

Healthcare Marketing White Paper



Digital Storytelling for Hospital Brands-Part II

How to create and deliver a unified brand story



DIGITAL STORYTELLING FOR HOSPITAL BRANDS – PART II

How to create and deliver a unified brand story

The creation of a compelling brand story for your healthcare organization is not always as easy as “Once upon a time.” Before you can produce an honest, emotional story, and before you can translate that story across multimedia channels, it’s essential to define your organization’s brand positioning.

In Part I of this white paper, we discussed how to humanize your hospital through an emotional brand promise and broke down the components of a compelling narrative. Just like all great stories, there’s a means to an end. In part II of this white paper, you will learn the components of creating your hospital’s brand story and how to effectively deliver this narrative across all of your marketing channels.

Creating the story of your brand

Where do you begin to tell your brand story? Start with the realities of your organization; its history, mission, people and service offerings all contribute to the plot. Finding the unique angles and plot twists are what make it engaging for your audiences; that takes research and keeping your eyes and ears open. Here are some tips on how to get started.

Finding storylines in your organization

When you start looking for stories, you may be surprised how many pop up. Think about the history of your organization, how it started and how it's changed. Ask your team to report interesting cases or patients that your staff may be talking about. Human interest stories and positive outcomes help personalize the people behind your brand. Not every story lead will pan out, so the more you pursue, the more likely you will be to find those golden nuggets.

Look for stories about brand origins and evolution of the brand:

- How and why was your organization formed?
- What was/is the mission or need the brand fulfills?
- How has your organization changed?
- How is it different from your competition?
- Who are the founders or leaders of the organization?
- What are their stories?

Dig into care-delivery and human interest stories:

- Recent success stories in patient care
- Difficult or unusual cases that tested your staff
- New procedures, techniques or equipment
- Department initiatives or goals that support the brand
- Community outreach, fundraising or education programs
- Physicians and staff members with interesting stories
- Cross-team collaborative efforts
- Employees' personal interests and after-work activities

Think of many small stories that support the bigger story

Almost every organization has a story to tell. Probably a big story – one that spans decades and may include thousands of individual characters. That's not something that can be told all at once; most media channels can't deliver a 10,000 word history. And you can't tell the same story over and over again; no one would pay attention. So you have to break it down into little human-sized bits.

Show how the brand story is reflected in the experience and efforts of individuals. Let the tale of one or two or three people illustrate the philosophy and purpose of the bigger story. Think of your story as many little stories that add up to that big story. Then demonstrate it on a human scale, one story at a time.

Telling the story across many channels

Unlike the one-on-one, in-person storytelling of days past, digital story telling takes your brand story out to the masses, and ideally will deliver that tale on-demand, at the viewer or reader's discretion. That means translating the story into bite-size pieces and longer, more complete episodes, to be accessed at the time and place that's appropriate for the listener. Tailor your story to the patients' place in the decision process and for each media format.

- **The online story:** Your website is the logical place to tell your brand's story. Summarize it on the home page, tell it in detail on deeper pages, and support it with all the words, images and video you need to make it exciting, engaging and memorable. This is one place you can afford to go into great length, but make it accessible by letting the reader navigate the story in their own way.
- **The video story:** Video is perhaps the perfect medium for brand storytelling, capturing all the language, emotion and pacing of natural storytelling (especially with a good editor). Your subjects can tell their own story, in their own words with every nuance and expression. You can use cut-away shots (or b-roll) to show related action, places or people. You can use music to create mood and atmosphere. And you have the luxury to create short teasers for broadcast or pre-roll and longer videos for the web, audience presentations or on-demand channels. It's important not to over-indulge with the freedoms of video, however... try to avoid feature-length presentations (most people tune out after a couple of minutes). And remember to support and add to the bigger brand story.
- **The social story:** Social networks are made for sharing content. Look for ways to truncate your brand story into the short and sweet formats of today's most popular social platforms. Quick summaries, engaging images or short video clips are compelling and shareable ways to introduce your brand story or promote individual stories online. Once again, think of how these quick hits support the bigger picture, and can work to keep people wanting more.
- **The integrated story:** We're focusing on digital storytelling, but there's a whole world of storytelling opportunities to consider as you weave your tale. Don't overlook the human element and your work environment as outlets for storytelling. Make your brand story part of the language of your company, and encourage your managers and staff to share and talk about their own stories. Find ways to tell the story in your organization's "owned media," the facilities and channels you own and control (hallways, waiting areas, web sites and internal communication channels). All of these are great opportunities to share your story and remind internal audiences how they contribute to the brand experience.

Beyond happily ever after

Digital storytelling is a new spin on the hospital marketing practice, but it's also as familiar as our favorite childhood books. Storytelling is an opportunity to bring warmth and humanity to your brand, and demonstrate how your organization affects the lives of those you serve. By sharing the brand story with your internal audiences, your team can understand how their behavior and performance supports that story and helps deliver a positive patient experience. By telling your story to patients, prospective patients and the community at large, you can help them build a deeper relationship with your brand. But above all, it's important to make sure that your story supports the brand's marketing communication strategies, and remains consistent with your brand promise.

THE END / THE BEGINNING

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