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Don't Be Afraid To Try Something New – Q&A With GSK Marketing Exec Stephen Glynn

by [Tom Gallen](#)

GSK Consumer Healthcare's engagement director Stephen Glynn gives his insight into how digital is shaking up OTC drug marketing and talks about the experiences that have shaped his career.

Never before have marketers of OTC products had so many different options open to them to reach consumers with their messages. The emergence of the digital channel gives brands the opportunity to connect with consumers through social media, video and even artificial intelligence.

While consumers have become more accessible through the internet, they have also become more discerning. OTC brands must work harder than ever before to not only stand out from the crowd, but to win consumers' trust.

In this exclusive interview, [GSK Consumer Healthcare](#)'s expert engagement director for Great Britain & Northern Europe, Stephen Glynn, tells *HBW Insight* how the rise of digital has shaped his OTC marketing career and taught him the value of pushing the boundaries to get results.



Q What has been the biggest achievement of your OTC marketing career?

A I've been lucky to have had a lot of different experiences in my OTC marketing career.

This includes working with consumers, shoppers and healthcare professionals across a number of brands. All of the achievements I'm proud of relate to where we have helped people with conditions or problems that hold them back in their daily lives, such as helping people quit smoking, managing symptoms or purchasing the right product for their needs. Most recently we worked closely with industry experts and pharmacists to highlight the issues joint pain can have on patients' lives. We helped identify the challenges facing the proactive diagnosis and management of the condition, and created informative materials to enable pharmacy teams to support patients with joint pain.

Q What has been the biggest challenge of your OTC marketing career?

A The challenge is always how to communicate the benefits of products to customers, whether that's shoppers or healthcare professionals, in a creative and distinctive way. We know there are so many messages that our audience are exposed to, so I always try to think about what is important and the best way to grab people's attention.

Q How has the consumer changed over the course of your career, and how have you responded?

A My career has coincided with the rise of digital, especially mobile and social, therefore I am always keen to test and learn (even if it is wrong first time, as you learn from your experiences). My expert team at GSK consisting of health care professionals such as pharmacists and dentists are always hungry to learn and build our digital expertise. People have shorter attention spans and are exposed to more and more messages, which is why we need to be relevant, unique and useful in this area.

Q What has been the most important lesson of your OTC marketing career?

A The most important lesson to date is becoming comfortable with trying something new and different. Whilst working on smoking cessation I was lucky to lead a review of our brand visual style and tone of voice. It can be hard to break the mould, but if you use good consumer insight and commit yourself, you can do some great things.

Q How do you see OTC marketing developing in the future?

A I think there are a lot of changes to come, including the shift to self-care, along with the continuous rise of digital and the role of user reviews. We know people are researching their healthcare needs in the same way they look at which restaurant to visit or which new phone to buy. As a result, there is pressure on brands and experts to offer trusted information wherever and whenever patients and customers are looking.

Stephen Glynn has headed up engagement at GSK for the past 18 months, and prior to that was the firm's category director for skin care in Northern Europe. Glynn has spent seven years with GSK, having begun his marketing career at drinks giant Coca-Cola.