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Why health and
wellness companies
should explore TikTok

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When it comes to companies taking the TikTok plunge, we don't spontaneously think of the healthcare industry. Yet, #medicaltiktok surpasses 2.5B views, and health content is one of the most-consumed topics on the platform. Also – according to different studies – up to 35% of people with chronic conditions seek app-based communities for support and information.

TikTok undoubtedly presents great opportunities for the healthcare industry, but, since health can be a sensitive topic and the industry is regulated, the main question is: how can pharma use the platform which is often seen as an entertainment platform for twenty-something year-olds? This white paper is not a love letter to TikTok nor a Gen-Z-centric narrative but uncovers examples of usage and guidelines on how to tap into the platform as a healthcare or pharma company.

WHAT MAKES TIKTOK UNIQUE?

By now, most marketers are familiar with TikTok's DNA and why it's working so incredibly well. TikTok is an entertainment platform, built on democratized discovery, powered by engaged communities. In addition, it's a storytelling vehicle, driving culture and promoting inclusivity. For devoted users, TikTok is the mirror for their daily lives in all its different facets. Short-form expression, strong relatability.

Over the past 2 years the platform has dominated the social media landscape as the fastest-growing network. But it's not just its daily active user count that is staggering, TikTok is also the most engaging of all social media apps, with an average scroll of 10 minutes.

And, in comparison with Facebook, it drives 9-times more engagement. This extended dwell time explains why TikTok's algorithm is so well informed and knows the user so well.

From a user-journey perspective, TikTok is atypical and moves beyond the classic marketing funnel. It's an infinite loop fuelled by the desire to constantly learn (49%) and discover something new (35%), which empowers companies and brands to establish more meaningful relationships with their audiences, ultimately leading to communities of loyalists and advocates. In fact, 73% of TikTokers feel a deeper connection to brands they interact with in the app, compared to other platforms.





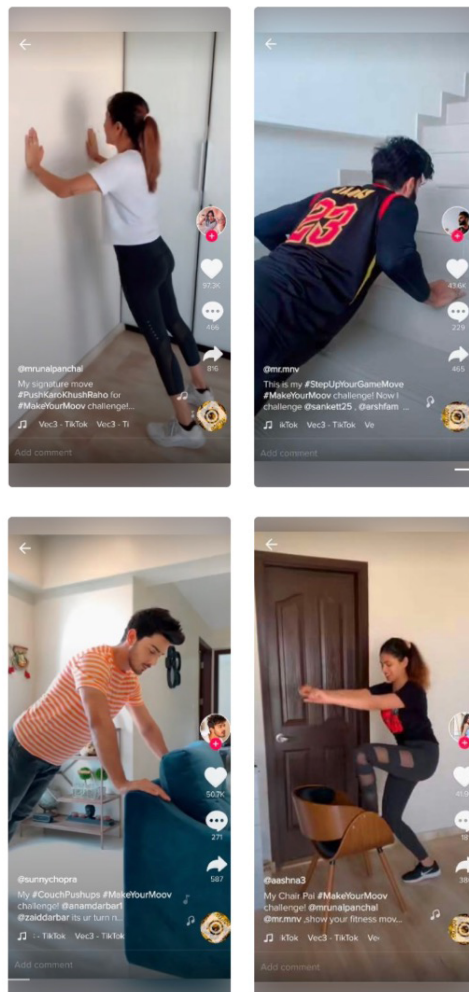
VALUE FOR HEALTH AND PHARMA COMPANIES

Building further on TikTok's unique features, how can the platform unlock value for the healthcare industry? More than other networks, TikTok is winning the battle for attention, which is the ultimate precursor

to persuasion. This high attention span, combined with a precisely personalised algorithm, makes TikTok a convenient space to investigate healthcare topics and participate in peer-to-peer discussions.

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Content



There are billions of short-form health-related videos on TikTok, with HCPs and patients creating content that resonates with the audience and opens the floor for deeper engagement.

To better understand what healthcare content on TikTok looks like, do a test: go to the search function in the app and type a category-specific topic, e.g. asthma. Once you tap enter, you will see an inexhaustible stream of native user-generated content, varying from asthma-proof travelling tips to HCPs illustrating how to use an inhaler:

very DIY and very relatable. The same query can be done for other topics such as hay fever, migraine, sleep, or skin conditions.

According to platform data, Fem Care and DermTok are among the most popular personal care sub-categories, along with dozens of mental health content clusters. Healthcare companies can co-create content with influential creators (including HCPs) to build trust and reach a relevant audience group. This is where content works hand in glove with community.



Community

What makes TikTok worth your scroll time, is its authenticity and sense of community. This is something we see picking up on other platforms as well, but not with the same engagement level or scale.

TikTok offers a space where users can talk about almost everything without taboos, in an unfiltered manner. Creators feel comfortable sharing personal concerns, with health being a prominent talking point. In fact, more and more TikTok is a place to seek out ways to alleviate common health concerns, not only from healthcare professionals, but from real people, eager to share what works for them.

According to Nielsen research data, 60% of platform users feel a sense of community while on TikTok, and 3 out of 4 people said that it is a place where they can express themselves openly. Such a strong community spirit and word-of-mouth endorsement are absolute value and equity drivers, especially for health companies who want to build brand perception.

Also, communities aligned on purpose can inspire decisions, give direction, and stimulate persuasion. This can go from dermatological product routines, diabetes-friendly recipes, to coping with OCD. Another interesting angle for health and pharma companies is the fact that communities are often democratized, meaning experts (such as HCPs) and users (patients, caregivers, prospects) can interact without too many detours or filters.

So how can health and wellness companies fit in here? Not always directly. TikTok communities tell relatable stories, and – if done right – often evangelising the brand that offers the most utility and comfort. Hence why users discover trusted recommendations from peers going through the same thing and sharing an emotional connection. To translate this into a statistic: 37% of TikTok users across the EU have bought a pharma product after seeing it on TikTok and 71% of these were unplanned purchases, highlighting the value of community recommendations.

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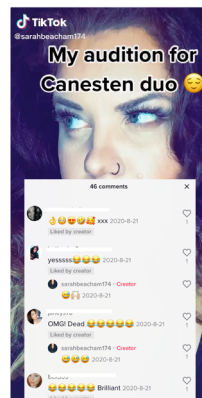
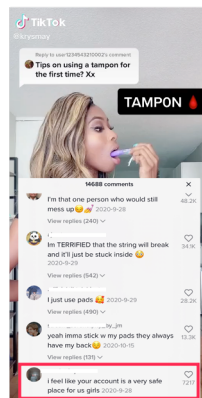
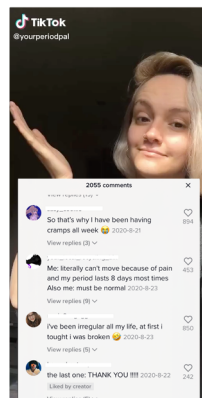
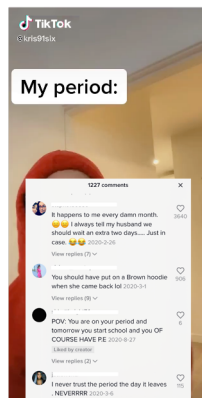
Creators

Health and wellness companies with clear-voiced ambitions need to make themselves discoverable on TikTok and join in (or partner) with the community to become a credible voice.

Yet, pharma companies can't simply buy their way into conversations around health topics. Therefore, co-creation is more than just a buzzword. When, for example, your company is raising awareness of the importance of cancer screening for a specific demographic, work with creators who fit that demographic and have a voice credible enough to move their viewers into action.

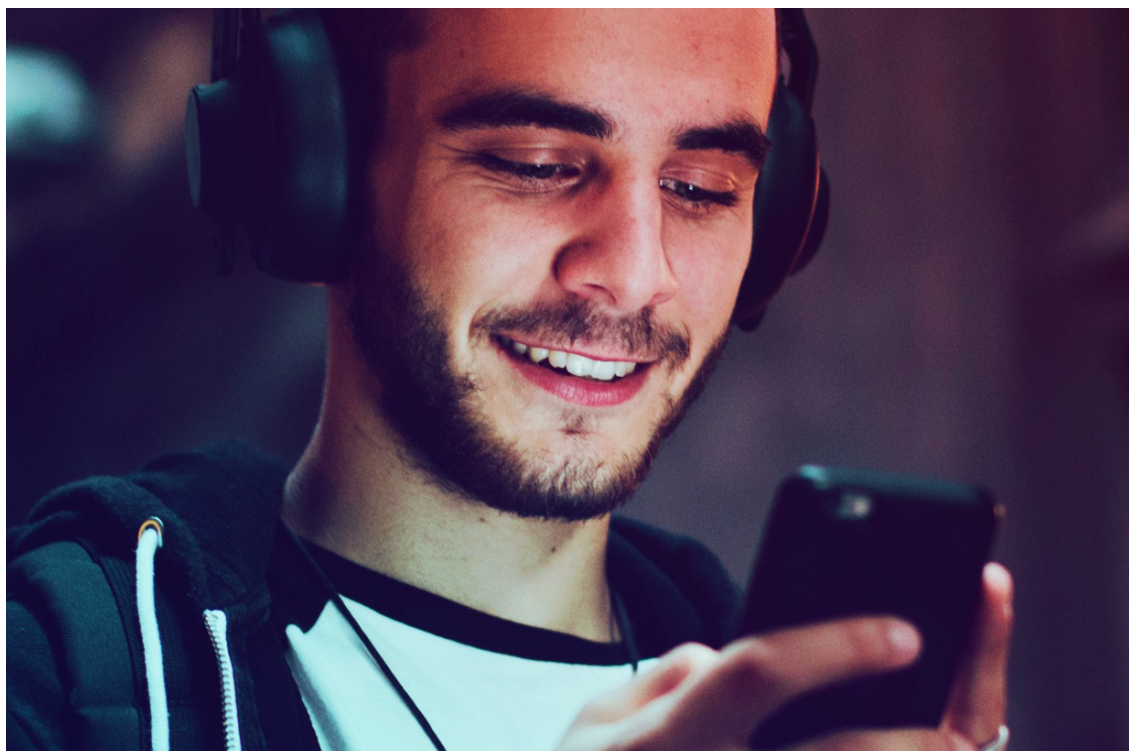
Also, the more sensitive the topic, the more important it is to diversify the line-up of creators that you work with. Especially in the DermTok cluster, we see perfectly how content diversification comes to life. Skincare plays out differently on TikTok. Here, users feel empowered to share their journeys and routines, not just the final look.

And, more importantly, they're keen to share what works for them with others. Think of acne advice from dermatologists or teaching users about rosacea from someone who is living with the condition. It's extremely powerful, credible and relatable.



GETTING IT RIGHT

Healthcare industry regulations obviously impact how far you can stretch your marketing efforts on TikTok, with some health and wellness companies able to do more than others. The following page contains a checklist to help you decide whether TikTok is right for you.



AUDIENCE	While TikTok goes further than just the average Gen Z'er, it's crucial that health and wellness companies assess how their target is using the platform.
CULTURE	TikTok is light-hearted, short-form and unscripted. Assess whether your messaging fits these brackets or not. Even on the fastest-growing platform, your marketing efforts can feel cringy.
STONE OF VOICE	Does TikTok allow you to share your company's tone of voice, focus on your role as a creator of edutainment and integrate natively with user experiences?
PROMISE OR PERFORMANCE	Define your objectives and understand whether TikTok is the right space for this.
DISINFORMATION	Disinformation is widespread across health-related content on social media. As a company, it's important to think about how you can counteract the disinformation by helping to share informed content.
PROHIBITED CONTENT	Companies can't share content promoting prescription-only drugs, class III medical devices, infant formula, at-home self-diagnostic tests, hangover cures, tan boosters, and meal replacements. Some products may be subject to additional restrictions.
LOCAL REGULATIONS	In some markets the ad policy is different from others. For example, in Belgium only medical device sales are prohibited, while in Italy OTC medicines are also a no-go. This also applies to the availability of formats per region.
FORMATS	TikTok offers an array of interesting engagement drivers, but it's worth understanding the restrictions. For example, Hashtag Challenges or Branded Effects are prohibited for pharma companies due to 18+ targeting requirements.
CREATOR ELIGIBILITY	Do a thorough background check of the people that you're engaging to promote your company/service/reputation. Spot, and nip potential controversies in the bud.
ROLE OF CREATORS	Note that creators fall under specific regulations. Ads for medicines should not feature celebrity or influencer endorsements for OTC products, or endorsements by healthcare professionals.
ADS FEATURING CREATORS	Companies can use creators in ads for OTC products, but only if they fit specific requirements (e.g. follower count below 10K).

JUST LIKE YOUR PHYSICIAN, WE'RE HERE TO HELP

For health and wellness companies navigating TikTok as a potential marketing avenue requires time and effort. On a case-by-case level there are dozens of different elements that come into play.

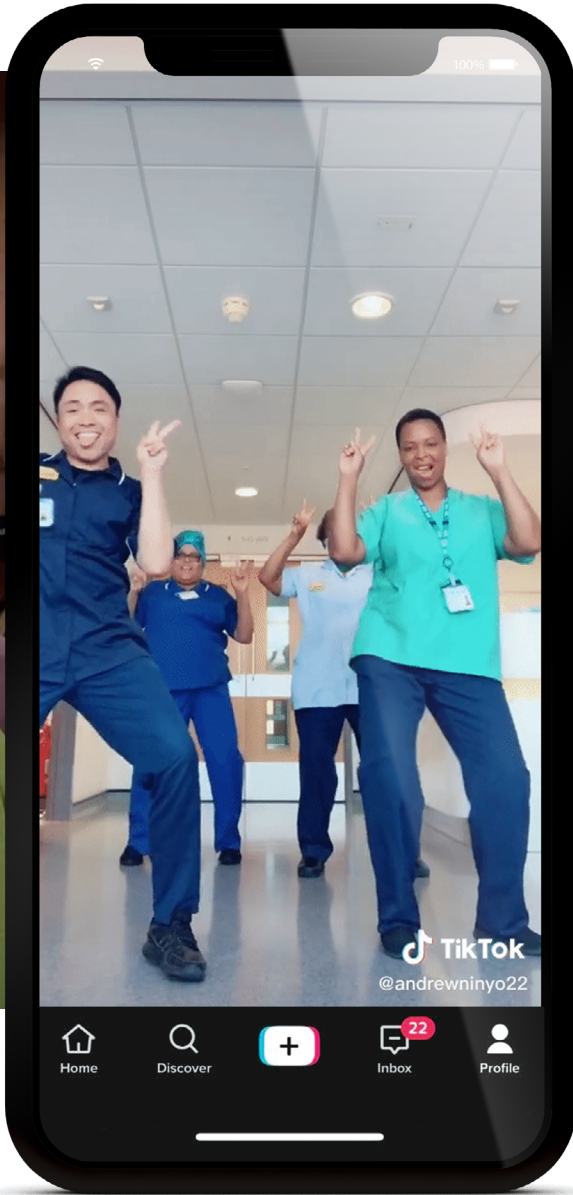
Therefore, we created TK.Lab, an end-to-end specialist agency servicing local and global advertisers with TikTok capabilities spanning across strategy, creative, sound, media, commerce, influence, and intelligence. Our approach goes full circle – from inspiration (benchmarking, intelligence auditing and trends tracking), via the actual

thinking process (planning, content, roles of sound and creators) to execution (content creation).

To fit this approach, we have stacked up multiple products, a centralised team, and a solid track record across different industries.

Get in touch to understand how your business can enter and/or grow further on TikTok.

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The background is a grid of squares. The top row consists of a black square, a square with black and white diagonal stripes, a square with light gray and white diagonal stripes, and a white square. The second row features a light gray square, a square with black and white diagonal stripes, a large solid red square, and another white square. The third row has a light pink square, a large solid red square, and a light pink square. The bottom row is composed of a square with light gray and white diagonal stripes, a square with black and dark gray diagonal stripes, a square with black and red diagonal stripes, a square with red and light pink diagonal stripes, and a light pink square. The bottom-most row includes a light pink square, a light gray square, a square with red and light pink diagonal stripes, and a black square.

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