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In Our Sights: The New World of Marketing Infrastructure Integration

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Healthcare marketing has come a long way over the last 15 years. It used to be that hospitals employed more traditional marketing tactics, such as issuing community newsletters, holding health screenings and events, and planting media stories. Now, such activities are just one small part of the overall marketing mix. Hospitals and health organizations these days are just as likely to embrace branding strategies, web site optimization, or outbound telemarketing and customer relationship management (CRM). The savviest marketers are going one step further and taking a page from other industries by using new media technology to deliver their messages via blogs, podcasts and other interactive media. It is not hard to imagine a not-to-distant future when these and other communication tools, which encourage exchanging ideas and moving information in all



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directions, become the norm.

While the tactics employed by the marketing arm of the organization may have evolved, most healthcare marketing departments have changed very little in the way they function. This is no surprise, given the operational

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structure of hospitals. By organizing the workforce into departments, hospitals have fostered a "silo" mentality, which is not optimal for teamwork and integration. Just look at the difficulty many organizations are having in introducing a single electronic medical record system that is embraced and utilized house-wide.

To help them through this



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dichotomy of wanting to evolve, but not being organized to do so, an increasing number of hospitals are turning to outside experts to help them develop these innovative strategies. Healthcare organizations may have an agency of record to assist with branding and advertising campaigns and some may contract with a public relations firm to assist with media relations, collateral materials, special events and even employee communications. Some agencies are full service and offer the entire spectrum of strategic marketing communications and outreach. But marketers have learned that highly technical initiatives such as web site development, search engine optimization and CRM often call for expertise beyond the scope of the traditional agency and certainly call for a breadth of knowledge and experience that most in-house departments simply don't have.

(over)

Similarly some healthcare organizations have also opted to outsource their call center functions. Others maintain the call center inhouse. Most call centers were created with a fulfillment mentality: answer calls for physician referrals and send out hospital information as requested. But like the rest of the healthcare marketing world, this too has evolved over time and today's call centers can do much more than that if given the resources and opportunities. They can collect actionable data on callers that allow specially trained operators to cross-sell hospital services. They can help build powerful databases that allow marketers to segment their audiences and target messages accordingly. They can enhance patient satisfaction by pre-registering patients and following up on those who have been discharged from the hospital. As a result many organizations now view their call centers both as a critical piece of their overall business development strategy and an important revenue source, rather than a cost center.

CRM is often handled by a contracted vendor, as well. This resource is necessary for integrating silos of internal and external information, tracking the effectiveness of direct marketing campaigns, and generating the metrics that can tie back to revenue. CRM drives consistent cross-sell or up-sell messaging across all sources of contact—call center, marketing contact or web site. Using an integrated CRM database to bring together separately kept data from billing, marketing and other sources—both internal and external—offers many advantages, including:

- Delivering a 360-degree view of a patient or prospect, reflecting all the information collected across the organization and from external resources.
- Enhancing the relevance of

the data by offering healthcare-specific segmentation models and creating versioned messages, allowing healthcare marketers to employ techniques used by the most sophisticated consumer marketers.

- Providing valuable insight into the effectiveness of marketing strategies.

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The Case for Integration

The quest to find and employ the best specialists within each of these important marketing functions is laudable. But we believe that, while healthcare's march into the new world of interactive marketing is impressive, it is also flawed. The problem with using multiple vendors to handle different functions of the marketing mix is this: the left hand often doesn't know what the right hand is doing—and none of the digits are coordinated. You are in fact, creating marketing silos.

Does this scenario sound familiar?

Under your direction, your advertising agency has created a compelling direct mailer with a clear call to action. The "hook" is motivating consumers to call into the hospital to request a free heart smart kit intended to attract potential cardiac patients. The mailer drops and the response is enthusiastic. The agency has done its job.

Next, it's the call center's function to fulfill those requests. The database builds. Names, addresses and areas of interest are duly registered and tagged for marketing of specific service lines. The database is ready for action. The call center has done its job.

Your customer relationship management vendor now has the ball. Together you create actionable

campaigns that reach out to those consumers who have contacted you through previous successful marketing efforts. Perhaps they tie back to the call center or your web site. Or maybe not.

This disparate mentality is not uncommon in healthcare. In fact, unfortunately, it is often the norm. Advertising agencies usually are not privy to how the call center is responding to callers. They don't know what they are cross-selling and aren't part of the strategy for CRM. Likewise, CRM vendors aren't a part of the creative team that develops ad campaigns. Instead, all parties rely on the hospital marketing department to report on the success of marketing strategies and to tie all of the pieces together. And usually that is limited to number of calls, registration or visits. Some hospitals can tie those metrics back to actual revenue, but even then the dialogue stops there.

But what if representatives from the ad agency, call center and CRM firm were in the same room together? What if they could discuss what callers actually wanted during contact with a call center? What if the CRM folks could explain your latest patient and prospect profiles and how to reach them on a one-to-one basis? What if the agency could learn how call center operators are positioning and cross-selling hospital services? And taking this concept one step further: What if one vendor managed all those functions, so they become seamless and integrated?

This model is not new. L.L. Bean, Amazon.com and myriad other companies have this concept down to a science, and use it with great success. But marketing infrastructure integration is a whole new frontier in healthcare. And we believe it is the logical next step in the evolution of healthcare marketing. To be a truly powerful marketing operation, the silos need to come down. The information needs to flow freely and

Assess Your Organization's Readiness for Marketing Infrastructure Integration

intelligence needs to be actionable along the entire marketing continuum. In order for healthcare marketing to be truly strategic and fulfill its potential, all the players need to be involved and invested in responding to market trends and imperatives.

True marketing infrastructure integration means that the ad agency, call center and CRM vendor become partners with the healthcare organization in strategic marketing. It unites the spectrum of your marketing strategies, consultants, suppliers, vendors and internal resources in meeting a common goal.

It is an entirely new world, to be sure. And one where, we believe, the savviest marketers will venture next with great success and tremendous potential. ■

Marketing Infrastructure Integration Readiness Components	RANKING 1 2 3 4 5 (worst) - (best)
PLANNING:	
Have you developed an enterprise-wide, comprehensive set of planning documents that chart the vision and progress of your Marketing Infrastructure Integration efforts? Rate the thoroughness and utility of your current...	
Strategic plan	
Marketing plan	
Service line plans	
Consumer media plan	
CRM implementation plan	
BRAND COMMUNICATIONS:	
Are you working toward the goal of unifying the brand, communication, marketing and patient experience messages through out your communication distribution channels? Rate the quality and consistency of your brand communications currently in the following channels...	
Consumer media	
Web site	
Call center	
Targeted CRM messaging	
CALL CENTER	
Rate your current usage of an essential Marketing Infrastructure Integration component, the marketing call center...	
Provides a branded inbound customer marketing experience	
Performs information collection	
Provides a reporting mechanism for past patient and current prospects	
Performs active outbound marketing/communications	
Performs patient satisfaction follow up	
Provides operational scheduling	
CRM SOLUTION	
Rate your current usage of CRM marketing solutions...	
Tracks effectiveness of direct marketing campaigns through ROI analysis	
Takes data inputs from strategic documents, Call Center, marketing lists and utilization	
Creates data outputs for the purpose of segmented, target marketing campaigns	
Enhances patient/prospect marketing/communication experiences	
Integrates response data back into information distribution points	

To calculate your readiness score, total your rankings.

Score 20-40: Not ready. Work on the basics: Study best practices, hold internal discussions, work toward getting C-level buy-in.

Score 41-60: Somewhat ready. Note where your scores are lowest, and work to improve your readiness in those areas.

Score 61-80: Approaching readiness. Begin sourcing your internal and external resources for marketing strategy, call center, web development, and CRM solutions.

Score 81-100: Ready. Consider your current marketing processes: Do you see evidence of infrastructure integration? Do some silos still remain? Get internal and external resources together with the goal of complete, seamless integration.