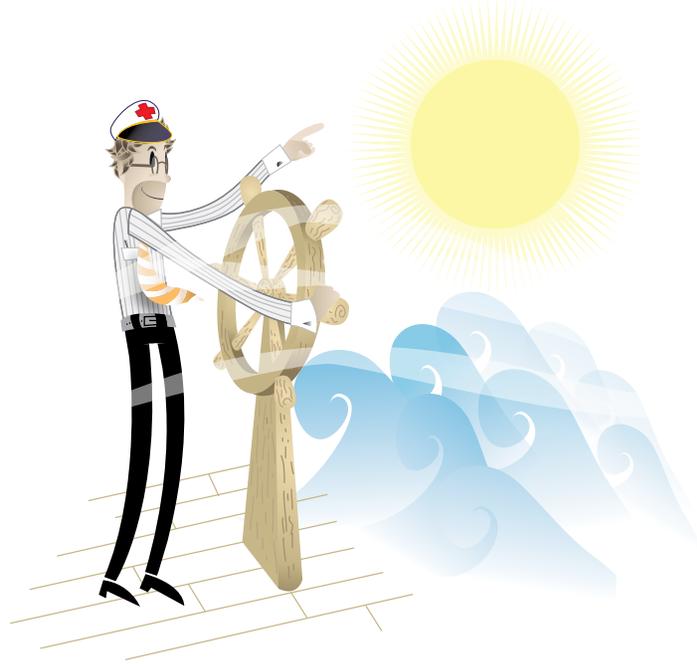


Focus on Results



Navigating a Sea of Change
Branding Healthcare Part II

2.02

Charting a Course for Loyal Customers



NeigerDesignInc

Brands that stand out.
Results that stand up.



Charting a Course for Loyal Customers

In our last white paper, *Branding Healthcare Part I: Getting Your Team on Board*, we suggested that the first step in steering through a sea of challenges posed by today's operating environment is to align your leaders and employees through training and tools to gain a consistent understanding and commitment to your brand.

Here, we embark on some of the next steps in delivering on your brand promise to earn a stronger, more engaged customer base. Typically, organizations capsize due to three branding issues: fuzzy positioning, lack of customer insight, and poor communication skills.

Frequently we see organizations that go through the motions with a new logo, tagline and brand style guide. But these are not always based on a clear understanding of what differentiates the organization or a deep insight about patients/customers and competitors. Demonstrating your passion to exceed customer expectations in unexpected ways is key to creating brand loyalty. Successful brands nurture a close and personal relationship with their customers. They create trust and emotional attachment, while maximizing the number of users. In short, the brand name evokes a clear and consistent image in the consumer's mind.

Navigate Your Target Markets

Who are your best customers and what do they care about? Before you position your organization, it's critical to do the research that will ensure your messaging resonates on the right radar. You can use focus groups, community-based research, individual in-depth interviews and quantitative surveys to find the answers to your questions.

Ask about consumer awareness and preference. The perspectives of referring physicians can be key, too. As you define your core or most influential target markets, consider these questions:

1. Have we defined these individuals as real people with needs, wishes, and desires (versus data and demographics)?
2. Would the individual recognize him or herself and care about being part of this group?



3. Does this individual have a real reason to be interested in our product?
4. Have we defined the size of the target group as large as identity and interest will allow?
What about trends and potential?

Other questions to consider include:

- How regularly do prospects use services like ours?
- How large and profitable is the segment?
- How strong in market share, awareness and perception is the competition?

Anchor Your Brand with Clear Positioning

Is there a gap between how your customers perceive you and what you want to be known for? Every organization has a position in its marketplace, like it or not. Ask yourself: What is your current position? What is that of your competitors? Then look for positioning opportunities. Perhaps you can fill an unmet need, identify a new market segment or correct a perceived weakness.

The best positioning is desirable (motivates the customer), ownable (your organization can be most closely associated with this benefit) and deliverable (you can live up to the promise).

New positioning can come from physical product differences. If you're a diagnostic company, for example, perhaps your test gives a clearer, faster result. Or, positioning can come from the way you communicate about it. The American Hospital Association's Society for Healthcare Strategy and Market Development (SHSMD) recently announced a new brand promise on its website to demonstrate more responsiveness to members' needs for just-in-time information as a result of increasing job pressure in today's healthcare operating environment.

Because today's patients and physicians are actively engaged on social networking sites, positioning through your *virtual* brand footprint is more important than ever, too. (See sidebar.)

Go Deep: Chart Your Customer Touch Points

Customers experience your brand in many ways. While product, packaging and contact with sales personnel may be key for pharmaceutical companies, professional trade associations may touch customers more frequently through their websites and at sponsored conferences and chapter events. Hundreds of touch points occur for hospital

.....

On Solid Ground... Watch Your Brand Footprint

A well-designed brand footprint is the unique impression it makes upon the consumer's mind. Remember, your footprint follows you wherever you go...on your website, across social media and through customer interactions. Will yours be clear and distinctive?

A brand footprint includes:

- **Core values**— one to two words about each of the brand's priorities (e.g., innovation, quality, responsiveness).
 - **Personality traits**— one to two word traits that would describe the brand if it were a person (e.g., trustworthy, smart, friendly).
 - **Brand essence**— how you articulate the emotional connection with your customers (e.g., "We care").
-



patients with caregivers and staff during a typical admission stay...not to mention pre-calls for appointments and the all-important post-discharge phone call.

Don't leave your customers' experience to chance. Design a consistent experience that reinforces and enhances your brand image across every touch point. Do a comprehensive "trace" of your marketing, selling, and servicing process—with employees—to create a simple touch point map that defines your customers' experience.

Questions to consider: How do you generate customer demand? How are products sold? How do your customers use your products? How do you provide after-sales support? You can use quantitative research or simple institutional knowledge to help you develop your touch point map. It all depends on the complexity of your products, processes, and existing knowledge base.

Then develop a "reason to believe" the brand promise at each key touch point. If "caring about patients" is an important part of what your hospital promises, for example, you may want to include some scripting during post-visit calls: "Are you having any pain? Have you filled your prescription? We always want to make sure our patients receive excellent care."

Know the Ropes: Understanding Social Media

Is social media right for your brand? It depends on your product, says Josh Bernoff, author of "[How to Create a Social Application for Life Sciences without Getting Fired](#)" and vice president at Forrester Research. Based on 25 interviews with pharmaceutical and other companies, Bernoff lays out recommended social networking strategies based on a graph that plots customers according to their medical condition. (People with Osteoporosis, it turns out, are "disconnected", while those with obesity or chronic pain fall in the "misery loves company" category and are avid users of social media.)

While the regulatory-restricted pharmaceutical industry may not seem compatible with unfiltered social media, life sciences companies who can assess the potential benefit to customers can determine if the risks are worth the rewards. The safest strategies for the risk-averse, Bernoff says, are [Listening Platforms](#) and [Communispace](#) private communities or working with the doctor community [Sermo](#).

In the end though, whether companies like it or not, their customers *are* gathering and organizing themselves on-line, so it makes sense to find out what they're saying. If you're a life sciences company, be sure to get your regulatory staff in on the planning for your



social media strategy. According to Thomas Gensemer of Blue State Digital, LLC, the essential elements of a social media strategy are timeliness, transparency, authenticity, and personalization of messages.

Are You at Sea? How to Connect on Blogs, Facebook, You Tube and Twitter

Paul Levy, president and CEO of Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston—and one of the nine people to watch in healthcare according to one publication—is an avid blogger, who relishes the opportunity to communicate in his own words without whitewashing from his PR team. A major advocate of transparency in healthcare, Levy has influenced many hospital CEOs to start a blog of their own in their quest to promote debate, educate communities, and create the kind of transparency that inspires trust in a brand.

How common is it for leaders today to participate in social media? An electronic survey of recent attendees at the National Association of Corporate Directors found that 65 percent participated in Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites and 32 percent read blogs as part of their work on Boards.

Wondering how hospitals are using social media? Ed Bennett, a web manager for the University of Maryland Medical System, keeps track of more than 450 hospitals on his social network list who are facebooking, twittering, blogging and You Tubing it up.

There's 618 fans, for example, on Abington Memorial Hospital's (Montgomery, PA) Facebook page, where the hospital promotes free breast cancer and prostate cancer screenings, volunteer opportunities, and new physicians. "Great service from a great hospital!" gushes one Facebook Fan.

When Innovis Health in Fargo, North Dakota was threatened by flooding from the Red River last April, it twittered crisis management updates to the media and community. The benefits: higher information demand from the media, ease of communicating from remote locations, and the opportunity to take control of the message.



Focus on Results

Navigating a Sea of Change

Branding Healthcare
Part II

2.02

Charting a Course for
Loyal Customers

Hospitals are leveraging You Tube videos in lots of ways. To distribute medical news. To brand their on-line reputation. To build relationships within the online community through virtual tools. And to film surgeries and procedures. Consumer demand for video content is high. When you consider that 25 percent of all Google searches originated on You Tube in 2008, you may want to get on board soon.

Do you tweet? Increasingly, progressive healthcare marketers do. At the Society for Healthcare Strategy and Marketing Development's October 2009 Orlando conference, SHSMD tweeted reminders about post-conference deals, requests for event photos to post on the organization's Facebook page, and links to free downloads from featured sessions.

Put the Wind at Your Back

In healthcare today, an organization that lives—and delivers on—a strong brand promise may still encounter some choppy seas along the way to category dominance, but the journey will be worth it. Higher quality, lower customer acquisition costs, greater patient satisfaction, and greater loyalty can all be yours. Isn't it time to set sail?

.....

Ahoy! What to Tweet?

In her blog, [SHSMD 2009: Tweeting in a Vacuum](#), HealthLeaders editor Gienna Shaw shares her thoughts on the Twitter experience as well as a sampling of tweets from attendees.

.....



NeigerDesignInc

Brands that stand out.
Results that stand up.

© 2010 NeigerDesignInc. All rights reserved.

NeigerDesign is a results-driven marketing, communications and design firm. Since 1989, we have been meeting the needs of businesses, healthcare organizations and professional associations by providing innovative strategic solutions to complex marketing challenges. Our clients are progressive leaders who understand that strategic "design thinking" can drive the success of their organization with brands that stand out and results that stand up.