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Everyone Builds the Brand

During a visit to the NASA space center in 1962, President John F. Kennedy noticed a man carrying a broom. He interrupted his tour, walked over to the man and said, “Hi, I’m Jack Kennedy. What are you doing?”

*“Well, Mr. President,” the janitor responded, “I’m helping put a man on the moon.”**

Just like this janitor, every employee in your organization is helping to fulfill your organization’s mission. Unfortunately, many of them don’t know it. Helping each employee realize how important they are is a big job. The good news is, internal communications, all the departments, and every single manager within your organization, has the ability to share this fact in a beautifully contagious way.

In this report, you will find inspirational and healthcare-specific recommendations to help your organization partner with each employee to show that they are critical to supporting your mission. Beauty comes from within—so does a successful brand!

3 Benefits of Focusing on Internal Branding

Benefit #1: Increased morale and internal pride

Your organization can have the best mission statement in the world, top-notch services and sparkling facilities. But without people who care, believe and act in a way that is aligned with the organization’s mission, there is no way you can share this excellence in any consistent way. Without the people on board, there is no way you can fulfill your mission.

“A brand is not a logo. A brand is not an identity. A brand is not a product. A brand is a person’s gut feelings about a product, service or organization.”

— Mary Neumeier, author
The Brand Gap



*Humor can help build relationships!
For Halloween Mercy staff dressed pumpkins and gourds like their favorite doctors. Mercy is located in St. Louis and Springfield, MO and Oklahoma City, OK.*

One of our guiding principles at Strategic Design Studio is our belief that people want to be helpful, capable, and heard. People desire to be part of something important; they want to do their jobs well. (We sure do! And we know our clients do too.) When an individual's role is valued, and their input is considered, morale increases too. The best thing about high morale? It's catching. This sense of internal pride can sweep through an organization. It can be the difference between mediocre and incredible. The belief that *we are all contributing to the brand* is the ideal place from which to grow. On the flipside, low morale is also catching—but by communicating the brand and working with operations, internal communications has the power to improve morale with every effort.

Benefit #2: Increased patient satisfaction.

Internal pride has a direct link to how well an organization's mission is being fulfilled—which is evident in patient satisfaction. When health systems promote their mission in a way each department (and each individual) can relate to—that's when you start to see significant increase in patient satisfaction.

Benefit #3: A stronger brand.

When employees have high morale and patients are satisfied, it means your mission is spreading. Positive engagement with the patient helps create a stronger brand.

Your brand is what attracts patients—but it's how your brand manifests every day that increases patient satisfaction.

Golden nuggets from Corporate America....

Without a doubt, employee morale provides tangible benefits for your healthcare organization. In this report, we took a look outside the healthcare world to see what we can learn. As a creative studio, we know that sometimes the best inspiration and biggest realizations can come from taking a look at the bigger picture! Some success concepts are truly universal.

In a recent interview with Susan Rink, Principal of Rink Strategic Communications, we uncovered successful tactics from outside the healthcare industry that can be applied to healthcare organizations.



Susan Rink
Principal, Rink Strategic
Communications

“Communicating a brand across an organization is everything. It even extends to walking in the hall and getting off the elevator and talking to employees in a way that reflects the company culture,” says Susan.

First, let’s meet Susan.

“My name is Susan Rink and I’m principal of Rink Strategic Communications. I work with large to medium sized companies and help them ensure their employees are informed, engaged and productive.”

Inspiration from the corporate world

It was interesting to see how an outside perspective—from an expert who specializes in employee communications programs and has worked with some of the country’s leading brands—could broaden our thinking about brand strengthening. In our discussion with Susan, we uncovered these universal tips for brand-building:

- **No corner office.** When the higher ups are part of the team, it’s easier for all employees to get on board. This kind of transparent working culture frequently results in uniquely successful companies. Susan says, “Think about companies with open, fun, outgoing cultures, like Zappos, which is known to have that quirky business model. Their CEO, Tony Hsieh, is a firm believer in no corner offices, no corporate charts, no special executive bathroom. Their culture is all about transparency, equality, having fun, being engaged and being motivated by great customer service. Tony Hsieh models that culture with every interaction with his employees.”
- **Employee enjoyment.** Susan cites The Container Store as being a place where employees seem to genuinely enjoy being at work. She says, “Their people treat you like a VIP, no matter what.” She mentions that The Container Store is always on the list of best places to work. They have a hiring process that screens based on personality and trains for technique. That’s why, she says, “Whenever you visit, you’re always going to have the same positive experience.”

“One of the results of a well-executed program is internal pride—people within the organization understanding who they are working for, understanding the values of the organization, and understanding that “brand” is all of the things that each of them do everyday—that we are all contributing to the brand.”

*Nancy A. Tait
Vice President, System
Communications and
Marketing
Spectrum Health System*

*Excerpt from
Designing Brand Identity
By Alina Wheeler*

- **Everyone on board from top down.** A top down strategy doesn't always work if everyone isn't on board. When employees start to have an inkling that maybe the manager or the exec isn't all the way on board—isn't emulating the brand—it can go sideways. Susan has seen companies fail for this very reason. “I've seen companies fall apart because nobody was receptive in engaging in the initiative at the director level. If you are trying to drive behavioral change, it has to come at several different levels and from several different directions, but the messaging needs to be consistent.”
- **Internal communications/HR as brand ambassadors.** In a perfect world, your CEO and COO would be out there in front of your organization's employees doing town hall meetings and market and sales briefings. In large organizations, this isn't always possible—especially not to the fullest extent. What can augment face-to-face interactions? This is where internal communications has so much power. Susan says, “Employee communications people tend to be a little less disciplined about something that our PR brethren have long since adopted—a messaging calendar. And making sure that their key messages, whatever they are, are kept up to date and are reflected in all their communications.”
- **Bridge the gap from marketing to HR.** Marketing and HR have a lot more in common than it may seem. They both have the job of engaging, attracting, and motivating—only their audiences are different. Susan explains, “I've noticed in the past eight years that HR teams are more open to embracing the whole concept of employee engagement. Employees need to not only understand their benefits and company policies, but also what the company does. And most importantly what it is that they do that helps the company be successful.”

Now let's go back to healthcare.

Steps to build your brand from the inside out

It's likely that your organization has a strong mission. It's also likely that there is more room for brand-building and increased employee morale. So what's next? How can all departments throughout your organization be working towards these goals? Based on our chat with Susan Rink, here are actionable steps to build your healthcare organization's brand from the inside out!

“It’s your brand that attracts patients—but it’s how your brand manifests every day that increases patient satisfaction.”

Stephanie Helline
Strategic Design Studio

DO THIS!

- 1. Derive all messages from the mission statement.** As always, all campaign messages should be derived from the mission statement. The example below is from a campaign our firm did for MedStar Health. (To see the actual posters, [download the white paper](#), *What to Do When External Audiences Will See Internal Healthcare Messages*)

Mission statement (excerpt):

Integrity: We communicate openly and honestly, build trust and conduct ourselves according to the highest ethical standards.

Poster Campaign Messaging:

“Lasting relationships take time to grow. For best results, nurture on a regular basis.”

“Building patient trust takes years, but it can be jeopardized in an instant. Help us remain the trusted leader in caring for people and advancing health by only accessing, using, and disclosing patient information when necessary to do your job.

For more information about privacy issues, contact your facility’s privacy liaison or visit the ...”

- 2. Listen.** The first-hand stories of your consumers, patients and colleagues will highlight brand building actions and areas in need of improvement. The needs, desires and frustrations help an organization pull together to improve care and experiences.

3. Develop brand behaviors. Everything is building the brand. Every department. Every action. Let departments know that they can be part of this larger brand building exercise. Give them tangible ways to do so.

TWO TACTICS:

1. Utilize the technique of writing care stories together. What have you or your team done that really made a patient satisfied, encouraged, relaxed or comforted? How can we do this every day? Share the stories.
2. Use patient feedback and comments, include the good, the bad and the ugly. Ask relevant teams to rank the experience from 1 – 10 (1 being the lowest, 10 the highest). How would they feel if they had had that experience themselves? Can they replicate the positive experiences with their patients?

4. Ensure transparency in internal communications. To build trust and strengthen the culture within the health system, you need transparency all along the way. It can't just be lip service—everyone has to relate to the mission and emulate it. From employment issues to patient care, there has to be a culture where information is shared freely and employees see high-level execs living the mission themselves.

5. Find the authentic message. When it comes to internal communications, it can sometimes feel like a challenge to keep things fresh. Susan Rink had a unique perspective on this. She said that in 22 years working for Marriott, “there was never a speech that Bill Marriott or his father gave—whether it was to employees, reporters, shareholders, the general public or the community—that Mr. Marriott did not use in some way the phrase, **“We take care of our employees so they can take care of our customers”**.” That was an element of the Marriott culture and the Marriott brand. And in every single interaction, they always said it. It's a consistent message, but it's an authentic message. Workplace norms and workplace behavior were built around that concept.” The freshness and enthusiasm comes from the employees who are living the brand!

FROM THE REAL WORLD



*Kristin Baird
President, Baird Group*



*Preston Gee
Vice President of Marketing,
Christus Health*

Highlights from the 2015 Conference of the Society for Healthcare Strategy & Market Development (SHSMD)

Building the Relationship: The Marriage of Marketing & Operations

At the 2015 Society for Healthcare Strategy & Market Development Conference (SHSMD), I had the opportunity to hear Kristin Baird and Preston Gee speak. They shared some excellent case studies and insight on building the relationship between Marketing & Operations, which in-turn builds the brand. Here are a few key points they made.

According to Kristin Baird, President of the Baird Group, and Preston Gee, VP of Marketing for Christus Health, the long-awaited emergence of the empowered patient has arrived. To build relationships with these empowered patients, we must marry marketing and operations. Gee explains, “To make that case, because it can be a hard case to make, you back it up with research. Show operations, this is where the consumer is.” It may seem daunting to begin the conversation of how do we back up the brand promise. However it begins with listening before talking.

Listen to your consumers and your employees.

Before starting the discussion between leadership, marketing and operations, Baird recommends listening to your consumers. There is nothing more powerful than hearing what consumers need, what frustrates them and what they want from a care experience. While in listening mode, take time to listen to your employees also. By listening you may uncover situations that can be improved.

**Baird recommends
3 metaphors:**



- 1. A magnifying glass** – take a closer look at what you are saying and doing now
- 2. A mirror** – hold it up so you can see how your customer is seeing you now
- 3. A road map** – decide to make this journey, to listen to your customers, engage operations and create a shared vision that excites everyone.

The voice of the consumer is the rally point

These first-hand consumer stories are highly personal and have the potential to bring employees back to the heart of why they went into healthcare. Your colleagues want to serve people, however they have a lot of distractions and regulations to follow, making it easy to fall into a habit of doing things a certain way without giving it much thought.

These stories can disrupt that. They are the rally point, the basis for marketing and operations to develop a shared vision of patient experience.

Exciting Operations and Marketing as they Create a Shared Vision

Baird suggests focusing on these questions:

- What do we want our patient experience to look like?
- What do we want our patients to say about what it's like being a patient in one of our hospitals?
- What do we want the consumers, who are not patients, to say about our hospital?
- What do we want the physicians to say?

Be persistent, insistent and consistent

Gee encourages teams to back everything up with research. “People will listen to the consumer voice and the patient voice.”

Baird added sympathetically, “It takes time.”

Building a strong services brand: Lessons from Mayo Clinic**

We can all learn a lot from The Mayo Clinic, which has developed one of the most powerful services brands in the world and, arguably, one of the leading healthcare brand in the United States.

Lesson #1: Attend to organization values.

A labor-intensive service can only be as good as the people performing the service. The values of the service provider directly influence the equality and value of their service. Mayo Clinic's durable core values are responsible for its durable brand meaning and equity.

Lesson #2: Play defense, not just offense.

The Mayo Clinic story reveals a cautious institution that prizes quality and consistency over growth. The Mayo brand is a trusted brand. The Clinic's leadership views the trust of patients and referring physicians as a priceless resource to be protected at all costs. Mayo Clinic plays aggressive brand defense and cautious brand offense.

Lesson #3: Turn customers into marketers.

An astonishing 95% of Mayo Clinic patients indicate that they praise the Clinic to others. On average, they speak to more than 40 people. No wonder Mayo Clinic hardly advertises—its patients do the advertising.

*This story is unconfirmed, however it highlights the culture and motivation of NASA in the 1960s. Putting a man on the moon was just what the USA needed then, a big boost of self-esteem!

**[Read more.](#)



Stephanie Helline

OWNER +
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Need a partner?

Yes, your brand is what attracts patients—but it's how your brand manifests every day that increases patient satisfaction. If you want help bringing your organization's offerings and authentic benefits to the forefront, in a way employees can get behind and feel a part of, let's talk.

[Schedule a complimentary consultation today.](#)