

BY MICHAEL KRAUSS

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## Writing the Book on Marketing Healthcare IT



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**D**an Michelson, CMO of Chicago-based Allscripts-Misys Healthcare Solutions Inc., has one of the most interesting and influential jobs in the marketing profession.

Michelson and Allscripts are revolutionizing the way physicians and hospitals manage healthcare records and make patient decisions. Using Allscript's technology, doctors around the world may someday make more efficient and effective decisions that will lower costs and improve medical care. Michelson is at the fulcrum of this revolution.

To understand Allscripts, consider how much you rely on Microsoft Office to make your job easier. Allscripts is for physicians what Office is for the rest of us. It is a modular software solution that makes physicians' jobs easier, more productive and more effective.

"Healthcare is roughly 18% of gross domestic product," Michelson says. "That's nearly \$2.3 trillion dollars. In 80% of the cases, decisions made in healthcare, [such as] whether to order a test, go into surgery or choose a medication, come from the physicians. The question is, what data are they using to make those decisions?"

"If we can put the right information, at the right time, into physicians' hands, we can change two things. [We can] lower costs and improve the quality of care by enabling physicians to make the right decisions with the right information. That's essentially what we've done," Michelson says.

**"You can't control your competition. You can't control the market. But you can control your effort."** DAN MICHELSON

Allscripts provides systems for electronic health records and billing and scheduling systems. It provides these solutions to practices of all sizes, from individual practitioners to the largest hospitals and healthcare centers in the world.

The company also created a physician's office kiosk where patients can check in for an appointment without having to interact with the front desk or complete repetitive paperwork. Allscripts offers mobile solutions so physicians can check their schedules, clear their e-mail and access patient medical records which, as Michelson says, "were previously hiding in a manila folder in a storage room," remotely.

"In the Obama administration stimulus package, the administration included over \$30 billion dollars to help subsidize physicians to buy electronic



health records," Michelson says. The market opportunity for Allscripts to improve the healthcare experience is enormous.

Michelson joined the company during the dot-com boom when there were only 100 employees, the company was losing money and the mission was to evangelize technology for healthcare. Today it is a major force and thought leader in the industry, with \$700 million-plus in revenues, 2,500 employees and an installed base of approximately one-third of the physicians in the United States. Michelson's marketing philosophy and programs have been integral to that growth and success.

"In the beginning, we were very opportunistic and good at listening to the physicians and the marketplace. We helped create a vision for the marketplace. We identified what needed to be changed [and] what products needed to be created, and we went after it all," Michelson says.

In 2005, Allscripts literally wrote the book on healthcare IT. It's called *The Electronic Physician: Guidelines for Implementing a Paperless Practice*.

"The government used it. Physicians used it. You can buy it on Amazon.com. Relying on our clients and our internal experts, we wrote it to establish trust in what we do," Michelson says.

Michelson believes marketing should play three roles in the company: as awareness creators, demand generators and closing sales support.

"First we need to make people aware of us; that includes branding, public relations and thought leadership. Second, our role is to create leads, make the phone ring, and establish pull-through and preference for Allscripts. Finally, marketing must support closing the sale. Marketing exists to drive sales. We don't romanticize marketing. If you're not selling, you're not going to be able to do the cool, exciting things that a lot of people like to do within the marketing space," he says.

Speed and energy are critical to Michelson's marketing success. Within 10 minutes of the stimulus announcement, Allscripts issued a press release on its impact and extended an invitation to 200,000 people to attend a webcast about it. It followed up with a 36-city tour that included going face to face with stakeholders and explaining the opportunity and implications of the stimulus.

Michelson's not a workaholic. In fact, he's an avid runner who wanted to work at Nike but didn't get the job. He's as enthusiastic talking about distance running and is as excited talking about books like Christopher McDougall's *Born To Run*—an inspirational work about the world's greatest distance runners—as he is talking about healthcare IT.

Yet he says marketing's competitive advantage is linked to effort. "We work around the clock. We know the opportunity is there. You can't control your competition. You can't control the market. But you can control your effort," Michelson says.

His advice to young marketers is simple: "Find a product or sector that you're passionate about."

When he missed the job opportunity at Nike, Michelson sold computers for Lanier, a role he liked. Then he worked in healthcare consulting at Baxter International Inc., which ultimately led him to Allscripts. Michelson is passionate about helping physicians improve their quality of care and reduce overall healthcare costs through improved information access and decision making.

"Some marketers can walk down the grocery aisle and say, 'That box of cereal came from me.' And that's great. When we go to our family pediatrician, [the doctor] looks at my child's electronic medical record. They're looking at my software. They're making decisions about medications knowing the drugs won't interact or cause allergic reactions because of my technology. That's incredibly satisfying and pretty heavy stuff." **m**