



# 'Champions For a Cause – ADHD is Real'

## A Shire Case Study

*Shire began a recent word-of-mouth (WOM) campaign with a few simple objectives – including engaging consumers to spread the word about ADHD and to gain insights into the impact of a well-executed word of mouth program. When the dust settled, the company had successfully prompted roughly 60,000 people to speak to a healthcare professional about ADHD medication and, as a follow-on result, the effort produced a remarkable ROI for the brand.*

BY ANDREW LEVITT

Over the past few years, the challenge for marketers to reach their target consumers has become more complex. There is more advertising clutter, less consumer attention and an audience that relies more and more on recommendations of friends than on the ads they see.

There is a preponderance of data that suggests that WOM continues to be the most trusted form of advertising. In fact, in a recent study, Nielsen BuzzMetrics surveyed 25,000 consumers worldwide, and confirmed that 90 percent of people identified “recommendations from people they know” as the No. 1 trusted source for information.

With this data in mind, Shire Pharmaceuticals decided to test the power of word of mouth as an innovative distribution channel to fortify the message that ADHD was a real condition that warranted medical attention. Tom Curatolo, Product Director for Vyvanse Marketing, and Beth Hamilton, Senior Product Manager, were instrumental within Shire to bring this program from concept to fruition.

Shire had three primary objectives with this program when it started in the fall of 2008: Engage consumers to spread the word about ADHD; increase the volume of conversations about ADHD; and, gain insights into the impact from a word of mouth program.

Shire began with consumer market research with both parents of children with ADHD, as well as the adults who had ADHD. This research focused on the dynamics of conversation – who people spoke to, when the conversations might take place, what they said, where the conversations took place, and most importantly, why they engaged in conversation at all.

The research was consistent with previous findings from Shire about consumer perspectives on ADHD, and underscored the opportunity at hand. Consumers felt a sense of relief when they were diagnosed, validating the fact that they weren't just absent-minded individuals, nor were they bad parents. Research also confirmed that people felt a strong desire to talk with others about their condition. The more consumers discussed their ADHD with others, the less of a stigma they felt about living with the disease. This led to the campaign theme: ADHD is Real.

### Recruiting 'ADHD Champions'

Leveraging its existing ADHD database as a recruitment tactic, Shire sent permission-based e-mail messages to a specific segment of its list, inviting consumers to sign up to be a champion for a cause that mattered to them. In a seven-week period, Shire recruited nearly 2,000 people to participate as

ADHD Champions to spread the word that ADHD was, in fact, a real condition that warranted medical attention.

Consumer participants registered online by providing their name, address, e-mail address and age, and identified themselves as either a patient or caregiver. These people then spent about 15 minutes online completing a tutorial, reviewing content about ADHD to help ensure their level of knowledge was based on accurate facts and information.

After successfully completing the online tutorial about ADHD, a welcome kit was sent out to their home address. That welcome kit included a guide for how to participate as an ADHD Champion as well as 11 flash drives that were branded with the program URL: [ADHDisReal.com](http://ADHDisReal.com). The intent was that each ADHD Champion would keep one flash drive for themselves, and then distribute the other 10 to people they knew who cared about ADHD. Those flash drives also included a PDF of a fact sheet about ADHD to further the knowledge transfer about the condition.

Participants were also given members-only access to a Web site where they could connect with other program participants in a private, moderated online community. This community was focused on lifestyle (not products), and was intended to create a sense of connectivity for the participants who were

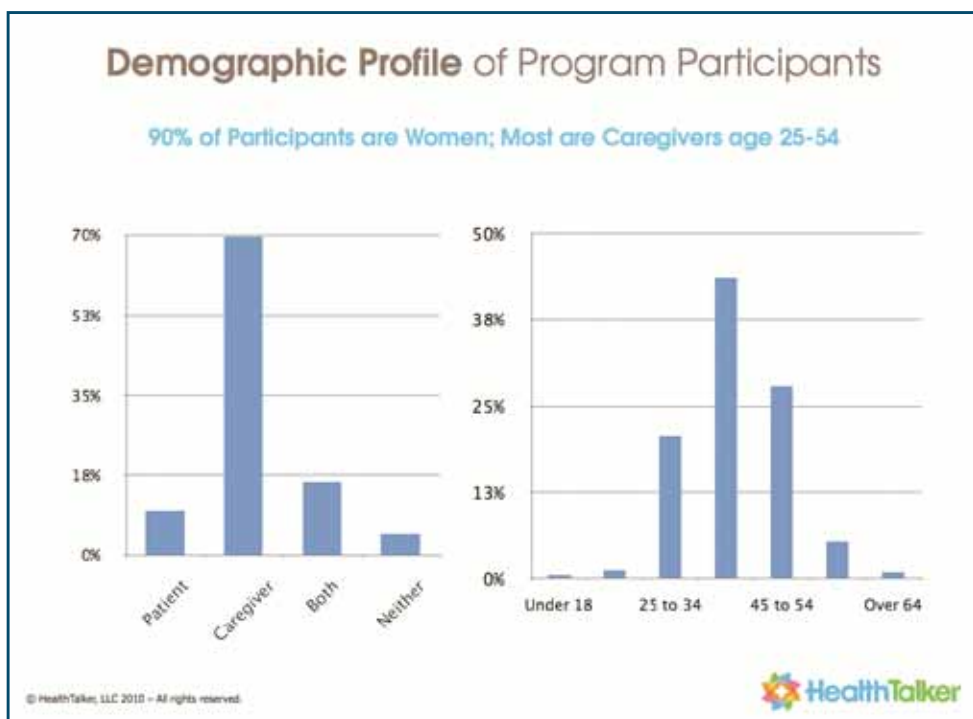


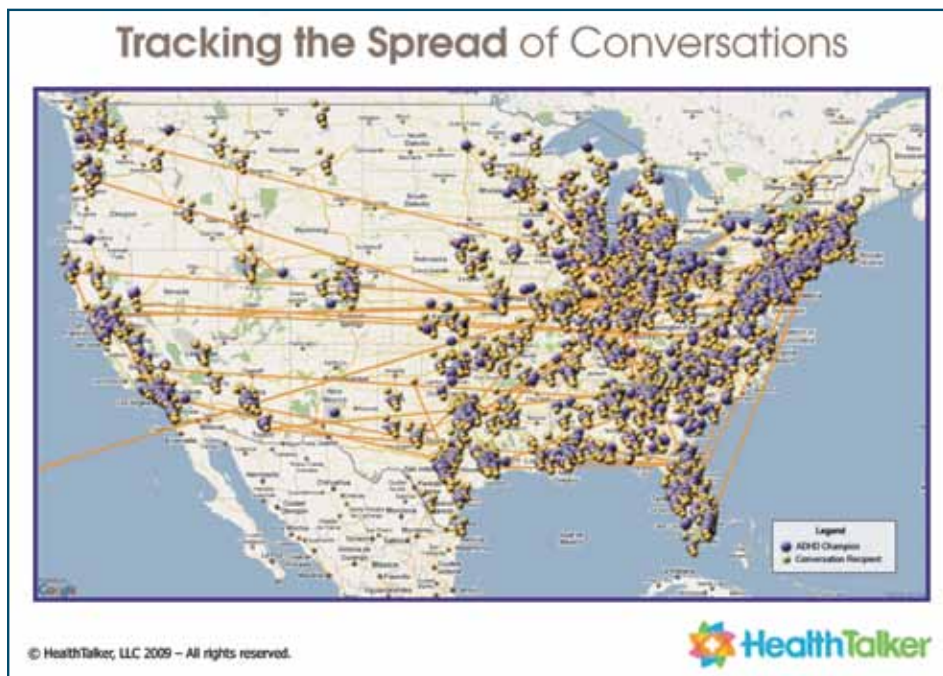
dispersed throughout all 50 states. Participants could respond to MLR-approved “threads,” but could not start their own discussion topic. There were a series of keyword bans in place to prevent adverse events from being shared, as well as a code of conduct and a mission statement to reiterate the purpose of this online destination. The community was monitored for all content, and there were zero adverse events identified over the course of a 14-month engagement.

### Patients show positive reaction to Shire

The community element mirrored the original research findings related to validation and relief. While many ADHD Champions discussed their lifestyle challenges as a parent and as an adult, other ADHD Champions responded by contributing “experience-based” solutions. Because the threads were in real time, the idea of searching for and retrieving information instantly placed Shire among this target as a pharmaceutical company that is empathetic to its consumers.

ADHD Champions shared feedback on the conversations they had with others on this same member Web site. Using radio buttons and drop-down menus (again: no open text fields pre-





versations about ADHD. The second-generation spread of this information contributed an incremental lift of nearly 75,000 more conversations, leading to a total reach of close to 100,000 conversations about ADHD as a real condition. These conversations happened in every state in the country for an average of 13 minutes per conversation. Over 14,000 flash drives were distributed, and 388 people participated in the online community.

Participants reported that 9 in 10 people whom they spoke to were “somewhat interested” or “very interested” in the topic, providing further validity to the power of word of mouth and the targeted message delivery that was achieved. Furthermore, two-thirds of the participants reported having “somewhat more” or

vented any AE reporting opportunity), participants provided context and background about who they spoke to, where the conversation took place, how long it lasted, and what information may have been exchanged.

ADHD Champions were not compensated for their involvement in the program. Upfront market research confirmed that potential participants simply wanted to be involved in a “movement,” to be a part of something larger than themselves, and to help spread the word about something that mattered to them. For many, knowing more about ADHD gave them a form of “social currency” that enabled them to feel like they could help other people who trusted them for information. Having good information to pass along, coupled with flash drives and a Web site destination to share with others, provided an authentic structure for dialogue.

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Over 90 percent of program participants were women, and they predominantly were between 35 and 54 years old. This “mom” segment was an ideal consumer panel as women tend to direct the health care decisions in the household. Also, since ADHD has a strong hereditary component, Shire was able to educate caregivers and potential adult sufferers through this singular program segment

### Conversations across the United States

The program generated significant reach for Shire. Nearly 2,000 consumers participated by having 19,121 direct con-

“significantly more” conversations about ADHD than before they joined the program.

Consumer participants also really enjoyed their experience as an ADHD Champion. When Shire polled participants about their response to the program, they received the following verbatim quotes:

“I felt empowered to tell the message that having this condition isn’t something to be ashamed of. I hope that I inspired others to seek the help that is out there for them.”

“I appreciate being able to have this information to back up my experiences when I am talking to others. When I read other people’s messages I know that there are others with the same issues and that fact helps greatly.”

“It is a great program... and the people I have talked with became very engaged in the conversation.”

A deep dive into the metrics and analytics of the program suggests that nearly 60,000 people went to speak to a health-care professional, and that more than 5,000 likely received a Shire ADHD medication. As a result, the program generated an ROI of 7 to 1. **DTC**

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