytelling part of your culture.





Final Thought: Be Unapologetically Human

Every session at #SMW pointed to a simple truth: the most impactful brands are the most human ones. Whether it's the Chicken Shop Date show host who insists on full creative control, or a Gen Z sports fan who finds her place in the NFL story, the common thread is authenticity.

In healthcare, our work touches lives in real, profound ways. The opportunity is not just to market, but to make genuine connections to people's real lives. To meet people where they are, speak their language, and listen more than we talk.

It's time to lead with empathy, tell better stories, and put humanity at the heart of every brand campaign, social post, partnership, and platform.

So, what story could only your brand tell—and what's stopping you from telling it today?



Questions? Want to chat? Reach out to Jamie at jamie.goldberg@omnicomhealthgroup.com