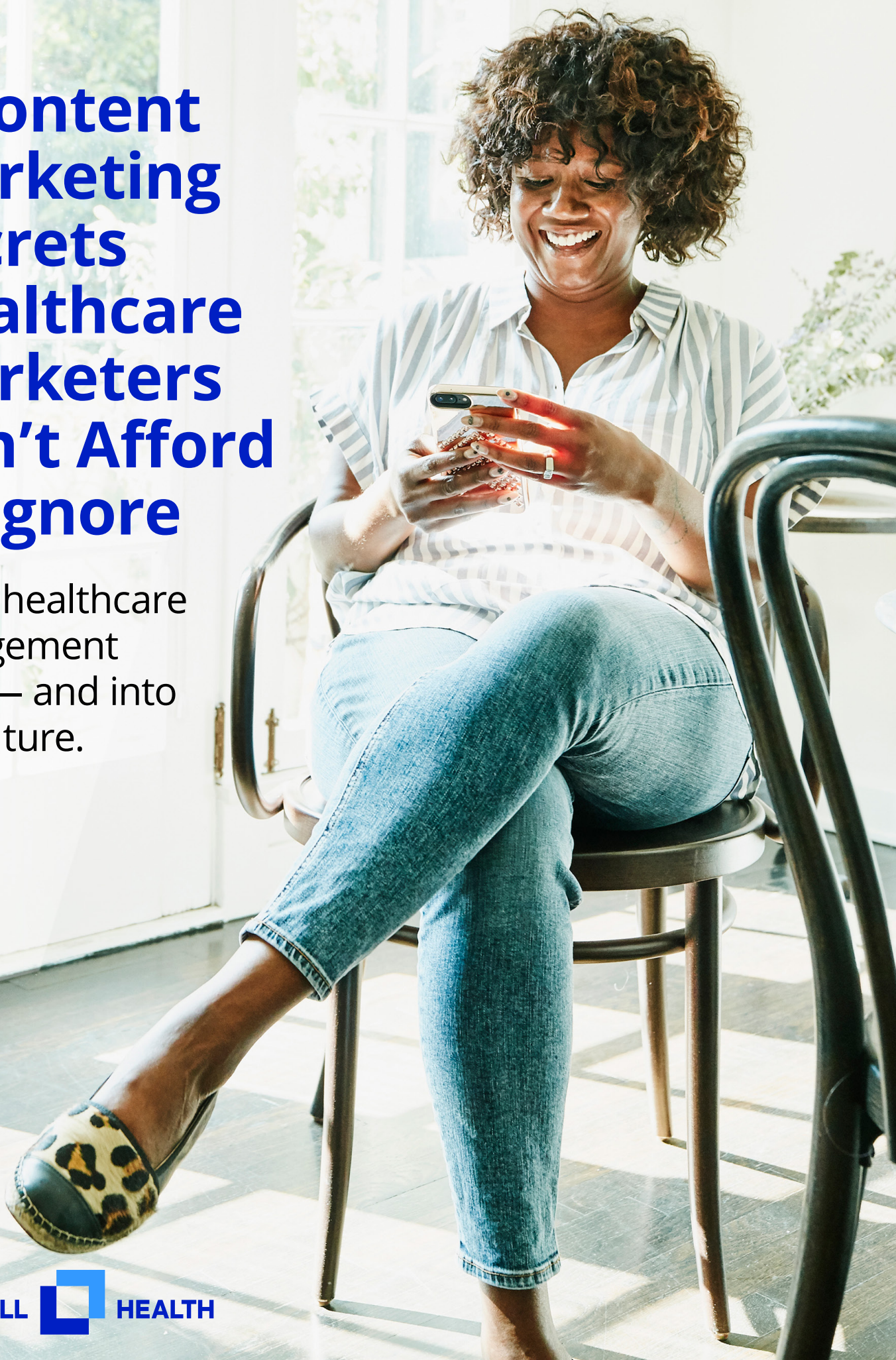


5 Content Marketing Secrets Healthcare Marketers Can't Afford to Ignore

Drive healthcare engagement now — and into the future.



The pandemic has left consumers hungrier than ever for reliable, actionable health information. In fact, Google receives more than [1 billion health-related questions every day](#), everything from queries about conditions and symptoms to ones about medication and insurance.

But healthcare marketers know that winning consumers' attention — and trust — takes a lot more than simply slapping together a blog or making a few scattershot social media posts. It requires future-proof content strategies, staying ahead of the tech curve with content delivery, and having a deep understanding of how content and marketing are evolving.

Want to cut through the noise and figure out where to focus? We got you. Here are the content marketing secrets you need to know to drive healthcare engagement now — and into the future.





The “What” Is Never Enough

When someone is searching online for signs of heart disease, delivering answers in a vacuum does them a disservice. You may have answered their overt question — “What is heart disease?” — but you missed three implicit ones:

Why did this happen?

What do I do now?

How do I keep living my best life?

It’s no surprise then that healthcare marketers are increasingly eschewing the passive, lean-back experience in favor of relatable content that empowers people to take action — whether that’s by downloading an app, engaging with the brand, or calling a help line.

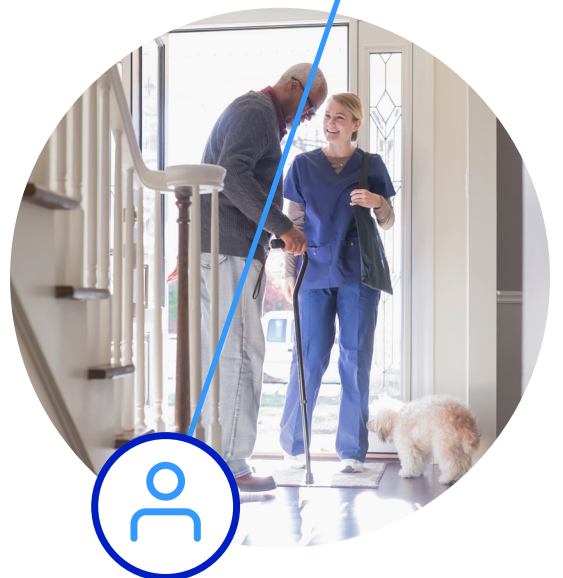


YOUR MOVE Multiply Your Member Journeys

All roads may lead to Rome, but your content shouldn't lead people to just one place. Pushing members through a uniform journey means you're likely creating generic, broad calls to action (CTAs).

More detailed journeys lead to more impressive follow-through. For one Blue Cross plan, for instance, Linkwell Health developed personalized clinical messaging to support more than 200 member journeys.

The strong CTAs throughout the content program pointed readers to relevant, personalized resources and encouraged them to connect with a health coach. The result: a 45% increase in calls.



YOUR MOVE Embrace Variety

There's a time and place to encourage members to book an appointment or download an app — but it shouldn't be at the end of every content piece your healthcare company posts.

Those hard nudges tend to be ineffective at best, annoying at worst. What does work, though, is utilizing a wider variety of CTAs that nurture engagement slowly and cater to all stages of the consumer-patient journey.

For a real shot at engaging someone searching online about heart disease, skip the CTA to book an appointment and instead think about pointing them to a heart health assessment, a video on women's heart health, or a Q&A with a trusted clinician.

YOUR MOVE Make the Next Best Action Obvious

Yes, you might know that “Read More” is a hyperlink (if members would just click on it!) or that the “See This in Action” button leads to your video library. But how would a new member navigate your site? Would someone who's never encountered your brand before be able to tell — at a glance — what and where to click to take action? If the answer is anything but a resounding yes, it's likely time to revamp the look, length, and placement of those CTAs.



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Authenticity Is Essential

Health is nothing if not personal. And people want to engage with healthcare companies that speak to their lived experiences, with an understanding of how everything from geography and race to culture and community can shape their health needs.

That craving for authenticity — rather than lip service or tokenism — has always been there. But the national racial reckoning that followed the 2020 murder of George Floyd brought new urgency to the topic. From [major hospital systems to digital health start-ups](#), brands rushed to stand in solidarity with protesters and pledged to do better themselves.

Consumers and patients are now holding brands to that promise. And younger people are even more attuned to authentically inclusive marketing. A [2021 Deloitte survey](#) of nearly 12,000 consumers found that the youngest respondents (between the ages of 18 and 25) took the greatest notice of inclusivity when making purchasing decisions.



YOUR MOVE Lean on Partners for More Perspectives

When marketing teams mirror the *markets* they're trying to serve, it shortens the cultural and demographic distance between healthcare brands and the populations they aim to reach.

But don't assume this diversity boost extends only to internal hires. Particularly for smaller marketing teams, as well as for those tasked with reaching sizable markets, teaming up with the right content partners can be a clear way to bring more varied and targeted perspectives into the marketing process — early and often.

YOUR MOVE Think of Language as the First Layer

Too often, when companies make content available for non-native English speakers, they don't seem to do much beyond running the copy through Google Translate and calling it a day. But straight-forward translation is a poor substitute for true understanding — and engagement.

Case in point: When a regional health plan set out to reach disengaged Spanish-speaking members in the Puerto Rican market, Linkwell Health assigned an editor born and living in Puerto Rico to develop Spanish-language content with richly integrated demographic and cultural insights. That authenticity helped deliver more relevancy to members — and a staggering 47% of the addressable audience engaged with the content.

YOUR MOVE Do an Inclusivity Audit

Featuring LGBTQ patients when you're marketing HIV drugs is easy. Likewise, spotlighting silver-haired patients for an osteoporosis medication is a no-brainer. But how often does your marketing team integrate people of varying ages, races, sexual orientations, and abilities into its mainstream outreach?

If you're like most health brands, you've likely made progress — but still have a ways to go. A [2021 survey](#) of LGBTQ individuals found that more than one-third felt healthcare companies didn't understand them. And while changing that stat requires a multipronged approach, more inclusive content marketing can help move the needle.





You've Got to Continually Feed the Content Beast

Digital or print?

Please. That quaint approach to content delivery has gone the way of the dodo bird.

For multichannel healthcare marketers, the current question is more like: digital and print and SMS and email and social and ... should we branch out into podcasts now or next quarter?

Demand for content has never been so insatiable — or had so many touchpoints.



Email

Despite the death knell some want to ring, email isn't going anywhere. The healthcare industry boasts an average open rate of 26%. And on average, email drives a return on investment of [\\$36](#) for every \$1 spent — higher than any other channel.



Audio

In 2021, [41%](#) of Americans had listened to a podcast in the past month, a stat that was at 21% just five years prior. Podcasts by healthcare professionals and hospitals increased 40% in 2021.



Digital

Overall, [85%](#) of Americans say they go online daily, and [31%](#) say they're online "almost constantly." That stat is even higher for those who are younger, are college-educated, and who earn more than \$75,000 per year. And 86% of seniors spend [six hours or more a day](#) online.



Social

[One in 10](#) Americans turn to social media for reliable health information. And nearly the same percentage turn to social when evaluating treatment options or seeking info about medications.

To meet members where they are, marketers lean into new technologies, while still pushing content through traditional channels. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska engages people through apps, social media, and streaming services, but the company [has said](#) it still invests in traditional content channels.

YOUR MOVE Find the Balance Between Quality and Quantity

If consumers are voracious for health content, then more is better, right? That is true ... but only to a point.

Healthcare marketers understand there's an ethical imperative to ensure that all content is accurate for the sake of an individual's health. And they also understand that sloppy copy is the quickest way to tank brand trust. Before you dramatically scale *content* programs or expand into emerging platforms, consider how you'll translate existing quality checks — from fact-checking and copy editing to legal, clinical, and risk review.



YOUR MOVE Slice and Dice from the Start

You could offer readers access to a health webinar. Or you could offer that webinar *and* use the same content to write an e-book or blog series, post a social poll, and crowdsource real-time panelist questions on social media.

SECRET 3



Strategically leveraging the same content across multiple delivery channels is both cost-effective and an engagement win — some people might encounter the content via only one avenue, while others will engage across the ecosystem. Think of making a strategic plan with the entire ecosystem in mind as the next-gen version of content repurposing.



Content



YOUR MOVE Celebrate the Tried and True

We'll be the first to admit: Content delivery through virtual reality headsets sounds a heck of a lot cooler than a newsletter. But if your members want both, you can't invest heavily in the new bells and whistles while giving short shrift to traditional channels. Sometimes print content is exactly what's needed to juice engagement.

Take one large managed care organization, for example. The healthcare company knew its communications weren't cutting it. The content was clinical and hard to understand, a clear mismatch to the Medicaid population it was trying to reach. So Linkwell Health reimagined its print newsletters, creating more compelling content underpinned by health literacy best practices. When surveyed, 89% of members found the revamped newsletter easy to understand, and members reported higher satisfaction as well.





Your Extra Sweat Should Go to Search

If a health query has you instinctually reaching for the nearest search engine, you're not alone. The billion health searches Google receives daily account for about 5% of its traffic.

That's not expected to change any time soon. Facebook's move to reduce its conversation attribution window, Google's plans to phase out third-party cookies, and the rising cost of many paid-media keywords will mean more marketing focus on search engine optimization (SEO).

Considering the return on investment for organic searches, it's no wonder why: A [2022 analysis](#) found that a No. 1 ranking generates a typical click-through rate (CTR) of 39.6% — more than double the CTR of the second position.

SECRET 4

In the crowded landscape of online health content, nabbing that top spot can feel elusive. But with a strong SEO strategy — and ongoing management — you can see measurable results.



YOUR MOVE E.A.T. Every Day

Yep, this is the same advice we'd offer about content creation. But when it comes to SEO, a winning strategy means building expertise, authority, and trustworthiness (shortened to E.A.T.) in the eyes of Google's algorithm. It's typically faster and easier to build that authority by going deep on a few core topics than by blitzing out a billion blogs with a billion potential keywords.

Here's where your content and search strategies should go hand in hand: Who is your audience? What do they care about? What is your brand an authority on, and how can you flex that?

SECRET 4



YOUR MOVE Upgrade Your Top Performers

Squeeze even more engagement out of top-performing content by refreshing those website pages with SEO in mind. Focus on adding and updating HTML tags, linking to other relevant articles on your site within the first few paragraphs of each piece of content, and doing a research refresher to ensure the health information is still accurate.

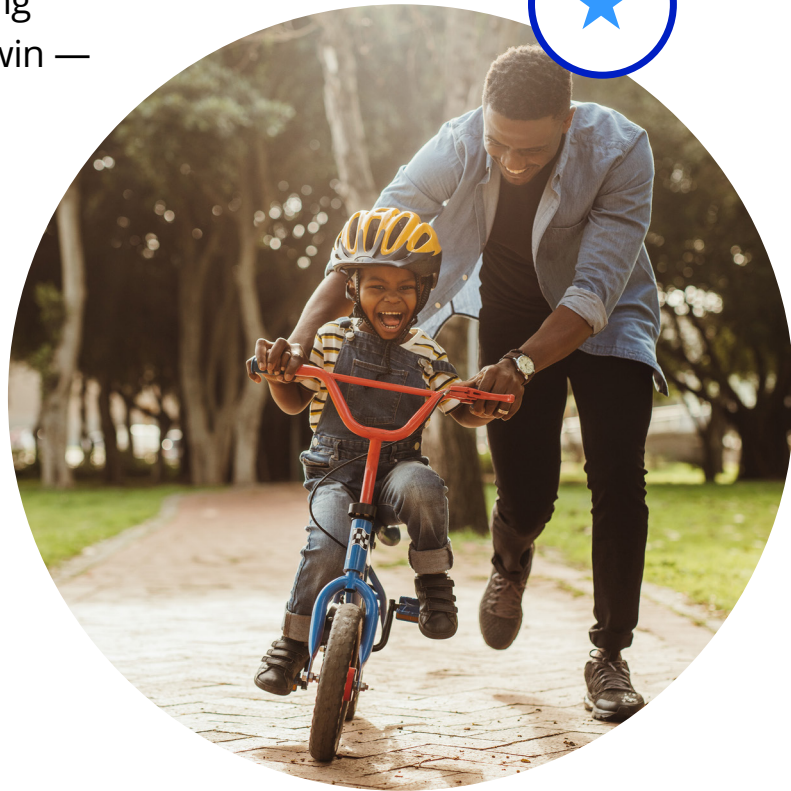
Remember: Your goal is to E.A.T. So getting any outdated info off your site is a clear win — for members' health and search results alike.

YOUR MOVE

Cross-Train the Team

Even if your healthcare company has an SEO specialist (or several!) on staff, leaving search considerations until the end does your content a disservice. Instead, cross-train writers and editors on SEO basics so they understand how optimization impacts audience reach.

And analyze how your team takes content from conception through publication. Are there ways to front-load some optimization tasks so teams are SEO-minded from the start? Whether that means a simple process tweak or investing in an easier-to-use content management system (CMS), those changes can pay long dividends.



Two women are captured in mid-air, jumping joyfully on a sandy beach. The woman on the left is wearing a yellow tank top and a striped skirt, while the woman on the right is wearing a denim jacket and jeans. Both are wearing sunglasses and have their arms raised in celebration. The background shows the ocean and a clear sky.

Future Success Depends on Organizational Agility

If the past two years have taught us anything, it's that the world can change seemingly overnight. When the pandemic first hit, even the *most staid* healthcare companies were forced to pivot:



Telemedicine use [exploded](#), after years of only slowly and fitfully gathering steam.



Venture capital poured into digital health companies, hitting [\\$14.7 billion](#) in the first half of 2021 alone, compared with \$7.7 billion for the entirety of 2019.



Consumers raced to access health info online, hoping to avoid the coronavirus — but also to manage chronic conditions at home and handle the mental impact of social isolation.

Behind the scenes, healthcare marketers were hard at work trying to meet those needs amid all the tumult. But for many, legacy IT systems caused frustrating bottlenecks and delays. How can you quickly publish a “this just in” primer on a novel virus when the current operating system requires an IT ticket and three weeks’ worth of patience to post?

As healthcare leaders look to the future, many are doubling down on organizational agility — what [McKinsey](#) defines as the right balance of stable backbone and dynamic capabilities. Because while no one can predict the future, we know for sure that change happens — and it can happen fast.



YOUR MOVE Take the Publishing Reins

The larger the organization, the more bureaucracy tends to impede speedy content pivots. But that doesn’t mean smaller is necessarily easier: The leaner the team, the less likely it is to have a full-time resource that handles site updates or customizations.

SECRET 5

Fear not: The right digital tools can help a company of any size get a content hub up and running in minutes — no IT support needed. When sizing up vendors, look for a CMS tool that allows for easy customization and has an intuitive interface so that anyone can easily update, optimize, and post content across various channels, including social, email, and search. You also want a tool with robust customization capabilities that can integrate seamlessly with your brand.

YOUR MOVE Nurture a Change-Ready Culture

The pace of change in healthcare is accelerating — and that doesn't even account for the technological, environmental, and social shifts we may not yet fully anticipate. But that doesn't mean teams can't be poised to act when the unknown arises.

The trick is to nurture the right mindset in your marketing team now by focusing on collaboration, promoting upskilling, and centering roles on underlying capabilities rather than day-to-day tasks. The more marketers can embrace that mindset, the more quickly and effectively they'll be able to pivot when problems — or opportunities — arise. And that ability to act swiftly can set your organization apart from the competition.

YOUR MOVE Consolidate and Centralize Your Digital Assets

Where is that editorial asset your team wanted to publish in the current campaign? Who made the most recent change to this content piece? What do the metrics look like for that blog series? Pulling together disparate data and digital assets can be a real hassle, especially if your content libraries and reporting tools are spread across multiple systems.

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But consider how much more infuriating that wasted time can be when every minute matters. For healthcare marketers, real-time data and cloud-based collaboration are the very heartbeat of agility. If your current system is holding you back, consider whether now is the time to upgrade to a more powerful, holistic, and future-ready solution.

Ready to elevate your healthcare marketing engagement?

Linkwell Health creates transformative, actionable omnichannel content marketing solutions —enabled by our Healthy Living Engine technology platform — to help health plans and health services organizations accelerate brand awareness, acquisition, retention, and business outcomes.

Contact us at info@linkwellhealth.com