

Broad Campaign with Simple Message Can Reap Great Results

BY RHODA WEISS

Although people are usually familiar with the names of their community hospitals, they are often less aware of the clinical strengths and capabilities of these local facilities.

The five-hospital Scripps system in San Diego County, CA, met this challenge with a simple, cost-effective campaign that told a very human story of why physicians and consumers should choose Scripps.

"We went 'back to basics' and envisioned a compelling campaign highlighting our clinical excellence as told through extraordinary patient care and experiences at Scripps," explained Christine Clay, marketing manager, Scripps Health. "The messages were built on the quality of our physicians, nurses, staff, and facilities while featuring real patients telling their stories. Our goal was to evoke strong, positive emotions and touch people in our communities on a very personal level."

To identify the most appropriate communications messages, a committee of Scripps employees representing a variety of areas met weekly for a month to critique previous messages, evaluate marketing efforts at other hospitals and health systems, identify Scripps' desired positioning, and brainstorm appropriate tactics. The committee decided on these objectives:

- Tout the Scripps name and prestige associated with it
- Increase the number of community members choosing Scripps during the fall open enrollment season for health plans
- Deliver a clear, classic message that staff and the community could embrace and understand

To tailor the campaign messages, the committee relied on recent National Research Corporation consumer surveys, which demonstrated that San Diegans preferred Scripps, particularly in the event of a serious illness such as heart disease and cancer.

"Two truisms from several marketing research sources deeply influenced our plans," said Marg



Ms. Weiss is a Santa Monica, CA-based health care consultant and speaker.

Stark, marketing communications specialist. "Namely, we targeted women over age 30, those all-important decision makers. And we recognized the critical role that personal recommendations from friends and family members play in helping consumers choose their doctors."

In addition, Scripps staff studied referral data from the toll-free internal consumer call center for physician referrals and health information. They identified upcoming community and business health fairs for participation by health education staff as an opportunity to showcase Scripps, its physicians, staff, and related entities. And the marketing, public relations, finance, and managed care departments worked together to learn more about payers, contracting, reimbursement, and other issues critical to success in open enrollment communications.

One of the biggest challenges was to create a successful campaign at a cost that was 50 percent lower than previous years. To achieve this, Scripps brought the communications campaign in-house with assistance from a lower priced outside consultant. Scripps thereby received the 15 percent media buying discount, which traditionally goes to advertising agencies.

The marketing and communications team agreed on campaign actions to meet all three objectives. They first introduced a new advertising tag line, "World-renowned health care for you and your family."

"Several years ago, Scripps Health eliminated its 'serving the community' motto and stopped using a tag line in its promotions," says Clay. "The new tag line was universally accepted because it captured the essence of Scripps."

The belief that "world-renowned" differentiated Scripps from its peers shaped the entire campaign. To create the campaign, staff searched for patients whose lives were saved because they came to Scripps and received extraordinary or revolutionary care. For the radio spots, classical music was chosen for the background, and radio

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shows and advertising vehicles that were not in keeping with the image Scripps wished to portray were avoided. Copy in the ads included statements such as, "We were fighting a disease no one could diagnose. Scripps did" and "When my heart failed, Scripps didn't. They saved my life."

To increase the number of consumers choosing Scripps hospitals and physicians during open enrollment, staff also created the new slogan, "Choose wisely. Choose well. Choose Scripps."

"This slogan gave us a much needed call to action in our ads and a directive for consumers during open enrollment," said Stark. "Including the word 'choice' in many of the headlines kept us on message. 'Choose wisely' also gave us a natural transition from the testimonial into the nuts and bolts of the ad, which included our affiliated physician groups, hospitals, toll-free referral number, and website address." As an incentive for consumers to call the referral line, Scripps offered free first-aid guides.

Advertising mediums were also selected wisely. Early on, the committee decided not to pursue television because of its high costs and production challenges, even though Scripps and other area hospitals had used it previously. The team believed strongly that radio and outdoor advertising (billboards, mall kiosk signs, etc.) together with newspaper ads would provide the broadest possible exposure for its limited budget.

Additionally, Scripps participated in more than 40 local employer health fairs and several community events. During these events, Scripps staff offered free health screenings at a striking exhibit that included photographs of patients featured in the campaign, along with the new slogan and tag line. "We also turned our employees into open enrollment ambassadors. This was accomplished by asking them, in


our internal newsletters and posters, to encourage friends and neighbors to choose Scripps. We also gave out internal flyers on the campaign, e-mailed staff, and wrote articles about it in our internal newsletter. Finally, we handed out more than 5,000 license plate frames bearing our slogan," said Clay.

One of the campaign's greatest strengths was in the use of patient testimonials. In Scripps' case, these life-saving examples brought home the importance of choosing the right doctor—the crucial message of any open enrollment effort.

"We believed that a personal recommendation of Scripps from a real San Diegan as opposed to a model would carry more weight with consumers," said Clay. Of equal importance was the continued enthusiasm of the different departments featured in the ads and the pride of all Scripps employees in the new messages.

By all accounts, the open enrollment campaign was a tremendous success. "The organization has embraced the new tag line," says Clay. "Calls to our toll-free referral center continually increased during the course of the four-month campaign, and website hits more than doubled in the first month and rose steadily during the campaign. Our referral specialists reported that they were able to offer referral advice and general Scripps information to callers whose main purpose was to get the free first-aid guide. We are now beginning to track the actual increase in affiliated lives, the use of Scripps services, and our return on investment."

Another signal in the campaign's success is that the Scripps Human Resources Department is now developing a nurse recruitment campaign around the advertising slogan, "Choose Wisely. Choose Well. Choose Scripps." □

 For further information, contact Rhoda Weiss at 310-393-5183 or at Rweiss@memnet.org.

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Pablo Casals, the Spanish cellist and writer, had it right: "The capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance."

FAITH MATTERS

The day after the tragedy, I walked past a chapel in a Minneapolis hospital. No formal worship service was taking place, but a steady stream of employees entered. One nurse told me, "Ever since the tragedy, employees have come to meditate. Every department of the hospital has been represented. There are janitors praying with surgeons and there are administrators meditating alongside the families of patients."

Perhaps the greatest legacy of the tragedy is that many of us have reaffirmed something we have long known—life is uncertain, and faith matters. True, our innocence has been lost and the damage done by terrorists will linger. Nevertheless, 80 percent of Americans believe the attacks will make the country stronger, and only 14 percent think that our way of life is fundamentally threatened.⁶ From what ashes does such optimism arise? One observer put it this way: "So much that was precious had died, but as though in a kind of eternal promise, something new has been born. We are seeing it in our nation and sensing it in ourselves, a new faith in our oldest values, a rendezvous with grace."⁷ □

NOTES

1. Josh Fischman & Boyce Nell, "A New Breed of Medical Horror," *U.S. News and World Report*, October 1, 2001, p. 56.
2. "The Road to September 11," *Newsweek*, October 1, 2001, p. 41.
3. William Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, Addison Wesley Publishing, Reading, MA, 1991, p. 52.
4. Bob Rosner, "Tom Peters Sounds Off," *Workforce*, August 2000, p. 57.
5. Nancy Gibbs, "Life on the Home Front," *Time*, October 2, 2001, p. 16.
6. "The Road to September 11," p. 52.
7. Gibbs, p. 17.