

Focus on Results



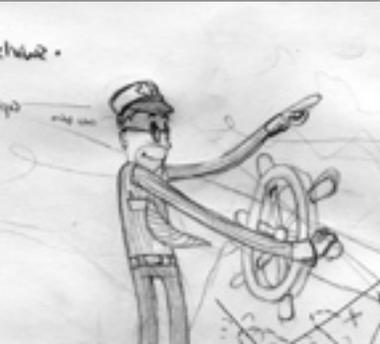
Navigating a Sea of Change Branding Healthcare Part I

2.01 Getting your Team on Board



NeigerDesignInc

Brands that stand out.
Results that stand up.



Getting your Team on Board

If you work in healthcare today, you may feel like a sailor trying to chart a course when the wind keeps shifting. First, there's the pressures of greater transparency and increased consumer pressures for service and quality. Then there's the rapid pace of new technology, including the shift towards electronic medical records. New trends in financial services and payment reform are occurring on all fronts since President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordability Act into law in March, 2010.

Physician and nurse shortages also loom large. And the usual revenue that hospitals count on from outside sources—investment income, philanthropic donations, and favorable rates in the bond market—have evaporated.

In *Leadership and Medicine*, Dr. Floyd D. Loop (former CEO of the Cleveland Clinic and an accomplished physician leader) also predicts that consumers will become even more selective in the years ahead as they absorb more of the burden of their personal healthcare costs through payment reform.

In the end, of course, stiffer competition doesn't come down to cost, but *value*...just as it always has. So what's your value proposition? And how well do you communicate it to the people who matter?

Leave Them in Your Wake

Steven J. Spear, in his book *Chasing the Rabbit: How market leaders outdistance the competition and how great companies can catch up and win*, calls high-velocity organizations "rabbits," because they perform so well that their industry counterparts are competitors in name only. Rabbits lead the race. They are constantly experimenting and learning more about the work they do; this is how they cope with the complexity they all face in one form or another.

Effectively communicating your brand has never been more important. It's what you stand for. Your value proposition. What makes you unique from everybody else. And while it's easy to see how this could take a backseat as you scramble to address all the other challenges in the operating environment, now is the best time to position yourself for success in the years ahead.

30 Seconds or Less: Who Are You?

To communicate clearly to your organization's external customers, everyone within the organization has to understand your brand and communicate it the same way.

Try this exercise:

1. Gather your executive team.
2. State who you are in a short sentence. For example, *"We help individuals with disabilities feel empowered to live and work in the community."*
3. Now shorten it. *"Empowerment for individuals with disabilities."*
4. Get it down to just one word. *"Empowerment"*



NeigerDesignInc

Brands that stand out.
Results that stand up.

© 2010 NeigerDesignInc. All rights reserved.



Living the Brand: All Hands on Deck

The fact is, your brand is carried by the people who work for your organization. Studies show that more than three-fourths of employees who interface with customers communicate inaccurate or incomplete information. Help your employees deliver on the brand promise with the tools and information they need.

One way to ensure you're effective is to stand in your employees' shoes for a moment. Ask yourself, "Does our message ring true?" In other words, is the experience you're selling to your customers identical to the one they (and the employees who work for you) experience every day?

Ensure that your organization's culture is aligned to the brand, because when you live your brand promise, employees know it. They're happier because they understand the mission and work for an organization that makes a difference in people's lives. Happy employees mean higher employee retention, which turns into bottom line savings through a productive, qualified workforce and lower recruitment costs.

Five Tips for Smooth Sailing

1. Get C-Suite Support.

You know who they are...the people with all the Os in their titles. Brand alignment starts at the top and cascades throughout the organization to front-line staff when it's effective. Leaders must drive the brand and walk the talk. The first step: coaching leaders on a consistent message for employees. Leaders must be ready to answer questions such as: "Where are we going? Why? How will get there?" Leader workshops can focus on aligning the message through the development of simple paper flip charts or PowerPoint presentations and how to hold effective, interactive meetings with employees on living the brand.

Then, kick off a series of "brand road shows," where leaders visit each facility or department to build awareness and commitment.

2. Involve Human Resources.

While it's true that everyone in an organization needs to own the brand, a progressive HR manager can be an invaluable partner in an internal branding strategy and implementation. However, be sure to involve all employees. If you develop a Branding Committee, include a diverse cross-section of leaders and employees by level and function.

3. Define Your Touch Points.

Every brand has a number of customer touch points where the customer comes in contact with your brand and will have either a negative or positive experience. In hospitals, for instance, emergency departments are literally the door to the community. The ED—which is responsible for a large percentage of a typical hospital’s admissions—generates huge word-of-mouth for better or for worse. Other key touchpoints in the hospital: front or back-end customer service staff, nurses, and physicians.

One of the things that truly exceed patient expectations in the ED is being offered a warm blanket. Visitors also appreciate communication about how long the wait will be to see a caregiver. Ask yourself: Do your employees have the training, skills, and tools they need to create a positive experience at the key touch points in your organization?

4. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate.

As the old expression goes, “No wind favors the ship that has no charted course.” Does everybody know the organization’s mission? What the organization is trying to accomplish? Where it’s headed? Do they understand why what they do each day makes an important difference to customers?

Connect to purpose often at employee meetings large and small. Reiterate the brand promise in employee newsletters. Recognize an employee by sending a hand-written thank you note to the employee’s home when you catch him or her living the brand promise.

5. Conduct an Internal Branding Audit.

Just like a financial audit, an annual internal brand audit provides an objective review by a neutral third party on how well the brand is defined, differentiated, and protected by appropriate policies and procedures.

The audit includes questions like: Do you have an effective brand positioning statement? (See sidebar on page 1: 30 Seconds or Less.) Are your brand messages and logo used consistently on all communications? Does everyone understand what it means to be a good brand ambassador? Do they understand what’s at stake when protecting the brand?

.....

Building the Brand: What’s in it for you.

- **Hospitals**– Live the mission and grow volume, improve employee retention and increase patient satisfaction.
 - **Consultants**– Survive and thrive by moving to the front of the pack. Align your message to what clients need most.
 - **Biotech and Pharmaceutical companies**– A consistent look and feel across all product packaging, newsletters, and catalogs create the promise that life science products deliver.
 - **Healthcare not-for-profit organizations**– Position yourself as the premier member resource for expertise and guidance on Navigating these challenging times.
-



Focus on Results

Navigating a Sea of Change

Branding Healthcare
Part I

201

Getting your Team
on Board



NeigerDesignInc

Brands that stand out.
Results that stand up.

© 2010 NeigerDesignInc. All rights reserved.

On the Horizon

Once you've transformed your team into a reliable group of brand ambassadors, you're ready to move to the next step: building patient and customer loyalty. In healthcare today, it's all about value, service, quality, and efficiency. Learn how to deliver on these key brand promises through critical marketing channels in the next white paper in our series, *Branding Healthcare Part II: Chart a Course for Loyal Customers*.

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.