

WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING

Using social media to amplify word-of-mouth marketing in the digital age

EXPERIENCE REIGNS

Building brand trust with a consumer-centric patient experience model

A WINNING MODEL

Empowering patients to improve their health with gamification

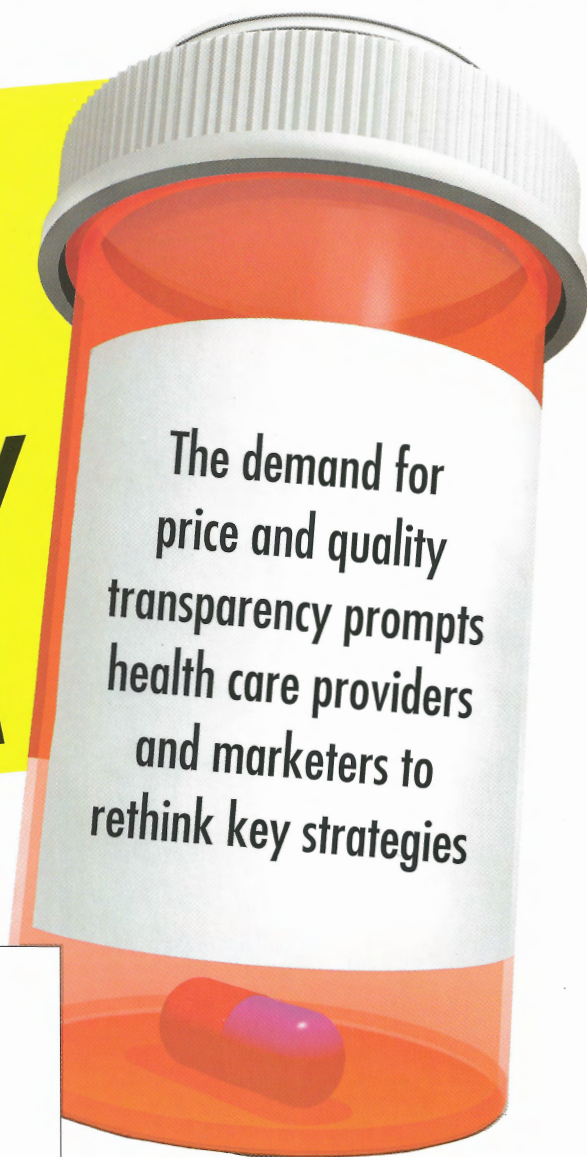
MARKETING

HEALTH SERVICES

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STICKER SHOCK



The demand for
price and quality
transparency prompts
health care providers
and marketers to
rethink key strategies



The Softer Side of Health Care

How to look less “institutional” online



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While social media is slowly moving health care facilities into more of an engagement-marketing model, a lot of work still needs to be done to escape that impersonal hospital image online. Consistently integrating more of your campaigns across all your digital media, being more creative and patient-focused in your presentation of differentiators and programs, and considering the brand personality will help immensely in creating an online image that evokes a positive emotional response from your audience.

Step Outside Your Comfort Zone

Health care, like finance, tends to shy away from bold ideas because the industry is heavily regulated. Decision-makers fear that creative ideas, particularly humorous ones, will get them in trouble.

There is room for creativity within the regulations if you are willing to find a balance, though. Creativity, more than anything, can set your facility apart from the rest and make you more human and less institutional.

Good creative ideas work harder for you, reaching more people for less money.

The key benefit of good creative online is that it's shared more often, extending your campaign's reach. Standard issue creative, on the other hand, only helps you blend in with everyone else, but it's where most of health care marketing operates because it's “safe.”

Add the Human Touch to Your Website

Your website is the most visited property relating to your health care facility or practice. All online ads, Internet properties and print materials should be driving traffic to your site, making it the central piece of your marketing strategy. Most facility websites, however, are very impersonal. Nothing says “institution” like generic stock photos of smiling people, austere pictures of buildings and slick health care technology with no patient benefits mentioned on the home page.

You may have an interesting program to feature on your home page and you've simply not given it high visibility on the website. For example, many hospitals have a pet therapy program. The home page could feature visuals of the therapy dog and a patient: “Meet empathy with a tail. We call her Joy.”

Think about the many initiatives and programs that could add that human touch to your website's homepage.

Other patient-friendly website features include easy-to-find phone number directories and driving directions, parking instructions, an event calendar, an online payment option and a find-a-doctor feature.

Develop Appealing Online Copy

Your goal should be to sound more conversational and to avoid the words “patient centered” in your copy. Instead of including such literal copy, offer examples throughout the site that leave people with the *impression* you are patient centered.

No one reads a website page like a book. People scan headlines and visuals with captions to find the information they are looking for. But they do dive into areas of the site and read sections, so make sure that a visitor who does nothing more than scan headlines, photos and captions gets the overall idea of your page content.

For the most part, your copy should connect with patients. For example, on a page we wrote for trigeminal neuralgia (TN), we included a picture of a toothbrush and the caption “Have you suffered intense pain from brushing your teeth?” For those with TN, this simple, everyday act of brushing can trigger a horrific episode of facial pain from this neurological disorder.

Immediately, we connected emotionally with patients, identifying something most of them have experienced. Now you have the visitor's attention and you buy another few seconds to tell them how you treat the condition successfully.

By presenting ideas creatively when implementing campaigns that are out of



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the ordinary or simply giving exposure to initiatives that are more human, you can begin to look more like a facility that cares. This can take more time and effort initially, but it does pay off in the long run—building a positive brand image makes any practice, hospital or center more human.

Examples of Creativity in Health Care

When developing your next creative campaign, don't start with something as intense as cancer. Instead, choose something such as a diagnostic test, birthing center, an internal patient-focused initiative or a branding campaign. Try a creative idea on a small scale and expand from there if you get good feedback or lots of clicks. You can test some ads through Facebook or Google Pay Per Click. Both of these platforms are excellent venues for testing concepts on a small scale for low cost, and you can control exposure by adjusting the reach radius.

I love the "Save the Ta-Tas" campaign by the Breast Cancer

Research Foundation. It has been successful in fundraising as well as raising awareness and education by reminding women to get their breast exams. It developed a life of its own on social media, garnering its own hashtag on Twitter and Instagram: #savethetatats.

In December 2012, Piedmont Healthcare utilized Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook to tell the story of a successful robotic nephrectomy and kidney transplant. The real-time communication was handled by Twitter, which branded the content as "breaking news." It did carry more risk exposure since it was a live procedure, but the results and press it generated were priceless.

Another example would be online display and PPC ads we created for Colon & Rectal Specialists (CRS) in Richmond, Va., a small private practice with seven surgeons. One of the goals for this client was to promote the colonoscopies they perform in their two accredited office surgery suites.

CRS had created a more patient-friendly colonoscopy starting with a more tolerable colon prep. Given the benefits of a better patient experience, we branded it the Kinder Colonoscopy. Next, we tested that brand concept through Google Adwords against another ad. Kinder Colonoscopy got an overwhelming number of clicks with a considerable number of patients signing up during the test period.

Next, we focused on many aspects of why patients avoid this life-saving screening test: Dreading the preparation is the primary reason patients delay making an appointment.

The majority of the campaign budget was devoted to online display and text ads, Facebook and blog posts. From January 2012 to October 2013, the campaign brought in an additional 436% ROI for this targeted surgical procedure. We tracked the results online, and the revenue was six times the ad spend.

This is an example of how a small campaign did very well simply because it incorporated humor into an otherwise dreadful medical procedure.

These online initiatives send a positive brand message of health care that has a friendly, human touch, most of which had minimal risk exposure.

Keep in mind that no matter how clever your campaign, it needs to be carried through to your website to pay off what you present in any ad or social media campaign. **MHS**

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