

# HEALTHCARE MARKETING BEYOND THE CRISIS:

## 7 IDEAS FOR MOVING FORWARD

Position your organization now to be ready for the evolving “next normal.”



During the COVID-19 pandemic, many marketers have cut back their efforts and nearly a quarter of brands initially went dark, according to a March 2020 survey by the Interactive Advertising Bureau.<sup>1</sup>

For healthcare marketers, however, reaching out now is more important than ever, for two main reasons:

## HEALTHCARE MARKETING HAS UNMATCHED AUTHORITY TODAY.

Consumers want comfort and education, and hospitals and clinics are among the most trusted institutions, per a recent Trust Special Report by Edelman.<sup>2</sup>

“Now, more than ever, individuals and families are looking to health brands they can trust to solve problems, offer reassurance and deliver credible and relevant information,” according to Deloitte. “It’s now an imperative that organizations deliver value moment-to-moment, in the most connected, human way possible.”<sup>3</sup>

Use marketing communications to highlight the steps your organization is taking to keep patients and staff safe, as well as the ongoing value it offers—personal attention, convenience, shorter wait times, a clear, easily understood billing process and respect from providers and their staff.

In healthcare content marketing, the greatest value for consumers, now and always, is a focus on their needs—solving their problems rather than selling your services.



**“One silver lining for medical care is that the care people are deferring now will be sought later.”**

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## THINK BEYOND CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS AND PLAN FOR THE “NEXT NORMAL.”

A best-case scenario from Deloitte predicts economic growth will resume in the fourth quarter of 2020; at worst, repeated outbreaks could hamper growth for up to two years.<sup>4</sup> No matter what the scenario, however, growth will return, even as “business as usual” takes on a new meaning.

“Think ‘now ahead,’” advises Arthur Sadoun, head of the multinational Publicis Groupe. “During this crisis, marketers do not have the luxury to prioritize one over the other. They need to focus on now . . . but simultaneously, they need to prepare and activate for what’s ahead—the transformation their business needs to succeed in the next normal.”<sup>5</sup>

This is the time to:

- Update your strategic communications plan
- Redouble your commitment to providing content that offers tangible value
- Highlight the strengths of your organization and the value it provides to patients and to the community
- Explain changes you’ve made to ensure patient safety in a COVID-19 world.

In the following pages, we offer seven specific, actionable ideas for moving your healthcare marketing beyond the crisis.



## 1 TELL YOUR ORGANIZATION'S STORIES.

Marketers have long known that storytelling drives reader engagement like no other content. Today, hospitals and healthcare providers have been a focus of the national conversation as never before. Share stories that differentiate your hospital or healthcare system's brand and reinforce the critical role your organization has played for your service area during the pandemic.

- **HIGHLIGHT YOUR HEROES.** Provide first-person stories from providers, teams and support personnel.
- **GIVE PATIENTS A PLATFORM.** Testimonials from satisfied customers are among the most persuasive forms of marketing. Grateful patients are often eager to describe their experiences, share how they were helped by doctors and nurses, and talk about how treatment has improved—or saved—their lives.
- **LET PEOPLE KNOW HOW THEY CAN HELP NOW.** Whether it's donating meals or contributing to a fund, give your readers specific ways to channel their gratitude and desire to make a difference.



**A creative communications plan can help you reach patients who are eager to move forward with elective surgeries and services. Educate them about their options and explain what you're doing to keep patients safe.**



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## 2 HELP PROVIDERS GET READY TO MANAGE PENT-UP DEMAND FOR HEALTHCARE SERVICES.

Many patients will be eager to move forward with elective surgeries and services—joint replacements, bariatric surgery, plastic surgery, reproductive procedures and so on—as soon as conditions at hospitals permit. Consider new ways to reach potential patients, for example through webinars and automated email programs, and create a communications plan with providers that includes:

- Information that can be emailed and posted online, advising patients when and how surgeries will be rescheduled
- Content that gives patients options and advice for what to do while awaiting surgery, such as actions to avoid and exercises to do
- Patient stories that help consumers understand what to expect and make them feel confident in the care you can provide
- Information that will educate consumers about the procedure in question: any necessary pre-surgical steps; what the procedure itself involves; and what to expect both during recovery and in the long run.



An estimated 90 million Americans have low health literacy, meaning they lack the ability to obtain or understand basic health information.



### 3 PROMOTE HEALTH LITERACY.

Early COVID-19 communications focused on the basics of containing the spread of the coronavirus: Wash hands, stay home, wear a mask when shopping. Evolved healthcare communications will tackle a long-standing problem of low health literacy in the U.S.

According to a national study,<sup>7</sup> an estimated 90 million Americans have low health literacy, meaning they lack the ability to obtain or understand basic health information. The result: poor health choices, missed appointments, failure to take medications as prescribed, delayed diagnoses, longer hospital stays, higher odds of readmission and much more.

Help your healthcare providers help their patients by creating:

- **COMMUNICATIONS** for print distribution, download or email that cover management of chronic and common conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure. Keep them simple (assume a 5th grade reading level), attractive and cleanly designed. Include practical resources like healthy recipes, exercise routines that can be completed anywhere and the like. Communications that are customized to an individual's health condition(s) will help your organization meet patients' rising expectations for relevant, personal interactions.
- **TURNKEY E-NEWSLETTER TEMPLATES** on wellness and specialty topics, such as nutrition, pregnancy, asthma and arthritis, that individual providers can send to keep in touch with their patients and offer reassurance in—and beyond—these extraordinary times. With your hospital or health system's branding, these communications can reinforce your position as the "go to" expert for care.



“Email is more trusted and more effective than paid ads or social media posts.”

SOURCE:  
CAMPAIGNMONITOR.COM<sup>8</sup>

## 4 EMBRACE EMAIL.

Email is more trusted<sup>8</sup> and more effective than paid ads or social media posts, according to CampaignMonitor.com and numerous marketing studies. In addition, ROI is easier to track. One of the biggest challenges with email is deliverability. These tips from Target Marketing<sup>9</sup> can help ensure your messages arrive in inboxes rather than wind up shuttled to spam.

- **SEGMENT YOUR DATABASE.** Pushing email out to everyone without considering who is likely to be interested in each message can damage your brand and lead to a higher unsubscribe rate. Prioritize people who have recently interacted with your brand.
- **KEEP YOUR CADENCE CONSISTENT.** Now is not the time to alter the frequency with which you communicate. Sending fewer emails can break your relationship with recipients at a time when they're looking to you for guidance and support; more emails than usual can destine your messages for the spam folder.
- **BE CREATIVE WITH SUBJECT LINES.** “COVID-19” and “coronavirus” are becoming triggers that send messages into spam or promotions folders. Instead, use subject lines to highlight the positives in your message.



OF AMERICANS READ  
PRINT MAGAZINES



SPEND AT LEAST 11 MINUTES  
WITH EACH ISSUE



SPEND 31 TO  
60+ MINUTES



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FREEMPORT PRESS 2018  
SURVEY OF NORTH AMERICAN  
CONSUMERS<sup>11</sup>

## 5 RETHINK PRINT.

According to Edelman, 57 percent of consumers say a hospital newsletter is their “most trusted” source of health information.<sup>2</sup> What’s more, The Association of Magazine Media, which represents both print and digital publications, has found that print offers several benefits over digital:<sup>10</sup>

- **73 PERCENT OF ADULTS** (including young adults) feel that reading a printed magazine or book is more enjoyable than reading on an electronic device
- **PAPER-BASED READING** generates more focused attention, higher comprehension and better recall
- **PAPER-BASED READING** is more likely to stimulate emotions and desires than online reading
- **DEVOTED PRINT MAGAZINE READERS** are more active on social media than the general population
- **PEOPLE TEND TO KEEP PRINT MAGAZINES** on a nightstand or coffee table for a week or more, so readership continues to grow long after the publication date.



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Take your social media beyond self-promotion by using it to be helpful: Address negative reviews, provide customer service and promote the tools you offer that make life easier for patients.



## 6 FOCUS ON SOCIAL MEDIA (EVEN MORE THAN YOU HAVE).

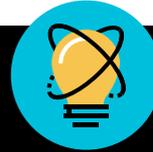
You probably already have Twitter, Facebook and Instagram outreach, but now they're more important than ever. Homebound consumers have learned to rely on social platforms for essential information of every kind, so ramp up your efforts in this area.

- **SPOTLIGHT NEWS PEOPLE CAN USE:** Take your social media beyond self-promotion by using it to be helpful: Address negative reviews, provide customer service and promote the tools you offer that make life easier for patients. Those might include online scheduling, telemedicine and apps for managing health records or tracking personal health information.
- **MAKE SURE IT'S SHAREABLE:** For any online content, such as blog posts, physician profiles or patient-education pages, provide sharing links to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and any other relevant social media platforms. Make it easy for readers to endorse your organization by sharing your content on their timelines and via private messages.
- **GET THE MOST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK:** Repurpose your content as appropriate for each platform, and for outreach beyond social media, including blog posts, brochures, print and e-newsletters, custom magazines and public relations efforts.

## 7 CONSIDER WEBINARS.

Given that social distancing will be a factor for months to come, consider replacing in-person educational seminars with webinars.

- **TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INTERACTIVITY.** Webinars allow you to incorporate live polls of participants and take questions from attendees. Use those options to keep people engaged.
- **BE CREATIVE.** Yes, you'll want to include an attractive slide deck, but also consider incorporating short video segments. For example, show one of your surgeons explaining the procedure in question, or patients sharing their treatment and recovery experiences.
- **MULTIPLY THE VALUE.** Once a webinar is created you can, of course, set up recurring dates to reuse it again and again. You also can record the webinar for patients to view at their convenience. Use the email addresses you gather from registrants to send follow-up targeted marketing messages.



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#### FOOTNOTES:

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## ABOUT WAINSCOT

Wainscot is a strategic content-marketing company that provides customized turnkey solutions. We develop targeted, award-winning marketing content for clients in healthcare and luxury retail. Our healthcare clients include health systems, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers and physician practices. Wainscot offers a full range of services, from communications strategy and planning to development and delivery of custom content for automated marketing programs, webinars, e-newsletters, social media, mobile apps, search-optimized websites and print.



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