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### Dirk Poschenrieder

Managing Director at Havas Health & You

# My personal top 5 challenges for healthcare brands in 2025: A creative agency perspective.

As one of Germany's leading creative healthcare agencies with extensive experience creating campaigns for renowned global healthcare brands, we've seen it all: the brilliant, the not-so-great and the downright confounding. In this rapidly evolving landscape, healthcare brands must adapt or risk being left behind. To help you stay ahead of the curve, here's an insider's look at the top five challenges on the horizon. Let's explore what healthcare brands could be facing in 2025.

### 1. The hyper-educated consumer or when everyone's a health expert.

Gone are the gool old days when a catchy slogan and a glossy ad only could sell a (health) product. Today's consumers are more informed than ever, and by 2025, they'll be virtual health experts with PhD-level knowledge. They'll Google every ingredient, fact-check your claims, and compare your product to the competition before you can even say "antioxidants".

#### The Challenge.

For health brands, transparency is no longer just a buzzword - it's essential - it's a must-have. Consumers won't just take your word for it; they want proof. And not just any proof-peer-reviewed, double-blind, placebo-controlled studies.

They'll scrutinize everything from ingredient sourcing to environmental impact, and if something doesn't pass their test, they'll move on. They demand transparency, authenticity, and scientifically backed claims.

#### Our creative agency perspective.

See this as a prime opportunity for brands to amplify your storytelling. Sure, consumers crave facts, but they also want a narrative that resonates with them. Let's create stories that are not only transparent and honest, but also engaging and relatable. If your health supplement has a fascinating origin story, or your skincare line is championed by a quirky scientist obsessed with peptides - let's get it out loud and clear.

### 2. The technological tsunami: Surfing the digital wave.

Technology is reshaping the healthcare industry faster than ever before. From smart wearables to personalized health apps, the integration of technology into health products is both exciting and overwhelming. The challenge? Keeping up without drowning in the sea of innovation.

#### The Challenge.

Most of the consumer expect healthcare brands to be tech-savvy, but with every new gadget or new app comes the risk of alienating consumers who just want a product that works without requiring an engineering degree. And this is a very delicate balance: Be innovative, but keep it user-friendly.new app comes the risk of alienating consumers who just want a product that works without requiring an engineering degree. And this is a very delicate balance: Be innovative, but keep it user-friendly.

#### Our creative agency perspective.

At our agency, we're passionate about human-centered design. We take the latest technology and transform it into something accessible, intuitive, and—dare we say—fun? Whether it's streamlining user interfaces or injecting some personality into your app's UX, our aim is to elevate the customer experience, not complicate it. And if we can make consumers smile while they set up their new health gadget, we consider that a win.

#### 3. The personalization paradox.

Personalization is the buzzword of the decade, right? And by 2025, consumers will expect products that are tailored to their very personal needs. Personalized vitamins, skin care, workout regimens - you name it, they want it. But delivering that level of customization at scale? That's where it gets tricky.

#### The Challenge.

The challenge is twofold: first, collecting and analyzing the vast amounts of data needed for personalization; and second, doing so in a way that feels seamless rather than intrusive or overly complex. Privacy concerns also come into play. Plus, navigating your company's internal approval process—which often isn't geared for quick, personalized, and timely communication—adds another layer of difficulty.

#### Our creative agency perspective.

Data is invaluable, but it's also difficult to navigate. We're all about using data responsibly and creatively. Let's make personalization feel real, not invasive. Let's use data to surprise and delight consumers with recommendations that feel like they're coming from a friend, not an algorithm. And let's keep the messaging warm and personal - after all, no one wants to feel like just another number in a database.

### 4. The regulatory rollercoaster: Keeping up with compliance.

As noted earlier, healthcare regulations are no laughing matter. They're always changing, so what's compliant today might not be tomorrow. For healthcare brands, keeping up with these shifts can feel like riding an endless roller coaster, full of sudden drops and unexpected twists.

#### The Challenge.

One compliance misstep can result in fines, product recalls, or worse, damage to your brand's reputation. But keeping up with ever-changing regulations in different markets is a Herculean task.

#### Our creative agency perspective.

We see challenges as chances to get creative. Compliance doesn't have to be a burden—it can be an opportunity to set your brand apart. Let's design campaigns that showcase your dedication to quality and safety, turning regulatory hurdles into moments of trust-building. And if regulations shift? We're here to adapt with you, keeping your messaging both sharp and compliant.

#### 5. How to go green.

Consumers are more environmentally conscious than ever, and they expect the brands they support to share their values. And this directly influences the decision to buy a product. At the same time, sustainability can become an important unique selling point for a product/company. By 2025, sustainability won't be optional; it will be essential. But here's the catch: sustainable practices often come at a higher cost, and finding the balance between green initiatives and profitability is no easy feat.

#### The Challenge.

Implementing sustainable practices can be costly, and not every brand has the resources of a multinational corporation. The challenge is to make an impactful change without breaking your budget-or falling into the trap of greenwashing, which can backfire and damage your reputation. This can put brands under pressure. And as the saying goes? Brands control. They are not controlled.

#### Our creative agency perspective.

Sustainability goes beyond environmental impact; it's about creating a brand with purpose. Let's integrate your green initiatives into the core of your brand narrative. Whether it's showcasing your eco-friendly packaging or your dedication to fair-trade ingredients, let's make sustainability a central theme in your brand story. But remember. Communicating these issues is a marathon, not a 100-meter dash. It requires continuous communication over many years.

#### In a nutshell

Looking ahead to 2025, it's obvious that healthcare brands will face significant challenges. But with each challenge comes a chance for creativity, and innovation. Whether you're navigating the savvy consumer, riding the tech wave, or balancing sustainability with costs, the key is to remain adaptable, transparent, and true to your brand story.

So gear up—it's going to be an exciting journey, but we're in it together. Let's make 2025 your brand's best year yet.





## Tony Miller

VP & Creative Director at Dentsu Health



## The Al-generated elephant in the room.

Let's all admit we have no idea what the long-term impact of AI will be, for agencies or clients. Furthermore, I'm sure that this writing exercise will look quaint in a few years. That said, here's where (I think) we stand from where I sit.

I've been at symposia where agency leads have talked about "how they're using Al", and once you get past the bromides and platitudes, it's clear they don't actually know. I've worked with a very large financial services client who has assigned significant resources to the Al conundrum, and while they've made inroads on the Machine Learning side, they are still trying to figure out how they can use Al tools to update web page content. As I'm sure most readers know, compliance is a massive issue with all Al generated copy. Humans still have to check it over, top to bottom.

Gen AI has already worked its way through agency creative departments on the Art side. Art Directors are playing with a range of ever-improving image generation tools to help with new business pitches and client presentations. This can save a ton of time that would otherwise have been spent messing around in photoshop. Consider an extreme example image, "Imagine a monkey juggling chainsaws" which can be rendered fairly quickly. In the past, not so much.

Copy, to some degree, can't be far behind, but in what form remains to be seen. And in the healthcare space, Al-generated copy errors can be catastrophic. On the production side, what if the day comes where TV shoots can be entirely produced by Al versus humans on the ground on location? When that happens, it will decimate a large chunk of the business. (Plus, I'll have to tell my grandchildren what a "craft truck" was...).

Bottom line: agencies will need to work out how to both make Al an asset for the balance sheet and for the product delivered to the client, without it becoming a race to the bottom.

Shifting gears, there's been more concrete success in the world of patient-support and related programs (PSPs). UBIE Health is a relatively new company that operates in Japan and the United States. UBIE uses AI to engage patients earlier and as a result, accelerate the path to treatment. Users self-screen with UBIE and can then locate a physician who has access to their symptoms before they walk into the office or clinic. Patients are guided toward the right care. This speeds up care and helps to avoid pointless physician engagement, administrative overburden and erroneous self-diagnosis. (i.e. "It's not lupus!").

Phreesia is a product that works in a similar way. It uses AI to streamline patient intake and eliminate/reduce human error that comes with manual data input. Phreesia takes over the process of inputting a patient's medical history so the intake process at a busy clinic is inherently more accurate. The meeting with the physician is based on more accurate information, and the support program generated more comprehensive. Tools like this can help with adherence, keeping patients engaged in their treatment plan, and focused on what's actually working.

Think back to the early days of digital advertising. Everyone jumped in, and dollars moved from traditional media to the online space. Then clients said "We aren't sure this is working. Can you prove it does?" At first, agencies couldn't. I'd posit that we're at a similar infection point here. Yes, with AI, early and ongoing success will define where we can go and what we can do. But the hardest part won't be generating the image you want or streamlining your content, it will be quantifying the business or brand impact.





### Udo Nery

Associate Creative Director at Havas Health & You



## Dr. Tin Woodman and his search for a heart.

Discussing the major challenges for health brands in 2025 is no simple task, primarily because the health market is inherently complex. We can approach this topic from various angles: disease awareness campaigns, direct-to-consumer (DTC) initiatives, healthcare professional (HCP) communications, or market management. Each segment presents its own set of challenges, making it difficult to pinpoint a singular "greatest" challenge across the board.

In many areas of health communication, advertising has evolved rapidly. Disease awareness and DTC campaigns have become highly creative, matching the quality of campaigns in other sectors. The lines between health and mainstream advertising have blurred, with health brands becoming more competitive and engaging.

As health brands adopt creative strategies similar to those of consumer brands, the reverse is also occurring: consumer brands are increasingly integrating health-focused elements to connect with their audiences. This convergence highlights the need for health brands to continuously innovate and stay ahead in a landscape where the distinction between health and general consumerism is diminishing.

However, I see a significant challenge in further advancing medical communication campaigns, especially those aimed at HCPs.

Both agencies and clients struggle here. The fear or lack of integration from regulatory departments often results in campaigns that fail to make a strong impact. This hesitancy hinders innovation and creativity, leaving HCP-targeted communications less effective and less engaging than they could be new app comes the risk of alienating consumers who just want a product that works without requiring an engineering degree. And this is a very delicate balance: Be innovative, but keep it user-friendly.

For many marketing and advertising professionals, doctors are still emotionless beings—machines that communicate solely through numbers, data, and scientific studies. They seem more like robots than humans who treat other humans. That reminds me of the Tin Woodman from "The Wizard of Oz", who was once a person of flesh and blood but was transformed into a man of tin. However, what our Dr. Tin Woodmans truly desire is a heart, a return to their humanity, to be capable of love and empathy once again.



## Tim Brierley

Creative Director at Ogilvy Health



## Brands: Say it true, or truly funny.

While every health brand, category, and market has its own unique challenges, 3 challenges remain universal: cutting through noise, building trust, and staying relevant. How has this changed in the era of Tik Tok, influencers, and consumers seeking hyper-authenticity?

## There are two particular brand challenges for 2025 that I believe are of note:

- What's new? What's the product innovation? What's the new data?
- How can we reframe the brand marketing and communication objectives beyond sales and market share, to appropriately include the Mission du Jour, aka Brand Purposeparticularly at a time when consumers scrutinise brand authenticity with a level of purpose-fatigue?

#### What's the new News?

How do marketers keep a brand relevant and top of mind when there's no new news? There's no new clinical study, no new efficacy data, no discovery of new benefits, and product innovations are stuck in development merry-go-rounds.

The challenge is to say the same thing in new, interesting and fun ways. What a relief in this Al

intoxicated world that creativity still plays a part.

Two recent campaigns come to mind that do this particularly well: Michael CeraVe and the Dramamine Last Barf Bag.

The Michael CeraVe campaign reinforces a superior expert positioning with an absolute confidence and ability to laugh at themselves, and sends up the oft seen tropes of expert testimonials in the category.

The Dramamine Last Barf Bag underlines its continuing effectiveness with an anti-humbleness that says "We're sorry, by being so good, we didn't realise we'd put an industry out of business". Wow, that's an efficacy story.

Ultimately, when you don't have anything new to say, get creative – reinvent the testimonial or efficacy platform.

#### Combating purpose fatigue.

When there's nothing new to say brands seem to be jumping on the greater good bandwagon instead - 'whilst clearing that spot we solve body dysmorphia'.

Don't get me wrong, having those good intentions and leveraging the power and voice of a brand can move mountains, but the public's BS barometer is finely tuned; they are all too aware of green-washing, rainbow-washing, and every other

delicates wash in between. It's not enough for a brand to shine a light on an issue or problem, without actually doing something about it – and committing to solve it over time.

The challenge is to go beyond a sticking plaster in a 12-monthly marketing plan and to play a long game. It can be no easy task to make a case and get financial commitment from internal stakeholders to invest in something that, in the short term, may not shift sales significantly (the Vaseline 'Transition Body Lotion' comes to mind). But getting the balance right for a brand to have a POV and position on the world beyond its functional benefit means ensuring it has permission to speak on an issue. We can't pretend to be the next Louis Pasteur and give something a new buzzword condition name and masquerade it as a discovery in an attempt to give a brand a new raison d'etre.

This 'purpose-fatigue' might be why recently we're noticing the rebirth of humour in health and wellbeing campaigns — as seen by awards being bestowed on campaigns that bring some joy and laughs along with a brand message (like those I mentioned above). Instead of searching for a purpose, perhaps brands could take a serious look at 'funny'.

Roll on 2025. Never a dull moment.





## Alyvia Mann

SVP & Creative Director at Neon



## Evolution for Progress.

Healthcare brands and the way they are marketed to both patients and care providers have significantly evolved since I began my career in this industry. Regrettably, like most brands fighting for relevance and differentiation in a colossal market, they face barriers and gaps that can hinder their progress. A prominent challenge that has been ongoing for some time is the integration of advanced technologies. While digital health tools including Al diagnostics, wearable health trackers, apps, and the continuous rise in telemedicine all offer promise, healthcare organizations grapple with a common issue of interoperability. This is crucial for effectiveness of these innovations, not to mention that it impedes the ability to offer a seamless patient experience.

Another concern looms around patient data privacy and cybersecurity with the reliance on EHR to protect data breach and unauthorized access—an investment that is imperative and can often obstruct judgement or approval to use innovative solutions. Navigating the regulatory landscape is another significant challenge faced in healthcare as the frameworks and guidelines often lag which creates uncertainty and hesitation for approval, and often add complexities when attempting to carve space for advancement in the market. A common

need to balance innovation with regulatory requirements is apparent for brands to thrive in the ever-evolving landscape.

As the industry progressively embraces personalized medicine and treatment advancements, arguably one of the largest barricades is healthcare equity, and the risk of these disparities in quality and access to care may worsen before it flattens. Addressing this gap and overcoming these barriers will require a concerted effort in 2025.



### Eduardo Basque

Associate Creative Director at The Bloc Ny



# The Power of Creative Projects.

As a creative professional, I believe one of the biggest challenges will be for brands to more actively support the special projects that agencies propose proactively. While it is understood that approving and executing these projects can be complex, and often perceived as being created solely for advertising festivals, their impact goes far beyond that. These initiatives have tremendous potential to change lives, advocate for important causes, and bring about positive social change.

Agencies often invest not only creative effort but also financial resources to bring these ideas to life. In many cases, these are truly relevant projects that can save lives, support communities, and protect animals.

With a deeper understanding and closer collaboration—whether with 4, 6, or even 8 hands working together—the chances of transforming these ideas into something that transcends awards and recognition increase significantly.

In the end, everyone benefits: brands, agencies, and, most importantly, society.



### Jake Silverman

Creative Director at Digitas Health



# The Empathy Imperative: Redefining Health Brand Success in 2025.

As we approach 2025, health brands face a pivotal challenge: shifting from simply selling to genuinely helping. In an age where audiences are increasingly skeptical of marketing, traditional approaches risk alienating rather than engaging. Brands must prioritize adding value to people's lives by focusing on authentic, meaningful interactions.

The key to this transformation and the heart of successful marketing lies in empathy. Campaigns need to acknowledge and respect the audience's attention, intellect, and emotions, embracing storytelling rooted in clarity, authenticity, and humanity. This means creating narratives that reflect the realities, concerns, and aspirations of the people they aim to serve rather than simply broadcasting a corporate agenda.

Originality will be crucial. In a crowded media landscape, health brands must break free from conventional methods, offering fresh perspectives that capture attention and spark genuine engagement. By deeply understanding the intricacies of their target audience, brands can design campaigns that speak directly to their needs while surprising them with creative and unconventional solutions. It's this combination of insight and innovation that will create lasting connections.

However, creativity alone isn't enough. Brands need to move beyond gimmicks and surface-level strategies, cultivating trust through long-term engagement. Audiences today are savvy, quick to dismiss anything that feels inauthentic or manipulative. A successful campaign in 2025 will be one that not only stands out but resonates—leaving people with a profound sense of connection and understanding.

Ultimately, the major challenge for health brands in the future will be balancing the art of capturing attention with the responsibility of nurturing deep, meaningful relationships. To thrive in 2025 and beyond, health brands must fully commit to an empathetic approach that offers real value, supports well-being, and forges a lasting emotional bond with their audience.



## Shelby Rauen

EVP & Group Strategic Planning Director at Area 23

## Pharma Brands: Striking the Right Balance.

One of the very biggest challenges facing pharma brands will be coverage and access. However, from a communication perspective one of the bigger challenges is striking the right balance between performance and purpose. It is easy to focus on the KPI performance of content and product promotion, but to truly serve people it is imperative we find ways to also solve problems for people and add value with our content.



## Steffany Carey

SVP & Group Creative Director at Syneos Health



## Embracing Vulnerability in Health Branding.

To find success in communications and connect with people, health brands need to show more humility and vulnerability. Human emotions can be confusing, and there is much beauty to be found in that. However, this can be challenging when 'taking a risk' is not something that pharmaceutical companies are trained to do.



## Roshan Poojari

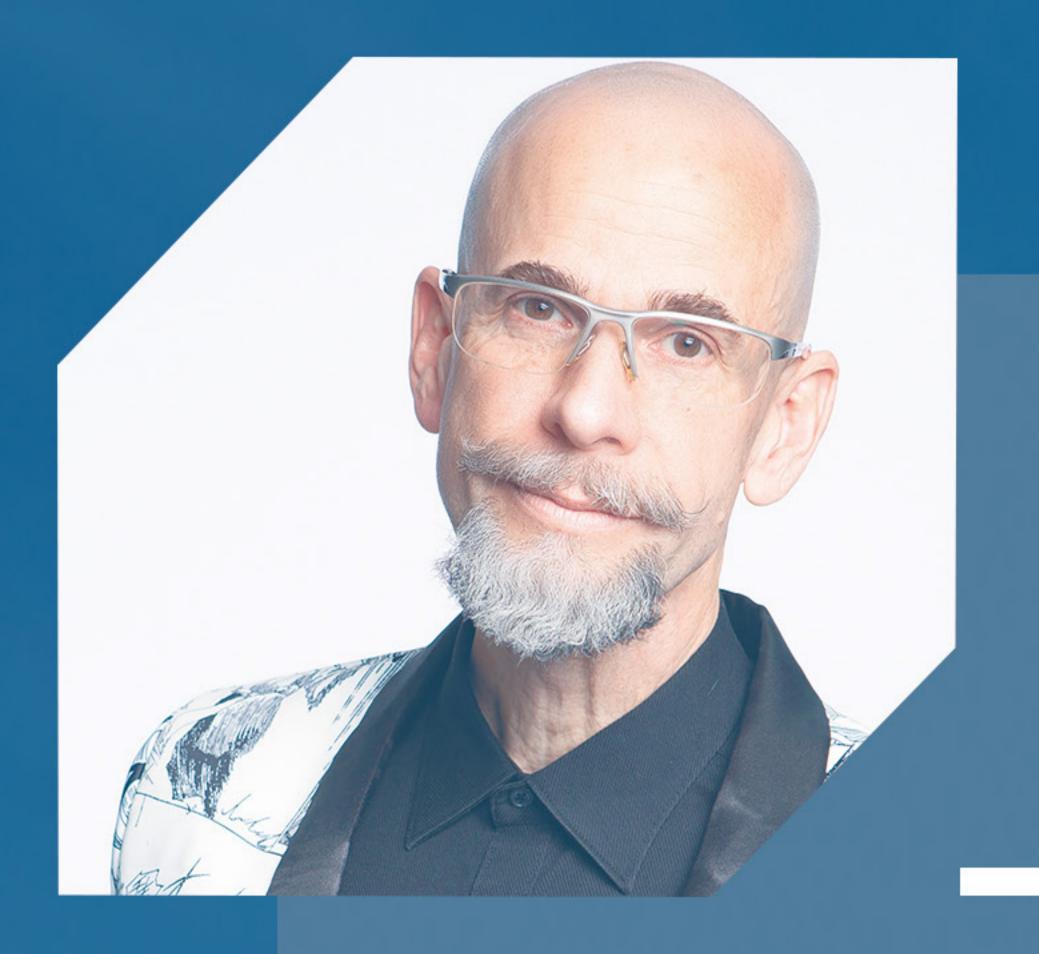
Chief Creative Officer at Pentacle Designs



## Al in Health: Building Trust and Connection.

Personally not being a fan of ai in art, ai has definitely helped in advancement of medical technology.

But health brands in 2025 must also focus on creating emotional connections beyond the automated data-driven solutions. As AI tools become more common, trust and transparency will be critical to stand out.



## Sean Riley

Executive creative director at McCan Health



## Balancing Privacy and Al in Healthcare.

When I think about the challenges facing healthcare and health brands in the year to come, I can think of 2 points – one is a challenge, and the other a responsibility.

#### The Challenge:

### Personalization, Privacy and Consumer Expectations

More and more as consumers, we are expecting our interactions with health brands to mirror the levels of sophistication and frictionless comfort that we enjoy everywhere else in our modern lives. But for a variety of reasons, health brands fall short when it comes to personalized experiences. To finally start to meet expectations, healthcare will need to heavily leverage data analytics to offer tailored health solutions and recommendations. The tricky part is that while we want health brands to understand exactly what we want and when we want it, we have serious issues with them impinging on our privacy.

## The Responsibility: The Ethics of Al and Health Equity

So much of our health system is built on flawed models that favour very specific groups of people. As the age of Al and machine learning barrels forward at an increasingly rapid rate, health brands and health systems need to ensure that those legacy flaws are not baked into the machine. Making sure that the inputs reflect today's society and that all people are represented fairly across disease states will be essential for Al to achieve its full potential in health.



#### Töbe Pickford

Creative Director/Leader, Coach. Creative General at The Health Army

# Major challenges for health brands are the structures that support and help drive them.

I believe 2025 is going to be tough for companies and individuals who work with and on health brands if we don't change the way we work together. With procurement rate tightening and company payment terms elongating, the cost of running a business to support deep localised and nuanced thinking will be on shaky ground. So, this means we need to be closer to the companies we work with and more open and transparent than ever before. Build relationships with people other than brand managers. Creatives need to be in planning conversations rather than at arm's length. This will ensure a better understanding and maybe better ways to deliver better more effective and cost-effective work.



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