

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

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"BIGGER BUDGETS MEAN BETTER MARKETING"

As I wrote in my previous column, marketing is never about big budgets (see "Low-Cost Marketing Can Reap Big Results," *Health Progress*, March-April 1999, p. 63). Many organizations annually spend millions of dollars on marketing with no positive results, while others spend less and see impressive market share improvements. In fact, in many cases excessive spending on marketing has a negative impact on market share. I know of a hospital that lost a major employer contract because the employer's perception was that the hospital, which ran full-page newspaper advertisements but which would not lower its contract price, was spending patient-care dollars on its advertising.

WORD-OF-MOUTH IS BEST

Marketing is not the only solution to your corporate strategic goals, and marketing and public relations functions are not solely the responsibility of those who bear those titles. Marketing is part of what everybody does while at work, because it is the sum total of impressions, experiences, and relationships that people have with your organization. It is also about pride and word-of-mouth marketing, which means you must never discount the marketing power of your employees, your physicians and their staffs, your volunteers and board members, and everyone who can share positive information about your organization with the community.

Marketing communications is critical to an organization, and should be a major activity. But the knowledge, enthusiasm, and passion with which your staff and volunteers tell others about your mission and what your organization has to offer are, in the final analysis, your most effective marketing tools. □

Putting Patients First RESPONSE

Focusing on Cultural Diversity

In the January-February issue of *Health Progress*, we asked you how your organization addresses cultural diversity. Here's what you told us. Answer this issue's question on p. 61, and we'll publish your answers.

LANGUAGE OF LOVE

Our cultural diversity is reflected in our mission: Love made visible. We have a Portuguese prayer group weekly. We have confessions available in French, Portuguese, and English. When a resident requests another language, we honor that request.

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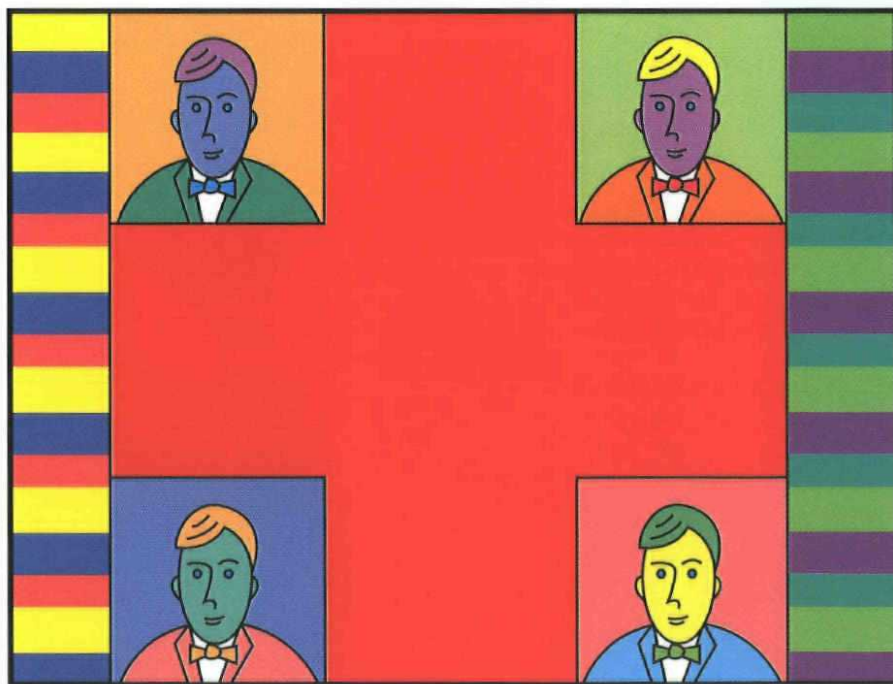
behavior expectations. The generic competencies outlined in job descriptions form the basis of the content for orientations. A recently designed two-step orientation for new hires invites participants to reflect on attitudes toward cultural differences.

The process is the beginning of a systemic approach for integrating values in the organization. Subsequent orientations for specialties, sites, and departments will probe the issue further by providing more specific information and facilitating skill building in managing diversity.

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THE PROPER ORIENTATION

Seton Healthcare Network in Austin, TX, addresses cultural diversity by incorporating cultural sensitivity into staff



Illustrations by Lin Wilson