

42 Tips for Building, Promoting a Hospital Brand

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In a session at the Becker's Hospital Review annual meeting in Chicago on May 17, Rhoda Weiss, PhD, a national healthcare consultant, speaker, author and editor of Marketing Health Services Magazine discussed a number of healthcare marketing and communications strategies for hospitals.

“You don't need a big budget to do marketing — you can have a smaller budget and still reach your brand positioning and marketing goals,” Dr. Weiss said. “Because marketing is about relationships.”

Dr. Weiss, who teaches communications and marketing courses at the University of California at Los Angeles Extension, offered suggestions of ways hospitals can engage and encourage physicians and staff to build a better brand and achieve marketplace success. Here are 42 of those tips for hospitals:

1. Write welcome letters and call new staff
2. Encourage staff with signage such as, “through these doors walk greatest staff”
3. Recognize newcomers as “buddies,” and assign them mentors
4. Develop a robust orientation program for staff and families
5. Create pride cards based on what makes staff proud
6. Implement an employee of the day award
7. Start a rumor or complaint line for patients and staff
8. Go on “endless management rounds”
9. Create professional development opportunities for employees
10. Give out best attendance awards
11. Create strong family wellness and fitness programs for staff and their families
12. Develop walking challenges and circulate wellness newsletters
13. Offer financial incentives to staff members who improve health
14. Assign staff “brand ambassadors”
15. Provide GED classes and scholarships for hospital staff members
16. Put on “glad you're here” one-year events
17. Open an employee hardship fund
18. Offer first time homeowner forgivable loans
19. Recruit, retain, market aggressively, promote and elevate physicians
20. Offer endless options for physician retention
21. Connect physicians and their families with mentors
22. Research; ask questions; relish data; be totally frank
23. Reinvigorate, engage leaders — be champions of change
24. Align strategically: Employ, affiliate, partner and integrate physicians
25. Host networking events and dinners for physicians
26. Meld the “personal with professional”
27. Identify ways to make employees' lives easier
28. Collaborate in best-practice medicine
29. Create “future task forces” in each physician specialty
30. Showcase the hospital using multiple media
31. Use benchmark data to persuade, not punish physicians
32. Rethink hospital's communication strategy with physicians
33. Develop a physician navigator program
34. Establish physician e-communities and women MD networks
35. Put on “check the pulse” sessions and open forums with physicians and employees
36. Market to physician office staffers, physician who are significant referral sources
37. Promote the hospital in physician practice reception areas and exam rooms
38. Engage referral services; offer same day scheduling

39. Promote languages, reduce accents and improve speech
40. Offer free screenings and complimentary physician visits for patients
41. For physician integration and alignment, consider options beyond employment
42. Produce quality videos that market hospital's brand, keeping physicians and patients at the center of the story

Dr. Weiss stressed the importance of producing videos that are professional and engaging, yet not necessarily big budget. She said the most important thing is for hospitals to engage patients through a strong storyline, not an expensive video. Posting the video on YouTube will help it gain necessary exposure and improve hospital brand reach, Dr. Weiss noted.

She also discussed the importance of creating memorable experiences at hospitals: striving for strong first impressions, shorting waits, attention to detail when communicating with patients and making patients laugh when appropriate.

Dr. Weiss highlighted the importance of being aware of the distinct cultures of a hospital's patient population. It's essential to be able to market to and connect with ethnically and culturally diverse groups as well as know how to tailor the message to each generation. She broke down the four living generations into one-word descriptions, and says delivering targeted branding to each generation's communication style will help organizations improve their brand.

- People living during the World War II era are the “direct me” generation
- Baby Boomers are the “engage me” generation
- Generation X is the “educate me” generation
- Generation Y, or Millennials, are the “connect me” generation

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