

Healthcare Marketing White Paper



Brand Integration in Healthcare Marketing

Tools and tips to build strong, consistent brands



BRAND INTEGRATION IN HEALTHCARE MARKETING

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Try this simple test. Look at a cross section of your marketing deliverables – your brand promise, website, Facebook page, online display ads, video content and graphics. Now, ask yourself; If you cover up the logos, do all of these things look and feel like the same brand? Do the various pieces support the same brand promise? If you answered yes, then you're on the right track to successfully integrating your marketing communications. If the answer is no, it may be time to put tools in place to develop a more consistent and unified brand.

In this white paper, we'll discuss how to successfully integrate a brand to ensure consistent messaging across your various campaigns.

SUPPORTING YOUR BRAND ACROSS PATIENT TOUCH POINTS

For a clear illustration of what brand integration is all about, look at a top national consumer brand such as Apple. From their website and advertising, to the Apple store design and their branded “genius bar” tech support, every aspect of Apple’s marketing communications work together to deliver a clear, uniform brand promise—both visually and verbally—and all support the same goals.

For hospitals and health systems, brand integration means that the touch points at which patients are interacting with your brand – whether that’s online, through interactions with your staff or within the facility itself – support the same patient experience and brand promise. If these contacts are opportunities to create awareness, inspire loyalty and drive conversions, brand integration makes the most of each one by building on the previous and subsequent interactions. Here are just a few of the ways that brand integration helps your organization.

Benefits of Brand Integration

- Builds brand recognition: Have you ever seen a commercial for the first time and known the company before they identified themselves? Consistent messaging over time helps brands become easily recognizable to consumers.
- Helps drive opinions and expectations of your brand: When your hospital has a strong and honest brand with a consistent look, voice and messaging, patients come to know what they can expect from your hospital—whether they’re in the facility or interacting with the brand elsewhere.
- Focuses the conversation with the patient: When you are clear in your message and provide consistent reinforcement, you can lead the discussion and help shape perceptions about your hospital.
- Maximizes the effectiveness of campaigns: We’ve found that healthcare marketing campaigns are most effective when online and offline channels work together. Integrated campaigns make those components more effective, reinforcing a singular message and cross promoting content and conversion tools.

By putting the right tools and processes in place, organizations can achieve successful integration, and help keep their brand strong and healthy for many years.



INTEGRATION STARTS WITH A STRONG BRAND PROMISE

Defining your strategic and creative direction

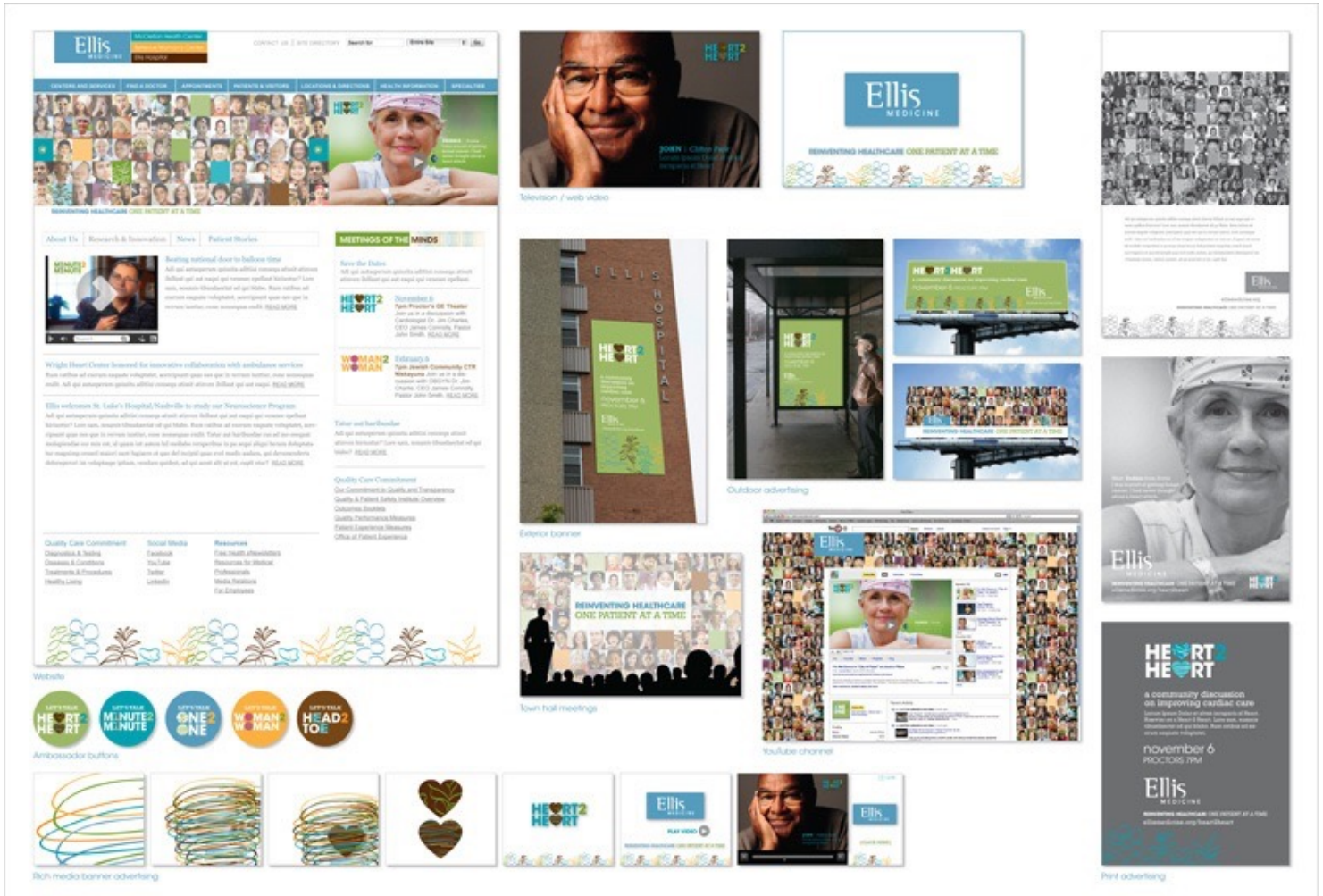
Brand strategy doesn't appear out of thin air. A competitive position and brand promise should be based on the realities of your organization; your strengths and the type of experience you can reliably deliver. Market research, competitive comparisons, interviews with stakeholders and surveys of your patients and healthcare consumers in general all contribute insights that will help shape the brand promise. What can your organization offer that others can't? Why should a patient choose your hospital? How do you define the desired patient experience and guarantee that it's delivered consistently?

Answers to these questions provide the insights that will shape your strategic positioning, and ultimately the mood and look of your brand. Making sure that the brand is honest and realistic is an important first step in successful brand integration.

In a brand building process that we've developed and refined over the last 30 years, we've created some practical tools to help hospitals and health systems successfully identify and implement their brand strategy. Among these tools are the **mood board** and **brand grid**, used to translate the strategy into the look and style the brand. The purpose of these tools is to visualize the brand, refine the message and serve as litmus tests for all other campaigns and marketing materials. The mood board and brand grid can be used as reference tools to help guide decisions time and time again..

An example of a mood board created for Ellis Medicine. This tool helps define the look and attitude of the brand. It's a benchmark for testing the mood, visual style and graphic elements of future executions.





An example of a brand grid created for Ellis Medicine. It demonstrates the brand's look and messaging in a number of different formats and channels to ensure that all elements look consistent before you even begin your first campaign.

Establishing and sharing graphic standards

A new logo design alone can't communicate a brand promise or patient experience. A new identity that's thoughtful, organized and far-reaching, however, can do a lot to integrate your brand message across all channels. Implementing an identity is a job for professionals, and part of that job is creating "brand standards."

Brand standards are the instruction manual for the identity: clear directions on acceptable logo treatments, color choices, typographic styles and direction for any number of individual applications, ranging from business cards and envelopes to brochure, websites, uniforms and exterior building signage.

These directions should be written out in plain, easy to follow language, supported by visual examples. The manual should be accessible to anyone who's responsible for creating marketing or branded communications. That usually means creating printed copies for the marketing department and an online version for access by external vendors, agencies, printers, publishers or sign companies.

Brand standards are an important part of brand integration, and the only way to ensure that your visual identity stays consistent across all the many media channels your hospital or practice will use. Yet, surprisingly, there are healthcare organizations that forget this essential brand-building step.

2

HOW TO DELIVER WHAT YOU PROMISE

Creating internal alignment and a consistent patient experience

Another major component of brand integration is making sure the patient experience inside the hospital or physician practice is consistent with your external branding. Marketing campaigns may target external audiences, but the brand promise has to reach internal audiences, too. And the only way your organization can deliver a desired patient experience is if most of your staff and care givers understand what that is, and how their behavior influences the patient's perception.

Hospital leadership can facilitate this process by creating goals that support the desired patient experience. That entails identifying metrics to track and incentivize team performance that's aligned to the patient experience. For example, if your brand pillars is 'fast treatment', measure and reward short wait times and quicker door-to-care intervals. It's up to the C-suite and department leaders to translate the brand promise into every employee's responsibilities so that every employee understands how their behavior and performance helps deliver the desired patient experience.

Another way to align staff is to deliberately make the brand promise part of the organization's language and everyday conversations. Talk about the patient experience during staff meetings, at corporate presentations and in care environment. Communicate what's expected of the staff, and develop reporting systems to measure the staff's success at achieving the goals. Create incentives to reward positive behavior, and conversely, create consequences for negative behavior. If you're really serious about your brand promise, failing to meet expectations should be cause for termination.

Keep the message top of mind

Providing reminders in the care environment

In the same way that your external marketing introduces, clarifies and reinforces your brand promise, your internal marketing should also create awareness with internal audiences. Integrating your brand message into the care environment is a great way to reinforce the patient experience for care providers, align staff to a shared mission and keep it top of mind for both employees and the patients and families who visit the hospital.



A branded wall at Ellis Medicine reinforces campaign messaging in the hospital environment.

Marketing executions in the hospital facilities should reflect the same brand identity (as outlined in your brand standards), the same brand promise (from your positioning) and the same patient experience that your team is prepared to deliver. Consistent messages inside the hospital create familiarity and strong brand associations for patients and employees.

When it comes to internal marketing, look for creative, unexpected ways to implement your brand message within the hospital. Posters and screen savers are obvious opportunities, but there are countless highly visible yet inexpensive ways to spread your message throughout the facility and grounds. Social media is another way to engage internal audiences, share success stories and recognize employees who live the brand.



KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON THE BRAND

Sustain brand integration with periodic ‘brand check ups’

Brand integration is an ongoing process that should be part of your marketing process. Once your marketing team and vendors understand the brand promise and how to support it, integration becomes a natural part of your work flow. However, it pays to monitor brand integration from a big picture perspective. We recommend performing a brand check up, and here's how.

Once a year, sit down and look at advertising campaigns and other marketing you've produced throughout the past year. Compare all of your campaign components to one another and compare them against the mood board and brand grid. If they all look the same, then you're in good shape, but if they feel like they're from different families, it may be time to refresh your marketing team on your brand standards.

During your brand check up, you should also think about additional consumer touch points other than just your advertising. How has the physical environment of your hospital or health system upheld the brand standards? What about HR materials, event signage or even the phone system? Look for all of the unthought-of ways to incorporate you brand into the day-to-day operations of your organization, and solutions that will maintain the look and message of the brand.

Successful Integration keeps brands alive

An integrated healthcare brand communicates AND delivers a consistently positive patient experience. The brand promise is part of the organization's vocabulary. The staff understands their core values, shares success stories and has goals and incentives to help people live the brand and deliver the desired patient experience. There's a clear brand promise, and a system of checks and balances to maintain brand guidelines and strategy. With the right tools, your hospital or healthcare system can achieve successful brand integration and reap the benefits of better brand reputation and recognition.

MORE MARKETING RESOURCES FOR HOSPITAL EXECUTIVES

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ELLIS MEDICINE: BUILDING A BRAND OVER FIVE YEARS

Throughout this white paper, you've seen examples of one hospital's brand integration tools. The mood board, brand grid and physical environment for Ellis Medicine were developed over five years ago, yet they are still being utilized today to create an integrated and singular brand promise. Below are some examples of recent advertising campaigns that exemplify successful brand integration over the long-term.

