

The right communications tools align audiences with your patient safety goals and impact behavior

Using effective communications tools that align diverse audiences with your organization's goals and ensure message consistency can reap tremendous benefits for marketing, including increased branding, improved financial benefits, and a more culturally cohesive organization. When your goal is to both improve patient safety and convey what your hospital is doing about it, the right tools delivering the right messages will help you bring audiences together and get them working towards the same end. All you need are powerful tools that can deliver relevant and sustainable communications cost-effectively, by giving you the ability to update your messages in real time with minimal cost.

Here's how (and why)...

- **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. Convey the importance of hand washing, and why it should be an integral part of your caller's life before she even gets to the hospital. Let her know the efforts your clinical staff makes to ensure proper hand hygiene and how these measures impact her safety. And don't miss the chance to reassure a pregnant mother who will be delivering at your hospital that you check wrist bands routinely as part of your patient safety initiatives.
- **Choose cost-effective communications tools that can consistently deliver current messages** – Keep messages interesting, fresh, and informative with mediums that can be updated in real time with minimal cost and effort such as on-hold messaging, web site pages, and digital signage.
- **Align all your audiences with your message** – Sounds impossible, but it's not. All over the hospital, your audiences have personal reasons for being there, whether it's working, eating, waiting for a procedure, or visiting a sick relative, to name a few. Everyone getting the same message at the same time, tailored to their situation, is a dream come true for marketers. For example, 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 receiving a consistent message on how to avoid medication errors and then doing their part, you can ensure your audiences are aligned in taking action. Words are nice, but words in action get results.

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- **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** – For example, your quality department can help with measurable objectives for clinical staff and provide performance improvement data to help elevate job performance and employee satisfaction. By working with your internal departments, together you can provide messages that will make a difference.
- **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 end with the tools that will enable them to do so (i.e. provide phone numbers, web site addresses for patients; outline process for clinical staff, etc.).

Today, more than ever, you need to spend your money on communications tools that can deliver the results you need. Using tools like on-hold messaging, your web site, and digital signage can enable you to deliver relevant messages that encourage people to take action, which is 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 audiences hear and see your messages and they change their behavior as a result, you know your efforts are working.