

**POV:** DARING GREATLY AND TELLING STORIES:  
FROM PRESIDENTS TO FAITH IN DOUBT

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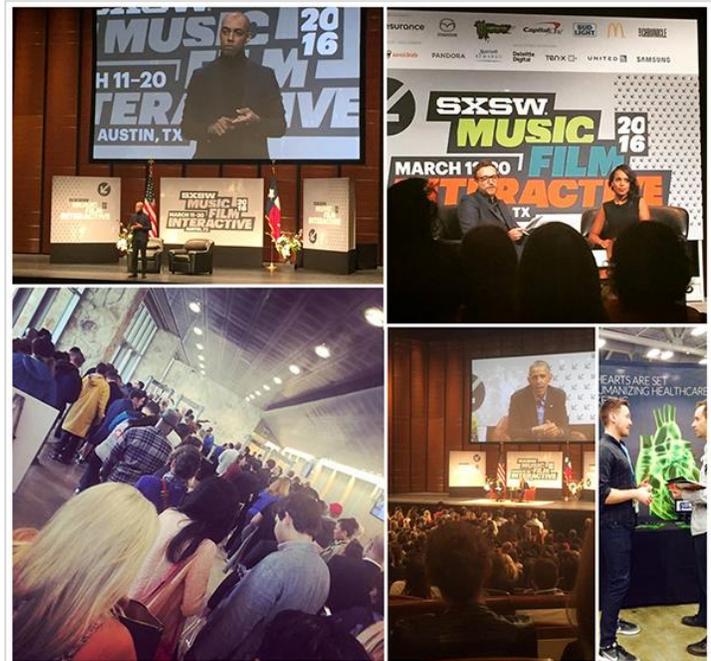


# DARING GREATLY AND TELLING STORIES: FROM PRESIDENTS TO FAITH IN DOUBT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

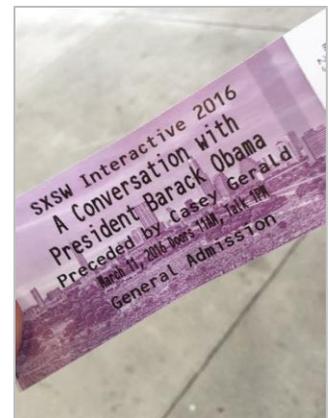
The South by Southwest (SXSW) Interactive Festival, held annually in Austin, Texas, brings in attendees from all over the world, and this year — their twenty-third — was no different. Along with 30,000+ others, Intouch Solutions was there to learn from and share with the biggest and brightest minds in technology, science and communications.

We listened to so many inspiring speakers and got together with colleagues and clients to discuss the future of interactive: How are we using digital technology? How can we be? How should we be? We published daily on-the-ground blog posts and POVs from the festival, and we've got one more. This POV provides the final wrap-up for the event.



## A GAME-CHANGING KEYNOTE

Former U.S. vice president Al Gore has spoken at SXSW Interactive a few times, and that's always a pretty big deal. This year, President Barack Obama gave the keynote address. It was an unprecedented event that many called a game-changer for the conference. SXSW Interactive, once just a geeky offshoot of a scrappy music festival, is now a globally recognized conference that draws the most powerful, serious and important speakers on the planet.



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The President used his time to ask the tech community for help in increasing civil engagement — getting the American public more involved, not just in politics, but in the affairs of government. In this day and age, programs and undertakings need to be communicated online, and — as he stated boldly — the government isn't as good at this as the private sector. Important, positive change is being made, but people aren't hearing about it and aren't getting the opportunity to join in.

## WORTH THE WAIT

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On Saturday, Intouchers attended three much-anticipated sessions: “Daring Greatly” with [Brené Brown](#), founder and CEO of The Daring Way and COURAGEworks; “Five Counterintuitive Truths About Habits” with [Gretchen Rubin](#), author of *The Happiness Project*; and “A New FDA: A Partner for the Digital Future” with [Bakul Patel](#), associate director for digital health at the Center for Devices and Radiological Health at the FDA.

Bakul Patel's talk opened with a promise: “The FDA does not want to be a barrier. Digital health, the convergence of tech, care moving from clinical settings to homes — we want to be your partner in these things.” His presentation included slides showing the levels of approvals and types of reviews. Intouch executive vice president Angela Tenuta attended Patel's session and left without solid answers, but she still felt encouraged by the idea that the FDA wants to be a partner, not an adversary.

“Ask questions, get guidance as you go,” she said, “and as Mr. Patel himself advised, ‘If it's something that you yourself would want, as a patient, then it's something that's worth creating for others.’”

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Both Brown's and Rubin's sessions were highly personal, encouraging the individual to self-investigate — to come to better terms with our humanity and failings in order to empower us to harness the innate power of those vulnerabilities to improve our own lives and those around us. As Brown put it, “When we define our stories, they define us. When you own your story, you get to write the ending.” Perhaps our goal should be to help patients write their own endings.

Coupled with Obama's talk, Rubin and Brown convinced us of the importance of telling stories well — and it's a call to action that pharma should heed.

After all, the federal government needs tech help to engage the public because they're not good yet at telling their own stories on digital media. Does this sound familiar? It should.

There are powerfully good things happening in healthcare thanks to the pharma industry — but if the public hears about them online, it's often coming from an uplifting news outlet or an interested science journalist, rather than a concerted effort to promote the positive works of pharma.

The idea of seeking the assistance of private citizens may sound unusual, but it really isn't. Pharma has been doing this in many ways, from patient-advocate programs to customer testimonials to focus groups. But if the government can ask so directly for help, there's no reason we can't, too. How can we better enlist patients and caregivers as goodwill ambassadors — and get their advice on how to better reach their peers?

## EVEN MORE GOOD THINGS

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Elsewhere at the conference, many other things were happening.

- + Our own Paul Ford and his team won an MIT hackathon. Given only a few hours, they developed a concept for a patient solution — codenamed VIVIAN, for “Virtual Visiting Nurse” — to assist people with diabetes who are returning home after a hospitalization.

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- + Producer and actor Kerry Washington addressed a standing-room-only crowd with a keynote about how she had leveraged social media to not only build her professional brand, but to use her platform to work for social change. She and other women in other sessions acknowledged the specific challenges that women can face in their careers and in building an online brand voice.
- + On the tech-specific front, while sessions on virtual reality and other devices were interesting and highly attended, many of the sessions focused on data. Data analytics, data ethics, the value of data, the uses of data, the potential of data. It's clear that we're moving past the logistics of big data — e.g., How do we track it? Collect it? Store it? Those are questions that usually have answers now. Today, the issues are moving toward broader application questions — e.g., What are the most useful ways to analyze it? How can partnerships and collaborations find new ways to use data to help patients? What are the legal, regulatory and ethical ramifications of these data stores and the ways in which we use them?

## FAITH IN DOUBT

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There were many questions, not all of which had answers. But in a nice moment of synchronicity, President Obama's opening speaker — Casey Gerald, cofounder and CEO of MBAs Across

America — expressed the need to “have faith in doubt.” His story was emotional and intensely personal, but it was actually reinforcing the basic tenets of science. Rather than put all our faith in any one way of thinking, one person or one solution, we must never stop questioning. At Intouch, we believe in this approach wholeheartedly.

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## USING WHAT WE LEARNED

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We go to conferences, and we see great speakers, give great talks, have great conversations. But how often and how much do these ideas make an impact on the conference rooms of big pharma? Intouch is working hard every day to make sure this happens. One of our annual efforts at SXSW Interactive is called *SXSW Distilled* — a cross-platform content blitz that “distills” all of the information to concentrate on the implications of these ideas for our industry, our clients and our work.

We spent our time at SXSW Interactive absorbing session information; recruiting brilliant minds; and discussing the application of what we were seeing with current, former and new clients. From considering ways to get more involved with the world around us to strategies for telling human stories more effectively, from learning how to better use data to creating new solutions for patients — our time in Austin was powerful.

We hope you've enjoyed this brief summary of some of what resonated most with us. For more information on SXSW Interactive 2016, check out the [SXSW Distilled blog](#) for a “feet on the ground” perspective from Intouch attendees as it happened. You can also look up the [#sxswdistilled](#) hashtag on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

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