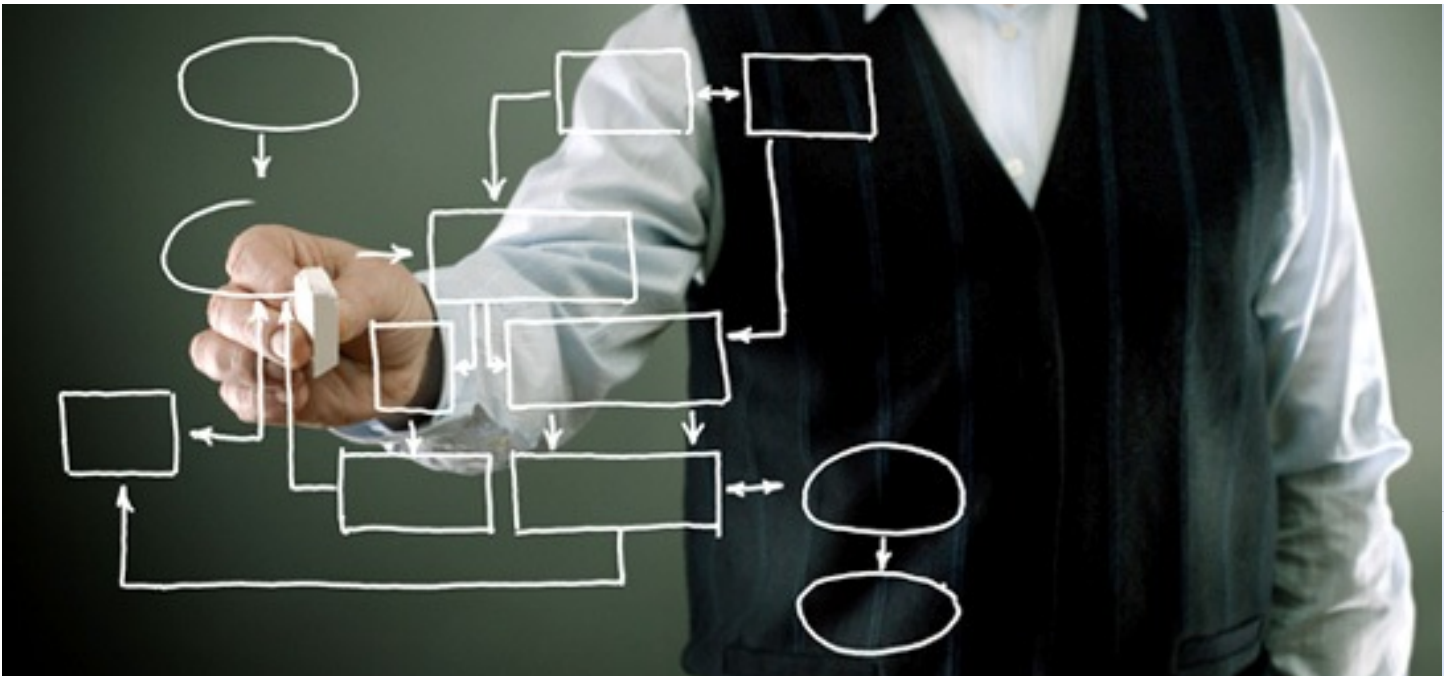


Healthcare Marketing White Paper



The Hospital CEO's Role in Supporting Marketing Goals

How Vision & Leadership Align Staff to the Brand Promise



THE HOSPITAL CEO'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING MARKETING GOALS

How Vision & Leadership Align Staff to the Brand Promise

Now more than ever, hospitals need to provide positive experiences that will make patients and doctors want to come back. Strong leadership can inspire and unify your staff to deliver great customer experiences. In this white paper we'll look at how hospital executives can support and advance the organization's competitive position, and align their staff to a shared mission.

Why is leadership so important right now?

Hospitals are facing sweeping changes in their business models. The impacts of healthcare reform, changing consumer behavior and a suddenly crowded market are forcing healthcare providers to compete for market share based on the strength of their brand and customer experiences. This is new territory for most hospitals.

With so many employees, doctors, patients and service lines, there are literally thousands of ways to deliver the customer experience – and as many ways to mess it up. It's hard to imagine that any hospital could create a cohesive unified brand association. Yet, top hospitals have succeeded in creating strong competitive positions that are clear, differentiated and widely understood.

In almost every case, these organizations have a Chief Executive Officer who understands and supports the organization's marketing goals. These leaders champion the mission statement and translate core values from the top down to every level of the staff. People look to the CEO for vision and guidance, as the leader, interpreter and facilitator of a differentiated customer experience. It's from this leadership position that an effective marketing strategy can take root and thrive.

Here are some of the ways hospital CEOs can have a powerful positive effect on marketing their organization.

The CEO's to-do list for hospital marketing:

- Understand and believe your hospital's competitive position (If you don't have a position that you can be passionate about, you need to get one).
- Clarify your mission statement. Learn to articulate it in one sentence, and as part of a 15-second elevator speech and a 30-minute presentation.
- Engage your counselors, managers and staff to define how to deliver the desired customer experience so everyone understands their roles.
- Make your brand story part of everyday conversations. Talk about it with your board, your managers, at chamber of commerce events and public-facing functions.
- Be resilient. When inside and outside forces exert their influence to go off strategy, resist the temptation to appease them and stay true to your mission.
- Know when to take a back seat. Understand that you can be a brand steward without becoming the brand spokesperson. And remember that third party endorsements are generally more credible than chest thumping or self promotion.

Translating the hospital's mission for stakeholders

Understanding what a hospital offers that's unique, relevant and appealing to the target audience is the foundation for a competitive position. To realize the full potential of their marketing investment, it's important that hospitals communicate a unique experience, and then deliver it consistently and reliably. Employees look to the CEO for gestures, meaning and focus – to help them embrace the hospital's core values and understand how they influence the customer experience.

Finding your organization's purpose

Given the competitive markets hospitals find themselves in, the changes brought on by healthcare reform, leaders must ask themselves some important questions:

- If people can choose where they get healthcare, and they have a bunch of different options, why should they choose our hospital?
- Why should family members want their loved ones treated here?
- Why should doctors choose to practice here?

The CEO's mission is to answer these questions; to bring a clarity of focus to your hospital or healthcare facility about what you can offer that no other organization can. A parity statement alone (Because we're the best!) is not good enough. Not every hospital can claim to be the recognized worldwide leader for their expertise and deliver on it. Taking a healthcare organization from having no purpose beyond parity and elevating it is hard. That's why so many hospitals fall back on their ranking in the Top 50. However, it is possible.

What does your organization really deliver?

Getting there requires a deep understanding of the organization: where it is and where it needs to be. What can the organization be the best in your world at? What can it do that is desirable to customers that none of the competitors can do? What is the focus – beyond just delivering health care?

One way to answer these questions is through rigorous and objective exploration; looking at the skeletons in the closet, patting yourself on the back for the things you do well, and acknowledging the things you don't do well. It helps to understand your culture, the personality of the organization, and the core values you are willing to commit to.

Core values are the actions that define a brand; something you're willing to fire an employee over. It's not a core value unless there is a positive or negative result for not living up to it. The positive results for the company are the culture the core value creates, but there is a positive result for employee as well. The negative is that if people don't live up to the core values, they don't belong on your team. If you're willing to stand up for core values, then you're well on your way to building a company culture that is in line with the brand you want to build.

TRANSLATING THE BRAND FOR STAFF AND PHYSICIANS

Educating team members on how to deliver the brand promise

A strong healthcare brand can have a powerful influence with internal audiences. It helps align employees and physicians to the company mission, provides common goals for care and creates a positive patient experience. When the management team, marketers, and frontline service personnel are clear on the organization's core values and what makes it different, they can think, act and react to reinforce the brand promise.



Share success stories

Some of the most compelling and memorable examples of a hospital's brand position come from the everyday lives of employees and patients. Whether it's a staff member who went beyond the call of duty to assist a coworker or customer (patient, that is), or a patient's experience that exemplifies the best the organization has to offer, there are real life episodes of the organization's purpose happening all the time. Have department leaders identify recent events or successes, and share them across the organization. Positive role models help employees understand and embrace the brand position.

Provide frequent reminders

Hospital environments are busy places. There are frequent distractions. People have bad days. It's easy to lose sight of goals and ideals when faced with everyday dramas. That's why it's also important to promote the hospital's competitive position and messages with staff and physicians – and do it often. Make the brand promise visible and keep reminders throughout the workplace.

Marketing channels inside the hospital or practice, what we call owned media, offer virtually endless opportunities to translate brand positioning, share core values and model behavior to consistently deliver the expected patient experience. Using creative placements in the care environment, from hallway posters to screen savers, marketing can help remind everyone of the organization's promise.

THE CEO'S VISION PROVIDES A COMPASS FOR SUCCESS

Hospital CEOs can learn a lesson in leadership from the late Steve Jobs, co-founder and CEO of Apple Inc. His vision for the company served as a guide for making tough strategic and tactical decisions. Sure, people laughed when he introduced the iPod. They made jokes suggesting the iPad was a feminine hygiene product. But with such a clear mission, he pursued his vision with confidence and built one of the great corporate success stories of our time.

Hospital CEOs have a lot to think about. The ability to articulate what makes their organization different simplifies the job in many ways. It helps people understand where the hospital is headed and what they need to do to get there. It guides and informs strategic and tactical decision making. And above all, vision and leadership help keep the hospital's marketing efforts on strategy so the organization can reach its goals. ☺

MORE MARKETING RESOURCES FOR HOSPITAL EXECUTIVES

[Follow the Smith & Jones' hospital marketing blog.](#)

[Follow us on Facebook.](#)