



## **When Books Are Best**

*"Print-to-Web" self-care books provide  
new value in an e-health world.*

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## Executive Summary

Self-care handbooks have long (and deservedly) held a primary role in supporting self-care and self-management. More than 30 million copies of Healthwise® self-care guides, for example, have been distributed since 1975. The books' ROI has been substantial and well-documented.

However, three undeniable advantages of the Internet have caused health plans, hospitals, and clinics to shift emphasis toward Web-based solutions. The Web can:

- Provide more information, in more detail, and more interactively.
- Be easily updated to keep pace with changes in medical science.
- Scale well—the unit costs can be very low.

As the leading provider of Internet-delivered consumer health information, nonprofit Healthwise has led the chorus promising the rewards of the Web. Yet, even as the Web goes mainstream, we have subtly reinvented our books and other print strategies to restore the value of print in an e-health world. Our view: Without print, too many people are left without the information they need to make better health decisions.

Read on to explore how an enlightened and modernized print strategy supported by the reinvented self-care handbook and a suite of new print-to-Web products from Healthwise can help your employees, health plan members, or patients achieve better health outcomes at low cost.

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## The Power of Print

If it's 3 a.m. and your baby has a fever, would you rather boot up your computer or grab a handbook? When your health question is at home but your computer is at work, can you afford to wait? When you're camping and need first aid, would you rather pack up camp and drive

to town, or take care of it yourself and continue your vacation? When convenience is important, books can be the best choice.

Sometimes it's simply about using the right tool for the job—or the right information resource for a specific medical situation. Here are some situations for which a book can be best:

- **Common health problems**—Is it just a bellyache or is it appendicitis? A cold or strep throat? Self-care guides are a great frontline resource when making decisions about the most common health problems. For these kinds of issues, a person doesn't need a lot of detail to know when to call a doctor or how to practice home treatment. Handbook-supported self-triage can save millions of unneeded doctor visits every year and help people get to the doctor when they really need to. One Healthwise client study reports that 23% of a population avoided a trip to the clinic by using the *Healthwise Handbook*.<sup>1</sup> The ROI is clearly there.
- **First aid and emergency care**—From nosebleeds to burns, from dehydration to heart attack, turning to a reliable book during an emergency is a fast way for people to get the information they need. During times of stress and emergencies, people appreciate a book that helps them do the right thing on the way to the emergency room (ER)—or, just as often, helps them decide that a problem can wait until self-care or their own doctor can solve the problem. Healthwise partners have reported that 15% to 39% of people said they avoided an unnecessary ER visit with Healthwise self-care handbooks.<sup>2, 3</sup>
- **Self management of chronic disease**—People with chronic illness may be the most avid users of health information. Although self-care guides cannot capture all the information about living better with chronic disease, or provide the interaction that call centers and

Web programs can, they do provide a valuable first-line resource for managing the scores of health issues that occur as part of associated co-morbidities.

- **Wellness, prevention, and becoming a smarter health consumer**—These are some of the most sought-after topics for consumers, as well as for health plans, hospitals, and employers. Consumers who want this kind of information are happy to read, click, and call to get it. For organizations that hope more of their members or patients will study these topics, an easy-to-use handbook is a good starting point for engagement.

### *The Web's One Weakness*

Given the Web's huge advantage of in-depth interactive content that is easy to update and inexpensive to deliver, it is easy to overlook its one great weakness: it just doesn't reach everyone. Too many people just aren't well-enough connected to the Internet. And, guess what? These are often the people who are older, dealing with chronic disease, and most often using the health care system.

Studies from Forrester and JupiterResearch are predicting a rise in consumer use of online health information.<sup>4, 5</sup> That's good news. But take a look at the numbers:

- 73% of American adults are now considered to be "online" (27% are not).<sup>6</sup>
- 42% of Americans have broadband connections at home (58% do not).<sup>7</sup>
- And, besides, even those people who are online are not connected all the time. Sometimes, even for online health care consumers, print is still best.

### *The Book's Reach: 3 out of 4*

Three out of four families who get a self-care book, use it. According to a study completed by the VA Healthcare System of Ohio (VISN 10), 75% of people who got a book said they used it.<sup>8</sup> Other studies have shown that families use the book about seven times per year.<sup>9</sup> It

would be hard to find any population for which an Internet-delivered service could have as great a reach.

### *Reinventing Print Solutions*

With the strengths of both the Web and self-care handbooks in mind, Healthwise took on the challenge of redesigning the *Healthwise Handbook* to make it:

- More accessible to the average person.
- More useful for controlling costs.
- Better at engaging people and then moving them to the more interactive tools on the Web.

#### **Greater accessibility**

For its first 16 editions, the *Healthwise Handbook* hovered at a reading level of about 9th grade (Flesh-Kincaid scoring method). After a deep dive into the "plain language" movement, we made it a goal to make every word count in helping consumers understand the issues and the options before them. As a result, the new *Healthwise Handbook* scores at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level without talking down to anyone or leaving out any important information. Take a look just to see a model for "plain language" excellence.

#### **Greater focus on costs**

Since 1975 the *Healthwise Handbook* has focused on quality care and quality self-care, but without a direct focus on saving money. Because more people are using high-deductible health plans, there is a greater need for specific tips on saving money without lowering the quality of care. We responded by now covering the most direct ways that people can both avoid care that is not helpful and buy the care they need at a good price.

#### **Better connection to the Web**

For the past eight years the *Healthwise Handbook* has included links to the Web. However, to get to the information in the online Healthwise Knowledgebase, the reader had to go through four to six steps, depending on the client hosting the Knowledgebase, to get to the specific content that would be most helpful. It worked for many people, but many others gave up before getting to the information. The new *Healthwise Handbook*

includes two significant changes to improve the connection rate.

First, the book text regarding the link is much more direct in telling the reader about how much they might gain by going to the Web site. These motivational messages are designed to send a person looking for a way to connect even if they don't have Internet at home or work.

Second, the book text provides a four-character Go-to-Web code that takes just one to two steps for getting to the relevant content. Instead of having to hunt and find the content, the motivated reader can go directly to it without any need for advanced Web navigation skills.

The combination of plain language, a focus on cost, and motivational connections to the Web has given the *Healthwise Handbook* renewed value as a consumer health strategy.

### ***Go-to-Web Goes Beyond the Book***

Self-care handbooks are not the only print tools that can add to the ROI of consumer health investments. Other print-to-Web approaches that provide the same motivational messages and quick Go-to-Web connections include:

- **Healthwise Information Therapy (ix<sup>®</sup>) Patient Instructions**—A new and smarter approach to take-home patient instructions is to use them to connect people to in-depth information on the Web. Healthwise Patient Instructions include Go-to-Web codes, along with directions to enter that code at their provider's Web site. The code links to more

detail on the current health issue and provides access to 6,000 topics ranging from wellness to chronic disease.

- **Newsletter and brochure ix links**—Healthwise can help organizations build similar motivational messages and Go-to-Web quick code links for newsletters or brochures. In every case, the goal is to reach and engage people first with print, and to then motivate the reader to seek the more interactive and influential decision-support tools on the Web.
- **Print-to-phone**—The same print-to-Web concepts work well to motivate readers to call a nurse call center for help with specific disease management or decision-support situations. Our books are used effectively by disease management companies for just such purposes.
- **Phone-to-Web**—Go-to-Web connections can also work for phone-to-Web. Automated phone messaging can encourage people to seek out Web-based solutions specific to their own moments in care.

### ***The Bottom Line: Books are Essential***

The bottom line is that books and other printed materials are still essential to effective consumer-engagement strategies. In other words, don't throw out the books with your bottom line. Instead, use plain language to reach and engage more consumers, include cost-savings tips to make print materials more relevant in the consumer-directed health care world, and add Go-to-Web innovations to motivate people to use the in-depth interactive materials on the Web.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Partners Health Initiative; Anderson, South Carolina. Six-month data provided by Clemson University. Eighteen- and thirty-month data provided by InSights Consulting. Self-reported data, 2004.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> VISN 22, "Customizing a Self-Care Book for Veterans," VISN 22 Patient Education Workgroup, 2002.
- <sup>4</sup> Bishop, L et al. (2006). Online health research goes mainstream. An excerpt from "The state of consumers and technology: benchmark 2006". Forrester Research, Inc. September 26, 2006.
- <sup>5</sup> JuniperKagan, Inc. (2006). US health consumer survey, 2006. Online health media consumption and impact of increasing health consumerism. JuniperResearch survey.
- <sup>6</sup> Madden, M (2006). Internet penetration and impact (data memo). Pew Internet and American Life Project. Available online: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/182/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/182/report_display.asp).
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> VISN 10 Evaluations on the *Healthwise For Life Handbook*, July/August 2004.
- <sup>9</sup> Oregon Health Sciences University. Final Grant Report. Healthwise Evaluation Project. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant ID# 027929. May 1, 1996 to November 30, 1999.