

Biotech *on the* Web



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By Susan MH Lewenz, CEO Axxiem

The Art of the Startup Biotech Website

At its core, the web is about connecting and informing people. This is true for social networks, online newspapers, and it is certainly true for life sciences companies. In the life sciences, the web allows companies to effectively communicate targeted messages to their key audiences, informing them of cutting-edge research and breakthrough technologies, novel pipeline candidates, latest corporate news, clinical trial results, and partnership opportunities.

For a startup biotech company, key audiences may include investors (seed or institutional), partner companies, researchers, job seekers, and, of course, the media.

Each Biotech Startup is Unique



Startups in the life sciences are typically led by a small group of people, often the very scientists behind the novel technology or product.

These visionaries are extremely enthusiastic about their work, but they struggle to communicate their stories in ways that engage and excite their target audiences. Scientists tend to want to say too much.

I frequently remind our clients that, in almost all cases, the primary job of the website is to:

- **reach the target audience;**
- **tell (or better yet “show”) enough to interest them in the opportunity; and**
- **lead them to the desired action, such as contacting the company.**

Reaching the audience is a matter of proper website positioning and communications, which can involve a range of strategies and tools, but that topic is for another day. Today, we will focus on telling the startup’s story effectively and driving their audience to the desired action.

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Capturing the Audience

First, we need to understand the science behind the company’s technology or product and, most importantly, to understand the company’s unique value proposition.

Once we hone in on the point of opportunity, we need to design a strategy for presenting this point, often stripping away non-essential details, and leaving just the core message. On the web, people move and think with great speed. The value of the company’s offering must be apparent from the start to convince site visitors to stay, learn more, and take action.

So how do we achieve that? Showcasing opportunity on the web in the biotech space is an art in and of itself, particularly on a limited budget, which is often the case for startups.

Investors are interested in innovation and fortuity. The job of the website is to help the visitor quickly grasp the core of the opportunity. That means presenting it with a minimum of explanation required and allowing clear and simple pathways to more detailed information.

Look at the example below:

Echo Therapeutics (www.echotx.com). The homepage aesthetic is appropriate for the industry and the company, the layout is clean and uncluttered, and the key messages are clear

echo
THERAPEUTICS

Needle-free monitoring and drug delivery

Contact Us | Careers | Press Releases

Home | About Echo | Transdermal Technology | Diabetes & CGM | Pipeline | Partnerships | Investors

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Transdermal Drug Delivery and Needle-free Continuous Measurement Systems

Needle-Free Monitoring and Drug Delivery

Echo is developing its Prelude™ SkinPrep System to allow for painless and significantly enhanced skin permeation that will enable both needle-free drug delivery and analyte extraction. Utilizing this technology, Echo is also developing its needle-free Symphony™ tCGM System as a non-invasive, wireless, transdermal continuous glucose monitoring (tCGM) system for use in hospital critical care units and for people with diabetes.

- Painless, rapid, precise skin permeation technology
- Needle-free **continuous** glucose monitoring device
- **Needle-free**, transdermal drug delivery

Echo Therapeutics in the News [More >>](#)

06/28/2011 - Echo Therapeutics Announces NASDAQ Listing
Shares to begin trading on Wednesday, June 29, 2011
PHILADELPHIA, June 28, 2011 ...

06/03/2011 - Echo Therapeutics to Present at the Jefferie...
PHILADELPHIA, June 3, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Echo Therapeutics, Inc. (OTCBB: ECTE)...

Echo Therapeutics: Building a brighter future for diabetes care with Symphony tCGM

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and repeated several times. Notice at the top of the page, right next to the company's logo, the statement "Needle-free monitoring and drug delivery." This simple statement, repeated at the top of every page, summarizes the point of opportunity in five words.

Next we have a succinct, 4-slide Flash story. Each slide has a straight-forward statement, and all together they tell a strong story. Make no mistake, each image is carefully selected and customized, and the text that accompanies it undergoes many rounds of revision to ensure a brief and clear message:

Slide 1: Transdermal Drug Delivery and Needle-free Continuous Measurement Systems

Slide 2: Echo Therapeutics is pioneering a platform technology to enable non-invasive glucose monitoring and transdermal drug delivery

Slide 3: Prelude™ SkinPrep System Pain-free skin permeation technology for needle-free drug delivery and glucose monitoring

Slide 4: Symphony™ tCGM System Continuous, accurate glucose monitoring and wireless data transmission

The rest of the home page is designed to continue to reinforce that core message and to make clear calls to action, i.e. click for more information.

Once we have their attention we need to demonstrate why they should care — that means market opportunity. Here we generally advise a short page with several key elements; again, the idea is to keep the content brief and to the point, and let the visitor ask for more. The objective is to pique interest.

First, state the target market
(for Echo Therapeutics, it is diabetes):

Diabetes is a chronic and life-threatening disease caused by the body's inability to produce or properly use insulin, a key hormone that the body uses to manage glucose, which fuels the cells in the body.

Next, describe the market size—the opportunity:

According to the ADA, the cost of diabetes care in the United States in 2007 was more than \$174 billion, including \$116 billion in excess medical expenditures attributed to diabetes and \$58 billion in reduced national productivity.

Finally, highlight the aspect of the opportunity that the company is targeting:

A significant portion of overall diabetes care costs, approximately \$10 billion according to industry sources, is attributable to costs associated with monitoring blood glucose levels.

Now these are very broad strokes designed to sketch the larger image without all the minute detail. Remember, an interested visitor can always explore the site further to get more information. So, first, we need to get their attention and interest. Once a visitor has clicked beyond the homepage, they are more likely to browse through the website at greater depth.

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Showing Opportunity using Medical Animation

Medical animation is a great way to illustrate a complex technology or the mechanism of action of a drug in a way that is understandable even by a lay audience. Such assets are also great for use offline in investor meetings, conferences, etc. Animations aren't a necessity for every biotech company and they can be pricey, though for many startups this is a worthwhile investment that will go a long way to attract investors and media. Let's take a look at an older website Axxiem has built that is still one of my favorites: www.caratherapeutics.com

For Cara we created a custom graphic showing remote pain signaling to the brain—the "nerve man", as the client quickly dubbed it.

The "nerve man" animation shows Cara's research focus at a glance. The message is brief and easy to digest, and works with, rather than against, other content elements on the page. It has one succinct statement: "Cara Therapeutics — novel approaches to pain relief". From here the visitor can view short

explanations and additional illustrations of the key target areas and technologies, with mouse-over glossary terms to help them every step of the way.

Axxiem launched the Cara Therapeutics website shortly after they were established in 2004. Can we claim that this site is responsible for the \$43 million in capital raised or the many partnerships established since then? Well we'd like to, but we

can't take all the credit — the great people and research of Cara deserve most of that. But we know for certain that our website is playing its part in finding and generating interest among Cara's target audiences.

Susan MH Lewenz is CEO of AxxiemWebSolutions, a digital communications company specializing in Biotech and Pharma. Ms. Lewenz has run global operations for much of her career including in Eastern Europe and India.

The screenshot shows the Cara Therapeutics website layout. At the top left is the logo "CARA THERAPEUTICS". To the right are navigation links: Home, Sitemap, and Contact. Below these is a site search bar with a "GO" button. A horizontal navigation menu contains: About Cara Therapeutics, Pipeline & Technologies, Therapeutic Market, Terminology, and News & Events. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features a large image of a human figure with glowing points on the head, spine, and joints, labeled "Kappa Agonist", "CB", and "DimerScreen". Below this image is a "Replay" button and the text "Cara Therapeutics novel approaches to pain relief." The right column has a "Mission Statement" section with a text box stating: "Cara Therapeutics is an emerging biotechnology company focused on developing novel therapeutics to treat human diseases associated with pain and inflammation." Below this is a paragraph of text describing the company's clinical development opportunities and its most advanced compound, CR845. At the bottom of the right column are three buttons: "Professionals", "Corporate Development & Media", and "Careers". The footer contains: Home | About Cara Therapeutics | Legal | Contact | Sitemap, Copyright © 2011 CARA Therapeutics. All rights reserved. Site designed and managed by AxxiemCorp, and an "Email to a friend" button.