

Five ways rebranding will create a personal healthcare experience

Medicine is rapidly moving toward a greater level of personalization – and healthcare brands should be doing the same



Where brands come true.

We're a national design company on a mission to help brands transform what is — to what could be.

Be different.

It wasn't so long ago when medicine was an off-the-rack industry. A diagnosis led directly to a treatment. One treatment. Cancer = surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. For everyone.

Not anymore.

Healthcare is changing. People are literally being treated differently. Because we are different. Today, everyone means every one. At a time. And that's good. Overall outcomes are improving. Survival rates are going up. The quality of life has become as great a consideration as its quantity.

As medicine embraces personalized treatments and targeted therapies, healthcare brands should be doing the same. Rebranding will help take them there. Rebranding successfully combines the brand experience with the patient experience, giving people a brand they can identify with, respect and trust.

We believe there are five levels upon which rebranding can create a more personal healthcare experience.

01 On an individual level

Rarely does the question, “**What’s in it for me?**” come more into play than with healthcare. We are a more knowledgeable society. We have immediate access to information online that 30 years ago was unavailable to the common person. We know where to look and how to find. We have become a community of “healthcare searchers.” Suspect an ailment? Check it out online. Your doctor says it’s a virus. What does the Mayo Clinic say? Go to the website and see.

According to the Pew Research Center, nearly 75 percent of Internet users have gone online seeking healthcare information in the past year. Eight in 10 of these healthcare “searchers” begin their inquiries at a general search engine, not at a specific healthcare entity’s website. Of those who have looked online for health information, 59 percent say they have gone online specifically to try to determine a medical condition, sort of an “online diagnosis.” About half of these searchers were looking for information for themselves, while the other half were looking for information on behalf of another person. And a growing number of people have at least one healthcare app on their phone.

Each of us is interested in our health and the care we receive. We want to know if one doctor or one specialist is right for us. Which facility can best treat my condition? Who will take the best care of my mother?

Healthcare entities today need to make an appeal to every individual person. Rebranding can transform a sterile, anonymous image into an identity that comforts like a lifelong friend. Rebranding can create an identity that conveys experience, knowledge, reputation and confidence and personalizes it with compassion, understanding and reassurance. That’s a one-on-one relationship.

Hospitals, medical centers and clinics don’t treat cases anymore. They treat people.

Healthcare brands and their components, from advertisements to websites, should treat each patient, potential patient, family member and friend like a person, too. One person. “The most important person we will treat today.”

Me.

02 On an emotional level

Awards are wonderful. They indicate expertise and enhance an already strong reputation. Hospitals and medical centers love to tout their national rankings and J.D. Power and Associates surveys. The plaques and statuettes are shiny and really cool.

Awards impress people. But they don't move people emotionally.

Healthcare brands need to do more than disseminate a message. They need to tell a story. Best in pediatric cardiac care for the third year in a row? Don't just show the award. Tell us why. Not with statistics. With faces.

Nothing connects with people like a well-told story, and hospitals are filled with them. The child who no one thought would make it to her third birthday – but who just turned five. The auto accident victim who may never have walked again, but who today is back on the basketball court. **The survivors.** What makes those people different is what makes your people different.

A heartfelt, moving story doesn't create emotion. It triggers it. Along with empathy. And respect. It illustrates in a very intimate way the characteristics and abilities that make your physicians, surgeons, nurses, social workers, technicians and therapists special.

Inform the public that you have the highest trauma certification in the region and people will likely be impressed. But tell them what happens during one 24-hour period in your ER – the stories of the lives that were saved – and you will touch people's hearts and open their minds.

Tell great stories – on your website, in your publications, your advertisements and signage – and people will know you do more than care for your patients. **You care about them.** Your brand will come alive and connect with people on an emotional level.

03 On an intellectual level

The smartest people never stop learning. They read. They listen. They watch. They pay attention. They absorb. They use technology, not to make life easier but to make it better. For themselves, and for others.

Though technology can deliver knowledge, it cannot create wisdom. Artificial intelligence is still artificial. Smart phones are filled with dumb messages. Smart devices need to deliver smarter messaging. So do smart brands.

Healthcare brands should concentrate more on content than on device. Smart content, presented in a way every person can understand yet specific so it appears geared to answer my question about my condition. That kind of targeted messaging relieves fear and yields confidence. Whether it is delivered via mobile device, tablet or laptop, the content and its message is clear and complete.

Smart content resides comfortably between basic information and the medical textbook version. Choose the fewest words and make them mean the most. Add video. Searches for healthcare “how-to” videos on YouTube are soaring.

From Addison Disease to Why We Sweat, there is a growing library of medical videos available online. Your specialists and medical experts need to be in front of a camera, communicating with and relating to the viewer as much as screen-to-face contact will allow.

Give your brand a transfusion of information. Create a video library online and provide easy access, whether a person is searching a subject randomly or specifically visiting your website. Film patient testimonials for every condition you treat. Show your clinical space and the people who staff it. Give your walls personality. Create a wealth of written and visual content that is relatable and educational.

Smart healthcare consumers want information from a source they can trust. **Rebranding can empower your brand to be that source.**

04 On a human level

Hospital ABC's cancer center has an all-team meeting every Friday at noon. For about 90 minutes, the surgeons, oncologists, radiation therapists, nurses, nutritionists, social workers and other team members review one by one the week's new cancer cases. X-rays and scans are displayed on a large screen at the front of the room and echoed on smaller monitors mounted on the other walls. As the team members discuss the particulars, they refer to each patient by the case number – not by the patient's name. They do share some details such as age, gender, family history, and background such as the patient's career if it is pertinent to that person's condition, stamina and state of mind. But not the name. That way, if any of the 30 or so caregivers in the room know that person, their input as to the best treatment course is not tainted.

While anonymity works in the situation described at left, it does not work for Hospital ABC's brand. Patients are not faceless numbers, and neither are the medical professionals who treat them. They and the hospital's brand must connect on a very human level. Oddly enough, among the best tools for creating and maintaining that human connection are technology and social media.

Any time you are in a group of people, look around. How many have their thumbs on their phones, tapping frantically like twin woodpeckers? Take advantage of that obsession people have with their phones. Utilize social media to communicate your brand message and add relevance to your brand identity.

Narrow the focus and you will widen the audience. A Facebook post relating the moving account of a cancer patient's progress from hopeless to hopeful will strike a chord with other patients and their family and friends. Portraying the patient rather than the disease shows what makes your hospital special. Weave your caregivers into the story visually and through commentary and you'll understand why it is called "human interest." Chart the number of likes and shares to know which stories are more popular. Then make more.

Connecting on a human level through social media and other communication tools further develops the meaningful relationships patients and potential patients (healthcare consumers) want to have with their healthcare providers.

05 On a practical level

Ever hear or see the explanation of what you thought was a complicated process and say to yourself, “Now, that makes sense...”? That is because the information you received was useful and sensible. It was practical.

The fifth way a healthcare brand can personalize its connection with people is on a practical level. Connecting on a practical level results from a brand identity that is real, useful and sensible. Save the theories for the researchers.

Through clarity comes a practical understanding. Treating cancer today is extremely technical and complicated. It can involve genomic mapping and treatments that are a combination of immunotherapy and whole-body care. But that is not the way to present cancer care to the public. A person does not need to understand every aspect of the internal combustion engine in order to drive a car. Neither do they need to know exactly how a linear accelerator works in order to be agreeable to receiving precisely targeted radiation therapy. They want information they can understand. They want to relate on a practical level because understanding the reason for treatment lessens the fear of what is beyond our understanding regarding its delivery.

You don't rebrand because others are doing it. You rebrand because it is precisely the treatment your brand needs to move forward, to create a personalized connection with healthcare consumers. On an individual level. An emotional level. An intellectual level. A human level. And on a practical level.

Rebranding clearly communicates the offer you make and the promise you fulfill. Above all, it positions your brand so that every interaction with the public produces a singular positive result:

Trust.

In today's consumer savvy, competitive marketplace, trust is the difference between a healthcare brand that is strong and thriving, and a brand that is on life support.

You know where
you want to be.
Identifying the
correct branding
strategy will help
get you there.

Considering a rebrand?

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