

📌 Familiarize Yourself with Sidewikis, or Pay the Consequences

- Pharma's next big trend?

Last month, AstraZeneca became the first pharma company to add a sidewiki to its site, and now Roche has followed suit. So, “What is a sidewiki?” Like almost everything digital and online, it seems, Google created it. In very simple terms, this add-on creates a bookmark toolbar where users can contribute and read information alongside any Web page. The toolbar is loaded with cool features, but we’ll have more on that in a coming issue of *Avatar*.

Right now, you should be familiarizing yourself with this feature, for two very important reasons:

1. If used properly, you can invite conversation and allow consumers to generate discussions on your homepage instead of driving them to other social media sites, where it is more difficult to follow discussions about your brand(s).
2. If ignored, you may never be aware of discussions that are already taking place *on your own website*. This means that patients or even competitors could potentially be saying derogatory and untrue things about your products or company while you stand by idly.

The best way to deal with Google’s sidewiki is to become an active participant. However, even if you prefer not to get involved with the discussions that may already be taking place, you must, at the very least, enter some welcoming information. As the owner of a page, you have the ability to enter a welcome message that can be prominently displayed as the first comment. In addition, you can also



configure it so that this comment appears on every page of comments, which is very useful for those who want to “jam” the system. By creating a long intro, you’ll essentially be hogging the real estate that is left for commenters, making it more difficult for visitors to view messages and display their own. There are some other, more complicated options that require HTML knowledge should you be ready and willing to render Google’s sidewiki useless, but it will certainly require more time and effort to do so, and it will only be a temporary fix, as features and add-ons like this are constantly being updated.

Now is the time to face your sidewiki head on; you can’t afford not to. Download the add-on, check out AstraZeneca’s strategy (www.astrazeneca.com), check out how Roche is handling it (www.roche.com), and make some quick decisions. The FDA will likely take its time coming up with rules and regulations that will affect the use

of sidewikis, so, in the meantime, it’s up to you and your company to deal with this issue. And if you spend time putting together a plan, you may even be able to harness the power of the sidewiki to promote and engage in positive conversation about your brand(s). One thing is for certain – change from the FDA is a-comin. In the meantime, it’s up to your team to make the best of the social media tools that will continue to be used by your consumers. Check out the resources below for more information.

Google Sidewiki Panics Brand Managers: Some Use Hacks to Jam the Service -

<http://tinyurl.com/y8hqpar>

Digital Pharma: Roche Tackles Sidewiki

<http://tinyurl.com/y8ggxx9>

Contribute with Sidewiki: Create a Webmaster Sidewiki Entry

<http://tinyurl.com/ybqbztt>

key: 📌 beginner 📌 intermediate 📌 expert