

THE TRUTH ABOUT TALENT

# HEALTH MARKETING



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**EXECUTIVE SEARCH**

# ABOUT THE BLUEPRINT

**We are a global executive search company with deep expertise in placing exceptional leaders for the creative industries. Combining rigor, industry knowledge and a passion for innovation and world class creativity, we support the world's best agencies to build their biggest differentiator: people.**

As global talent scouts for the creative industries we are passionate about the opportunity for diverse and progressive leaders to help drive a new wave of creativity in the healthcare sector. This is why we have chosen to focus the third iteration of our Truth About Talent series on health marketing. A reflection of our increased focus on the health sector as a business.

We find and place leaders who understand how to use creativity to navigate the complex regulatory health environment, driving forward digital health transformation and AI innovation. A leadership skill set which helps brands cut through the noise to patients and HCPs and drive growth. And our focus on diverse leadership helps health agencies deliver more inclusive and innovative patient care.

**We are relentless in our pursuit of finding and supporting the most progressive and impactful leaders in the creative industries.**

## WELCOME TO THE TRUTH ABOUT TALENT: HEALTH MARKETING

If you are healthy you barely think about it. Yet if your health is bad it's all you can think about. We take our health for granted, even though it's the single most important factor in all of our lives.

The same could be said for healthcare advertising. Historically it's a part of our industry we have taken for granted. Or worse still, stereotyped and sidelined.

Healthcare marketing has come a long way, but leaders across the industry agree there is still more to do. The creative possibilities to connect with the world's most diverse audience; people with a pulse, are endless.

When Apple launched its Health app, it somehow managed to omit a woman's menstrual cycle. Fast forward to today and brands are not only working to close the gender health gap, but innovating across borders and boundaries.

From dogs detecting cancer to TikTok educating patients, healthcare advertising is brimming with talent and ideas that are pushing to the very edges of creative possibilities. Everyday in this industry people are making work that means something. The best work of their lives.

Our goal with this report is a simple one: to help positively shape the future of talent in the healthcare sector. Through in-depth interviews with the industry's brightest leaders, alongside insights from conversations with talent across the sector, we lift the lid on the big issues impacting healthcare marketing.

At The Blueprint we obsess about our industry's most precious resource: its people.

So here's what you need to know about what those people really care about.

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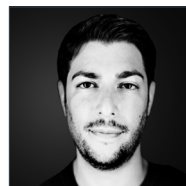
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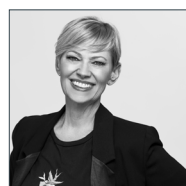
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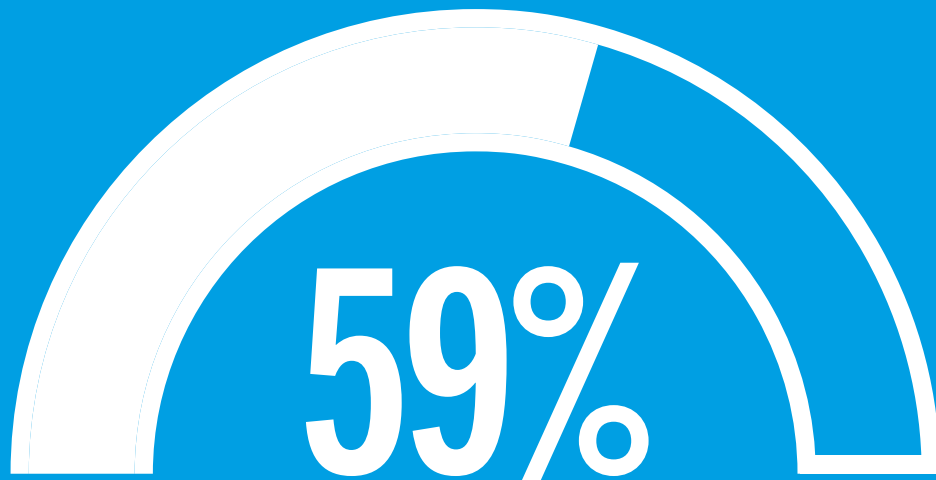
**There has never been a better moment to make your creative mark in healthcare communications. We are in the midst of a new wave of healthcare creativity. From utilizing AI to tackling misinformation at scale, to closing the gender health gap; healthcare leaders are harnessing creativity to address some of the biggest challenges of our age.**

The stereotype is that healthcare marketing is a sector where creativity cannot thrive. Our research shows the opposite is true: creative careers in the sector are accelerating at a rapid pace. Talent in the sector is getting bigger opportunities faster. The sector is breaking through with new creative firsts from reality TV shows to TikTok partnerships.

A commitment to life/work balance, combined with stable budgets means that talent in healthcare is not just making the best work of their lives; they are actually able to have a life too.

So if you aren't already riding this new wave of healthcare activity, should a career in healthcare marketing be your next move? If you want the opportunity to make work that really matters, alongside leaders who care passionately about the people making that work, then the answer is yes.

# CLOSING THE RECOGNITION GAP



**OF LEADERS IN HEALTHCARE BELIEVE  
THAT THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY  
UNDERVALUES THE IMPORTANCE  
OF CREATIVITY IN HEALTHCARE**





## Healthcare has carried the burden and stigma of being a creative killer.



The words of this healthcare marketing leader underline the biggest challenges to attracting talent to the healthcare industry: misconceptions and stereotypes.

The healthcare industry is riding a new wave of creativity and innovation. Yet the stereotype of healthcare being a sector where creative careers go to die continues. A disconnect reflected in the fact that the majority of leaders in the industry believe there is still more to do to break the stigma surrounding pursuing a fulfilling creative career in the industry.

According to our research 59% of leaders believe that the advertising industry undervalues the importance of creativity in healthcare marketing.

Claire Gillis is the CEO of VML Health, the largest and fastest growing global health communications offering in WPP. She manages over 2,000 health science specialists and creatives across North America, Europe and APAC. From her vantage point she can see that the sector is on a journey towards greater appreciation, but she believes it is not yet getting the recognition it deserves.

She explains: **“Everyone thinks that technical science gets in the way of creativity in healthcare advertising. What has happened historically in health advertising is people get very desensitized and rely on stereotypes. Think about all those ads featuring people walking on beaches. It all looked so formulaic. The gift we are given in healthcare advertising is that we need to reach such a wide audience; creativity is vital.”**

Gillis would like to see healthcare advertising have equal billing with consumer advertising in awards. **“I would like to see fewer barriers between consumer and health advertising,”** she adds.

## A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

Many leaders link this devaluing of healthcare advertising directly with a lack of industry knowledge.

Jon Chapman, Executive Creative Director of BBH Health, says:



**Healthcare marketing is undervalued because I don't think people genuinely understand it. There are lots of misconceptions about health and pharmaceutical work.**



He continues: **“Health and pharma work isn’t a mystery. There aren’t dark arts happening around the corner and you are not always reading medical textbooks and you do not need a PHD to do it.”** He continues: **“They feel there are too many barriers but from a creative point of view it’s exactly the same process of answering a brief.”**

Pointing to other regulated sectors like finance he believes that the fear of regulation and the stereotype that you can’t be creative because of regulation are long past their use by date.

The majority of leaders believe there is a fundamental disconnect between the talent and innovation in the healthcare industry and broader industry perceptions. Claire Knapp, CEO at Havas Lynx, says:



**There is still a perception that creativity in healthcare and pharmaceuticals is behind, but that doesn’t reflect the creative opportunities and transformation of the past 5 years.**



## THE FIGHT FOR CREATIVITY

Yet these stereotypes persist a state of play that leaves industry leaders concerned over the ability of the industry to not only attract talent, but ensure that talent gets the opportunity to thrive creatively.

As one leader explains: **“It’s clear to me that creativity and healthcare are two words that don’t often go together when the industry considers our craft. In fact, I think sometimes even the healthcare advertising industry undervalues the importance of creativity in our work. There are so many accepted hacks in our work that the majority of the ideas are mediocre. And there are so many regulatory burdens to carry in the work itself, that creativity becomes a real challenge.”**

Yet when it comes to the struggle of attracting and retaining the best talent industry leaders are committed to closing the perception gap for the next generation of talent. There is a red thread between the stereotypes which persist when it comes to creativity in healthcare marketing and the lack of understanding of the creative growth pathways talent can take in the sector.

Healthcare marketing has more to do to light the path for the next generation. Akwa Onuoha, Executive Vice President and International Client Lead at Publicis Health, says: **“We are a people-focused business and we are only as good as our best talent. Our creativity comes in our approach to problem solving and we need to communicate that more to talent.”**



Across the board leaders are united in their belief that the healthcare industry has a wealth of opportunity for talent. However there is also a recognition that the industry must do a better job in ensuring a diverse range of talent knows about career opportunities in the industry in the first place.

## CREATIVITY IN CONSTRAINT

Leaders agree that rules and regulations do not mean that healthcare marketing cannot be creative. Instead the opposite is true: creativity thrives in constraint.

Pierre Robinet, President at Ogilvy Health Asia Pacific, is on a mission to bust the myth that healthcare marketing is not a creative discipline. He shares: **“There’s still more to be done to show that healthcare can be creative, and that has been one of my challenges over the past four years. The core challenge is that healthcare hasn’t traditionally been seen as cool or a place where you can make really great work. There is a fear of compliance and constraints, when the constraints mean you have to be even more creative.”**

Tash Beecher, Creative Director at Syneos Health, believes that now is the time to flip the script when it comes to the wider industry undervaluing the creative potential of the sector.

**“There is a misconception that healthcare advertising is not creative. When actually the reality is you need to be more creative. I could create a campaign for a fizzy drink”,** she says, adding: **“I would be winning all the awards in mainstream advertising.**

**To be able to have those ideas and sell them to multiple stakeholders you need really multifaceted creativity.”**

Industry leaders are clear on its intrinsic creative potential.

VML Health’s Gillis explains:



**In healthcare we are controlled by the claims we can make, but our creativity and how we push complicated messages to huge audiences gives us a unique challenge and creative opportunity.**



## CREATIVE TRANSFORMATION

**“The industry is in the process of really transforming,”** says Renata Maia, Chief Creative Officer at Ogilvy Health. A transformation which she links directly with a relentless focus on talent.

Her leadership is rooted in the accountability and personal responsibility she holds for hiring diverse talent and mentoring the next generation of talent. **“Mentorship is fundamental for our industry,”** she explains. Maia supports D&AD and is the Jury President in the Health and Wellbeing and Pharma categories at the 2025 Awards. A role which means she has a genuine understanding of the next generation of talent coming into the industry, often without a formal education.

**“If you want to live in the past you will not invest your time for the future,”** she explains, adding:



**The future is talent so invest your time in that because without that investment in talent you will not succeed as a creative agency.**



Maia believes that this focus is more than just a personal investment by leaders, it is the foundation of ensuring that the industry continues to progress.

Leaders are clear-sighted that this transformative era for healthcare marketing is bringing with it new opportunities for talent. **“Health is going through a golden era of creative opportunity,”** says Siân Dodwell, Chief Strategy Officer at Publicis Health. Dodwell points to the growth of marketing talent in client teams as a key driver of innovation across the sector.



**The next generation is all about the talent in our client teams. They are all fascinated with the world and want to see work from outside of our industry.**



She believes this increased focus on marketing as a distinct discipline in pharmaceutical companies will continue to drive creativity.

It is clear that in healthcare marketing transformation is more than a buzzword, it is business as usual for an industry at the forefront of scientific and tech-driven innovation.

Robin Shapiro, CEO of TBWA\WorldHealth, explains: **“Our business is in a state of redefinition and technology, AI and data is all a part of that.”** Yet Shapiro is clear-sighted on the value of creativity in the midst of this constant innovation.

**“We have never been in the business of derivative content and commodity execution,”** she explains, adding:



**Creativity as a business tool is an upstream value for business, we need to continually prove the value of creativity as a business tool.**

## **FRUSTRATION IS CREATIVE FUEL**

Frank Mazzola, Managing Founder, 21Grams and Global Chief Creative Officer, Real Chemistry, has built his career on a singular belief that the standard shouldn't be lower in healthcare advertising. He believes the creative bar should in fact be higher, because there is so much more at stake. Put simply the agency believes that medicine should be more important than sneakers.

He says: **“I think about it in terms of consumer products. If I do the greatest work I ever could at Nike the best outcome of that is we sell more sneakers. The best outcome in health is that someone learns something about themselves that has a far greater impact.”**

Sharing his experience of refusing to share any of his work with his parents after his first six months in the industry, he has embraced the guts necessary to only do work that he is proud of.

## **AN INDUSTRY INFLECTION POINT**

Kara Dugan, President of Razorfish Health, believes that Covid was an inflection point for the healthcare industry.



**We have attracted an enormous array of creative talent. Great progress has been made.**



Yet despite this progress Dugan cautions that while the sector continues to strive for creativity, it remains under-appreciated by the wider advertising industry.

Ogilvy Health's Robinet believes that the tide is turning and that healthcare is beginning to get the recognition it deserves in the broader industry. He says: **“A lot of people see the creativity in healthcare advertising. Our Health@WPP community was recognized with 50 Lions in Cannes last year which reflects our creative power in healthcare advertising.”**

Yet leaders agree that recognition is still a work in progress. Brett O'Connor, Founder and Executive Creative Director of VCCP Health, believes there is more to do to close the recognition gap, but the value of the sector is beginning to be seen.

**“A lot of the holding companies have really seen the value of the work,”** he says, adding: **“Look at Cannes and the Clios and you really see the Health work is not just winning in its categories, it is winning in different verticals like PR and data.”**

But the ultimate truth about talent in healthcare is not just its awards, or industry recognition that lights them up. It is making work that really matters.

When it comes to talent Razorfish Health's Dugan is clear that finding the right talent is about ensuring that talent is excited by more than just creating a 30 second spot. **“When it comes to talent you have to create that movement to really ask yourself what problem can you solve?”** she says. Dugan believes that the industry's best talent are excited and not overwhelmed by the scale of the challenges they face.

She has a clear vision of the biggest responsibility for industry leaders: unlocking the potential of its people.

Dugan is an advocate of the singular truth that: 'What you don't overcome continues to hold you back.'

While the continued headwinds of an uncertain economic environment and consolidation threatens to hold back creative innovation, the relative economic resilience of the healthcare industry means that talent has a unique opportunity to thrive.

As Shazzia Khan, Chief Talent and Innovation Officer at Havas, explains:

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**I'm hugely optimistic for the future of the industry. The calibre of talent that is coming in today is incomparable. It is a positive cycle. We are attracting brilliant talent, which in turn is attracting more great talent allowing us to deliver more impactful work for the industry.**

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While the industry has come a long way in overcoming the stereotypes and misconceptions, closing the perception gap remains a work in progress. Work that the industry's most progressive leaders are stepping up to on a daily basis.



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# 7 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALTH MARKETING

## 7 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALTH MARKETING

# #1 HEALTH'S PURPOSE ADVANTAGE

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**The desire to make work that matters and have a clear purpose makes healthcare a magnet for talent.**

**“Would you be more proud of an ad for new trainers or an ad that changed government policy for HIV testing?”**

Jon Chapman, Executive Creative Director at BBH Health, perfectly encapsulates the purpose advantage that is so core to attracting and retaining talent in healthcare marketing.

While industry commentators continue to call peak purpose, the truth remains that the next generation of talent continues to prioritise making work that actually means something. A truth which provides the healthcare industry with the power of purpose.

Health's purpose advantage is a magnet for talent. Across the industry when you speak with creative leaders about why this work matters you will hear less about Cannes Lions and more about who can access life-changing drugs.

Closing the gender health gap has only just become a mainstream marketing movement. The healthcare marketing industry has been tackling inequality at scale for decades.

As Kara Dugan, President of Razorfish Health, explains: **“In healthcare you have to be the changemaker, and that attracts a certain type of person.”**

## A CLIMATE OF CHANGE AND CLIMATE CONSCIOUSNESS

The 'purpose advantage' also brings with it both an opportunity and responsibility for the industry to be on the front foot of the huge societal and business challenges posed by the climate crisis.

Claire Knapp, CEO at Havas Lynx believes that climate consciousness is going to become increasingly important; both in terms of talent attraction and healthcare advertising more broadly. The agency recently published a white paper called Climate of Health, which explored the impact of climate change on human health.

**The World Health Organization has declared the climate crisis one of the biggest global threats to human health, with one in four deaths attributed to preventable environmental causes. By 2050, it's estimated that it could cause an additional 14.5 million deaths and \$12.5 trillion worth of economic losses worldwide.**



## 7 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALTH MARKETING

### #1 HEALTH'S PURPOSE ADVANTAGE

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A truth which means that when it comes to understanding the power of purpose in healthcare then the lens of the climate crisis is particularly important. Especially when air pollution is contributing to a rise in a wide variety of illnesses. Havas Lynx's Knapp explains:



**The talent coming through from Gen Z are more climate conscious than before. It is something we need to acknowledge.**



While the wider marketing industry has failed to acknowledge the universal truth that people want to work for and buy from companies they believe in, in the healthcare marketing industry leaders share a desire to create a positive difference. Never shying away from breaking taboos and tackling the biggest challenges of our generation.

It is an approach which is attracting a unique type of creative changemaker to the industry. The type of talent which refuses to apologise for wanting to create work that makes a meaningful difference are the fuel of the industry. Talent which is successfully driving forward a new wave of creativity.

## 7 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALTH MARKETING

### #2 NOT A CAREER FOR LIFE, A ROUTE TO A SQUIGGLY CREATIVE LIFE

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Squiggly careers are on the rise and agencies are embracing creatives with a myriad of different experiences. This trend is not just about opening the doors to talent with consumer experiences, but creatives from adjacent sectors such as tech and telecoms. While stable budgets afford young talent the opportunity to work on big projects quickly making the sector a career accelerator.

The desire to do things differently means healthcare advertising is opening its doors to talent from adjacent industries such as technology and telecoms. Healthcare leaders are hiring for different skill sets. Attracting talent which goes beyond the realms of consumer advertising.

While healthcare shops are still scouting talent from direct rivals, the sector has also been fast to adapt to the rise of the squiggly career.

**“We love having people in our teams who are not from traditional health advertising backgrounds as it really challenges our norms,”** explains Claire Gillis, CEO of VML Health.

She continues: **“The stereotype is that you can’t go from consumer to health advertising, but the reality is that careers are fluid. You can go into healthcare advertising at any age. I would like to see more diversity and we really focus on driving that forward. We also need to have people with different experiences.”**

Healthcare is increasingly an environment in which creative talent can thrive at any point in their career journey. As Kara Dugan, President of Razorfish Health, explains:

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**The stereotype is that healthcare advertising is the last stop in your career journey.**

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Yet she believes this belief that healthcare is the last stop of a creative career journey is finally being busted. **“We are seeing a lot more squiggly and I think that is fantastic,”** she says. Dugan believes that the sector must not just ‘catch’ talent from disciplines such as technology and telecoms but actively seek them out.

## 7 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALTH MARKETING

### #2 NOT A CAREER FOR LIFE, A ROUTE TO A SQUIGGLY CREATIVE LIFE

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Frank Mazzola, Managing Founder, 21Grams and Global Chief Creative Officer at Real Chemistry, actively looks outside of the traditional industry talent pools. He explains:



**Creatively we look for people who haven't spent their entire careers in health as they don't bring the same baggage. You are going to be experts in it eventually.**



This ethos of doing things differently extends to giving talent the opportunity to step up and supercharge their creative careers quickly. Talent in healthcare can experience the momentum so missing from creative careers in some large agency networks. Progressive leaders are passionate about the creative potential of the industry today and the opportunity for young talent.

Leaders agree that the healthcare industry is relatively stable in terms of budgets. While long-term and stable brand strategies mean that new talent can get to work on substantial shoots faster. A state of play which offers talent a unique opportunity to make an impact quickly, regardless of their background or age.

### TALENT-STACKING

Siân Dodwell, Chief Strategy Officer at Publicis Health, believes it is vital that the industry nurtures marketers with wide-ranging experience, not just communications specialists. A shift which ensures agency leaders have a seat at the top table alongside client teams in order to make the brief, not just take the brief. She explains: **“We need to show talent where the next step in their career would be and where their knowledge gaps are.”**

Dodwell believes this approach is critical across the industry to ensure that creativity isn't seen as the coloring in department. At a time when clients are placing more emphasis on the CMO role industry leaders believe that there is a unique opportunity not just to make a quick impact in healthcare agencies, but build a career with both longevity and the opportunity for lifelong learning.

### #3 RAISING THE BAR FOR ETHICAL AI IN HEALTHCARE

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**The ethics of AI in healthcare is a life and death challenge for the industry. The creative industries have a once in a generation opportunity to tackle the pandemic of misinformation. AI can be a tool to help solve problems of its own creation, but only with the right talent.**

The risks surrounding the unethical use of AI are heightened in healthcare. The World Health Organization has warned that precipitous adoption of untested systems could lead to errors by healthcare workers, cause harm to patients, erode trust in AI and thereby undermine or delay the potential long-term benefits and uses of such technologies around the world. When data used to train AI may contain bias, generating misleading or inaccurate information that could pose risks to health, equity and inclusiveness. The moral imperative of ethical AI is clear across the creative industries, but the stakes are higher in healthcare.

The opportunity for creative talent is clear: AI can be harnessed as a tool to solve challenges, even when it has contributed to those challenges in the first place.

The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2024 identified misinformation and disinformation as severe threats in the coming years. For the healthcare industry where driving health equity is a global challenge, tackling misinformation is a life or death pursuit.

Yet AI is not automatically the villain in the deep fake story. It can play a crucial role in combating disinformation and misinformation at scale.

**“One of the biggest challenges in healthcare is fake news and misinformation. And I do believe AI will be a powerful tool in tackling misinformation,”** explains Pierre Robinet, President at Ogilvy Health Asia Pacific.

He continues:

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**The next big opportunity for AI solutions is to move from Large language model-driven solutions (LLMs) to Large action model-driven solutions (LAMs). This may help to continuously empower patients, easing their healthcare journey.**

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### #3 RAISING THE BAR FOR ETHICAL AI IN HEALTHCARE

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Robinet shares that while most large language models are tapping into open data the opportunity for healthcare, whilst respecting patient privacy, is to tap into private and proprietary data. **“While most Large language models (LLMs) are tapping into open and public data, there is a growing opportunity for any company, while respecting patient privacy, to tap into private and proprietary data in order to feed the models with specific information that makes the difference in delivering better outcomes,”** he adds.

He also believes that AI can be a tool for creative brainstorming. **“Our tools are now very sophisticated,”** he shares, adding:



**Our team can easily brainstorm with AI, including our own founder David Ogilvy, and our creatives can turn their ideas into thousands of assets in minutes.**



### AI AS A TOOL FOR GREATER HUMANITY

Akwa Onuoha, Executive Vice President and International Client Lead at Publicis Health, is hopeful that AI can help drive health equity. She explains:



**The AI opportunity is about scale and access. I have spent my career working in global and international marketing. We are talking about connecting with people on every continent and every country and AI offers a more thoughtful and equitable solution than the non-scalable tools which came before.**



## 7 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALTH MARKETING

### #3 RAISING THE BAR FOR ETHICAL AI IN HEALTHCARE

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Leaders are bringing in new talent from adjacent industries such as tech and B2B marketing to drive new loyalty programmes for healthcare providers at scale. If in the past marketing to healthcare providers was rooted in visits from sales reps and clunky CRM tools, its future affords talent the opportunity to utilise AI to drive personalization at scale.

Rachael Pay, President Health EMEA and APAC Integration Lead at Weber Shandwick, takes a nuanced approach to the AI opportunity. She believes there is a significant opportunity to utilise AI in message and campaign testing, creative testing and in creating personas.

From a healthcare professional perspective there is a unique opportunity to lift the lid on conversations between doctor and patient which have historically been behind closed doors. When you consider issues such as the gender health gap the impact of the difference between what patients say and a doctor hears could quite simply be revolutionary. A watershed moment for listening at scale.

**“From a healthcare professional standpoint being able to look at dialogues at scale and improve outcomes is a really interesting space,”** explains Pay.

There is also the all important promised efficiency element. Applying AI to creative businesses to lessen the burden of administration and give creative people that ever elusive time to be creative. Yet Pay is eloquent in explaining that centering humanity in creative response still requires human beings.



**AI is the tool, it isn't the answer in itself. We have to combine it with human empathy.**



In a highly regulated sector, healthcare marketers simply cannot afford to get it wrong. A pressure which makes it vital to ensure they have the right talent in place, not just to understand prompts and process, but bring a new level of rigor to the discipline as a whole. A state of play which means industry leaders believe that healthcare will be the hotbed for AI breakthroughs for talent.



### #4 RADICAL INCLUSION

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**Creativity is playing a crucial role in closing the gender health gap, DEI is not an afterthought in healthcare marketing.**



**We are pitching to the world's largest, most diverse customer base, so we need a completely diverse workforce. It is beholden on us to ensure diversity.**



Claire Gillis, CEO of VML Health, is explaining why inclusion is the fuel for creativity in the healthcare industry. When so many of the biggest healthcare marketing challenges of our age are centred on access and addressing inequalities, attracting and retaining diverse talent is crucial.

This means the sector is open to doing things differently and hiring talent without sector specific expertise. Akwa Onuoha, Executive Vice President and International Client Lead at Publicis Health, is passionate about making this change:

**“People who are newly coming in have the benefit of really bringing that outside perspective in. Leaders like myself need to listen and create those safe spaces that our teams and talent need to thrive,”** she adds.

She believes that action drives inclusion, explaining: **“We need to cast the net wider. For talent, we need to go beyond our traditional talent networks and pools. We need to build our talent pipelines earlier; at University, Colleges and Secondary school is really important for us to open up.”**

Fuelled by a generation of talent who have lived through a pandemic, healthcare advertising is at the forefront of the drive towards radical inclusion. As one leader shares: **“Health equity, helping underserved communities, arming patients and caregivers with innovative tools to navigate a rare disease, campaigning for better access, raising awareness around a disease state, a breakthrough treatment in oncology - whatever it is - it is hard to ignore the power of healthcare in communications and its transformative impact on the population.”**

Yet healthcare leaders are clear that attracting and retaining diverse talent is crucial to achieving this transformation.

### #4 RADICAL INCLUSION

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Tash Beecher, Creative Director at Syneos Health, says:



**People need to feel like they belong. The culture and the community is what brings people in and helps them to stay.**



Healthcare is a sector which takes inclusion seriously. At VML Health this commitment extends to providing space for neurodiverse talent who might need more thinking time or a less pressurised environment. As VML Health's Gillis explains:



**If we are more creative in our approach to talent we can be more creative in our output.**



At a time when the industry is set to become even more patient-centred this focus on inclusivity will only accelerate. Pierre Robinet, President at Ogilvy Health Asia Pacific, explains: **“I foresee an acceleration of the shift to patient centricity in marketing. The next 10 years will be about engaging with patients and consumers, joining their conversations, and empowering them to find the right health solutions they need and speak to the right physician.”**

Health inequity presents both a huge challenge and a creative opportunity for the industry. Marketing has a huge role in continuing to break the numerous global health taboos which have deadly consequences.

Rachael Pay, President Health EMEA and APAC Integration Lead at Weber Shandwick, says: **“We are still guilty of having a very homogenous group of people and that is our big challenge.”** She continues: **“Health equity is a big challenge and we need to build a new model which is designed with community in mind.”**

### **DIVERSITY DRIVES BORDERLESS CREATIVITY**

The very best creative leaders in the industry see diversity not as a distraction, but as a core driver of creativity and commercial effectiveness. Renata Maia,

## 7 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALTH MARKETING

### #4 RADICAL INCLUSION

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Chief Creative Officer at Ogilvy Health is passionate about the huge creative opportunity ahead. **“More than ever people realise the importance of diversity in all its forms,”** she explains.

While regulations and access to healthcare varies greatly across the globe Maia points to the universal truth that health is a deeply personal sector. Whether you are focusing on removing medical gaslighting, mental health or illness the truth remains that these issues all resonate emotionally. **“It is personal,”** explains Maia, continuing: **“When it’s personal you have this opportunity for hyper personalization. For storytelling that can humanise and personalise like never before and you can’t have that without diversity, without people from completely different backgrounds coming together.”** It’s an ethos which ensures Ogilvy’s commitment to ‘borderless creativity’ is a competitive advantage and a way of thinking which infuses the entire business.

### SETTING INTENTIONS, MEASURING PROGRESS

Across the board creative leaders were passionate about their own personal responsibility for continuing to drive diversity in their businesses. Accountability is top of the business agenda, despite the challenging cultural climate.

Robin Shapiro, CEO of TBWA\WorldHealth, is fully focused on improving diversity of talent. **“It is a real intention that has to be set and I encourage everyone in our business to be purposeful,”** she explains. To this end the agency has a dedicated DEI manager and a long-term focus on learning and development.

**“From a strategic standpoint we think of sustainable inclusion,”** she continues, adding:

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**The world is evolving and I want to see the inside of our agencies reflecting that world.**

”

Shapiro is clear-sighted on the two truths that there is not enough diversity in the industry and changing that will demand both a consistent and long-term journey of change.

## #4 RADICAL INCLUSION



### HIRE FOR POTENTIAL, NOT SPECIALIST SKILLS

Notably in a sector which is full of stereotyping, Tash Beecher, Creative Director at Syneos Health, is clear that you do not need to be a sector specialist to thrive in healthcare advertising. Expertise can be learned, but attitude is inherent.

“Hiring for potential has not always been the approach,” she explains, adding: “There has been a threshold of skills that have tended to be needed to be working in health.”

While she shares that this barrier doesn’t necessarily impact entry level talent once you have been in advertising for as little as 2 to 3 years, those sector stereotypes can creep in.

“If you have experience in the craft that’s great,” she adds, noting: “100% one of the things I look for is the hunger and curiosity to make a change. I hire for potential and for that attitude and hunger to change the world. There are more and more people at the top who have seen the power of the behavioral mindset and are embracing this shift.”

### #5 LIFE/WORK MATTERS

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**In an industry that thrives on burnout the relative work-life balance of healthcare is a competitive advantage.**

For decades burnout has been an accepted by-product of working in the creative industries. But the combination of the forced global reset of the pandemic and a wholesale shift in employee expectations have left employees demanding more. Rather than empty statements on work life balance, healthcare is a sector where the ability for employees to have a life is a key driver of talent acquisition and retention.

In the wake of the pandemic the healthcare industry has become a safe haven for creative talent from sectors such as hospitality. Yet leaders warn that creative shops have had a mixed record of retaining such talent.

Healthcare leaders recognize that the relative stability of the sector is a magnet for talent. **“Attracting talent now is not an issue. When I first started it was hard to drag people in. Now I think it’s the opposite - creatives from all over the world - want to get in,”** explains Brett O’Connor, Founder and Executive Creative Director of VCCP Health.

O’Connor set up the agency with work-life balance as one of its foundational principles. **“Healthcare definitely offers a better work-life balance. It is one of our core principles when we set up VCCP Health.”**

He continues:



**The next generation coming through won’t accept working late and weekends. It is a different way of working now and we always have that in mind.**



## 7 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALTH MARKETING

### #5 LIFE/WORK MATTERS

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Progressive leaders are committed to ensuring that talent has the space to thrive. Kara Dugan, President of Razorfish Health, is passionate about recognizing that while she may do her best work at a desk surrounded by Harvard Business Reviews there is no one-size fits all for creative talent. **“We need to create the fluidity where people can make their best work,”** she says.

Such is the appeal of the sector’s work-life balance that a number of industry leaders point to a lack of staff churn as an issue. A challenge that many leaders in consumer marketing could only dream of.

It is important not to sugar coat the sharp edges of the pictures, deadlines and economic pressures which still impact the industry.

Tash Beecher, Creative Director at Syneos Health, says:



**The big challenge is that clients are being shrewd with their budgets and they are expecting more for less. There is a valid fear that people will be used as workhorses rather than for their creativity.**



Yet healthcare leaders are successfully pushing against this fear by focusing on building cultures that not only understand that life is finite, but respect that having a life outside of work is creative fuel.



# #6 A NEW ERA OF CREATIVE STORYTELLING AND INDUSTRY FIRSTS

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**Humor, reality TV and embracing the always-on storytelling of TikTok and Reddit are just some of the ways healthcare is telling stories differently. The new era of healthcare advertising is breaking new ground creatively, offering talent the opportunity to drive forward genuine industry-firsts.**

From dogs detecting cancer, to a reality TV show to demystify rare diseases, to social storytelling on platforms from TikTok to Reddit. A new era of creative storytelling and genuine creative firsts is being driven by progressive talent.

This ability to actually make a mark is a differentiator for talent. **“You can come into it and be part of a first,”** says Frank Mazzola, Managing Founder of 21Grams and Global Chief Creative Officer at Real Chemistry. Making such an impact is much harder in consumer advertising. **“It is a white space where we can do a lot that people haven’t done before,”** he adds.

If in the past when you closed your eyes and thought of healthcare advertising, the chances are you would be picturing a grey-haired couple walking on the beach selling erectile dysfunction drugs in a TV spot featuring an endless stream of disclaimers.

**“Creatively there is a lot of misunderstanding about what the limitations are and what healthcare advertising can do,”** says Real Chemistry’s Mazzola.

Pointing to the status quo spots on US television. He explains:



**Healthcare commercials on TV are just a long list of side effects. But that is just 5% of what the industry does. We would say that healthcare advertising is the best creative opportunity there is.**



For talent the opportunity to make an impact is clear. The move towards greater patient-centricity in marketing has created a white space. Creative agencies are clear that they want to do things differently and embrace the opportunities on Snapchat and TikTok. While different creative tools such as meme culture and humor remain underutilised in healthcare.

## 7 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALTH MARKETING

# #6 A NEW ERA OF CREATIVE STORYTELLING AND INDUSTRY FIRSTS

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## AN EXPANSIVE CREATIVE OPPORTUNITY

Notably the industry-firsts that the industry is achieving is the result of both evolutions in both science and consumer attitudes. In a post-Covid world the concept of 'wellness' extends well beyond traditional healthcare brands.

Shazzia Khan, Chief Talent and Innovation Officer at Havas, explains:



**Every brand is a health brand.**



She highlights the creative opportunity of the combination of tackling women's health inequity and utilizing Femtech to level the playing field. At the same time the GLP-1 revolution (breakthrough treatments for weight management and managing blood glucose levels) reflects how scientific breakthroughs continue to transform both the healthcare industry and adjacent industries.

These firsts offer new opportunities for talent. As Khan explains: **“The healthcare advertising landscape is evolving rapidly, driven by digital transformation, technological advancements, and a greater focus on patient-centered care. There are numerous untapped opportunities for talent in healthcare advertising, especially for professionals who can blend creativity with healthcare knowledge, technological expertise, and compliance.”**

She continues:



**Organizations that can recognize and nurture these opportunities will be better positioned to attract top talent, innovate in their marketing efforts, and connect with patients in more meaningful ways.**



Creative leaders are clear that not only is it time to raise the bar and do things differently, the talent coming into the sector today will be in the driving seat of this new era of creative storytelling.

## 7 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALTH MARKETING

### #7 IT'S PERSONAL

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**From life-long patients to losing a loved one, for many healthcare creatives this work holds a piece of their heart.**

From life-long patients, to losing a loved-one for many in the healthcare industry their career choice is deeply personal. Even for talent which fell into the industry, relationships and understanding of patients' experience have impacted them deeply.

Some leaders in the healthcare industry are themselves life-long patients. Or have had personal experiences which have in turn fuelled their passion for creating positive change for patients. This work can be deeply personal.

Tash Beecher, Creative Director at Syneos Health, explains:



**I strongly believe in advertising because we have a responsibility and really great power to influence so much of the world. My purpose is elevating those misunderstood stories. Nowhere does that need to happen more than healthcare.**



She continues:



**There are communities that are misunderstood. Healthcare professionals that are misunderstood. We can do something about that and that is so powerful. I will always stay in health because it is good for the world.**



## 7 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALTH MARKETING

### #7 IT'S PERSONAL

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Making work that means something on a personal level is both a differentiator for talent and an inflection point for leaders. Many leaders in the industry are acutely aware of the emotional investment of their teams. As our report underlines, technology such as AI is giving talent new tools, but it is the talent of the people within the industry that will unlock the true potential of those tools. Just as healthcare leaders are personally invested in the work, it is clear that drive extends to building cultures in which employees can unlock their own potential.

The truth is that privately leaders in healthcare express concerns of how to best support employees who are passionately committed to making a difference to avoid emotional burnout. Many have faced the sharp edges of criticism that 'they care too much'. Yet ultimately that care and personal investment is the industry's creative fuel. A truth which makes leaders that care as much about the wellbeing of the people making the work as the work itself; the healthcare industry's greatest asset.

As one healthcare leader explains:



**The biggest piece for me when I think about talent is really spending the time to find your people. It's the people that fill your cup. We work too hard in advertising for this to be just a job.**



# CONCLUSION

## THANK YOU FOR READING THE TRUTH ABOUT TALENT: HEALTH MARKETING

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Assumptions are the death of creativity. Stereotypes stop people from achieving their full potential. We hope that *The Truth About Talent: Health Marketing* contributes to the stereotype smashing that healthcare agencies have spearheaded so successfully.

Far from being the last stop of a creative career journey, our research underlines that the combination of stable budgets and brave creativity create the conditions where talent can truly thrive. Making work infused with purpose and the ability to make a meaningful business is a magnet for talent.

The new wave of healthcare creativity affords talent the opportunity to drive forward genuine firsts and The Blueprint is passionate about finding the progressive leaders who can continue this journey of growth and creative innovation.

The Truth About Talent is forever a work in progress. We would love to hear where we should go with *The Truth About Talent: Health Marketing* next. So please get in touch with us at [geraldine@wearetheblueprint.com](mailto:geraldine@wearetheblueprint.com)



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**EXECUTIVE SEARCH**

## **THE TRUTH ABOUT TALENT: HEALTH MARKETING**

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