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Pharma company GSK is taking control of Google data to find out more about its customers

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Pharmaceutical companies are seen as experts in health care rather than being at the cutting edge of digital technology, but the industry — like many others — is going through a revolution.

At GSK, which owns brands including Horlicks, Aquafresh and weight loss product Alli, digital technology is having an impact on how the business operates from human resources to legal. In marketing terms, it's about developing a closer relationship with consumers, or selling direct rather than through retailers.

“The more direct relationships we have with the consumers the better, right? Because (it) enables us to do lots of great things like feeding into the innovation pipeline, so we create better innovation,” [GSK](#) Chief Digital Officer Marc Speichert told CNBC's “[Marketing Media Money](#)” anchor Carolin Roth.

It also means working more closely with [Google](#) to find out how people are searching for its products, according to Brian McNamara, chief executive of GSK's consumer health care business.



“We work directly with Google and actually have a deal that we signed with them recently which actually allows us to own the data that we use ... (It) allows us to have much more visibility, much more capability and understand how consumers are behaving, how they react to certain messages, how they’re searching for our products,” he told “Marketing Media Money”.

“We can use those insights and analyze that to help get better at what we do. So I think it’s a big opportunity for the industry,” he added.

When someone searches for a particular health condition or treatment, they may want in-depth information rather than a quick answer, Speichert said, and this is an opportunity for GSK to start marketing to someone.

“There’s a perception around people actually want(ing) everything shorter, which is actually not true. I think you need to get them quickly to the passion point (that they are interested in) and that needs to be very kind of immediate and quick.”



terms of answering that question. It's just the first step of their path to purchase, he told [Marketing Media Money](#).

GSK



“Look at the businesses we compete in on e-commerce, on Amazon, it’s roughly 4 percent of the overall market. It is growing at a healthy rate but it’s still at a relatively low level,” he said.

“If you’re sick in the morning and you need a product, you’re probably not going on Amazon and you’re probably driving to your [CVS](#) or your (U.K. drugstore) Boots,” he told “Marketing Media Money”.

Some drugs sell well on Amazon such as weight loss brand Alli, because “it’s a place where consumers (would) really rather shop for that product,” McNamara added.

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