

Communications that align audiences to increase patient safety

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Cost-effective communications (real-time updates at minimal cost) can align diverse audiences and ensure message consistency, reaping tremendous benefits for marketing through increased branding, improved financial benefits, and a more culturally cohesive organization. When your goal is to communicate what your hospital is doing to improve patient safety, delivering the right messages will help you bring audiences together and get them working towards the same end. All you need are reliable and effective tools that can deliver both relevant and sustainable messages.

Here's how...

- **Begin with the first phone call** – Someone calls your hospital for the first time. Use this opportunity to establish your credibility and gain the trust of the caller in a professional yet friendly manner, by communicating specific safety messages while your caller waits on hold. Communicate the importance of hand washing, why you have multiple patient identity checks, and more. Explain the efforts your clinical staff takes to ensure proper hand hygiene and how it impacts safety. This is your one and only chance to make your first impression your best.
- **Choose cost-effective communications that consistently deliver** – Even safety and quality messages can be interesting and engaging. Use mediums that can be updated with minimal cost and effort in real time for both external and internal audiences. Digital signage is a powerful means of routinely connecting with your audiences in a visually captivating manner.
- **Align all your audiences with your message** – Sounds insurmountable, but it's not. This is a dream come true for marketers, everyone getting the same message at the same time and having it be relevant to their individual reasons for being in your hospital (are they working, eating, waiting for a procedure, visiting a sick relative, dropping off a delivery, etc.?) Your safety messages should remind physicians about your unapproved abbreviations, reinforce the process for nurses regarding medication reconciliation upon discharge, and inform patients of how critical it is to list all medications they are taking. When all parties are working together and are receiving the same message of how to avoid medication errors, you can routinely ensure all audiences are aligned in taking action. Words are nice, but words in action get results.
- **Develop effective and sustainable messages** – but don't go it alone.
 - **Use your communications vendors to help you develop the right content for the right mediums** - Your vendors should not only understand your healthcare communications challenges, but should also be able to offer you message suggestions and provide content libraries to help you meet your objectives.
 - **Work with your internal departments** – Your quality department can help with measurable objectives for clinical staff and provide performance improvement data to help elevate job performance and employee satisfaction, for example. By working with your internal departments, together you can provide messages that will make a difference.

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(continued)

- **Develop each message on a given topic clearly and concisely for each of your audiences**
- Be clear on the points you communicate to each audience, let them know specifically what action you want them to take, and always end with call-to-action (i.e. provide phone numbers, web site addresses for patients; outline process for clinical staff, etc.)
- **Target diverse audiences at the same time with relevant messages on the same topic to keep everyone in sync** – For example, doctors viewing digital signage messages in the lounge will know what is also being communicated to nurses in the nursing unit, as well as what patients are seeing while waiting in the lobby.

Healthcare marketers need to invest in communications tools that will deliver the results they need. Using tools like social media, on-hold messaging, your web site, and digital signage can assist you in delivering relevant messages that encourage people to take action, especially critical when it comes to patient safety. Once you have the tools in place, you can then focus your efforts on developing sustainable content over the long run. When your messages are received and your audiences change their behavior, you know your efforts are working.