

The modern marketing methods of improving healthcare facilities

Emil Zhalmukhamedov

Marketing board member at NYSS, NYS EMT-B Volunteer at RVAC.

Abstract- As US Department of Health (DOH) continues to evaluate the ranking of hospitals throughout the country, it's becoming imperative for the hospitals to keep their brand image on a positive side, as well as keep improving their services of patient outcome. This paper focuses on the important aspects of modern methods of healthcare marketing, as well as emergency marketing, such as how to deal with bad PR. The methods introduced in this research paper, can dramatically improve the business side of the hospital and increase the patient loyalty.

Index Terms- Healthcare management; NYC Healthcare Grading and Improvements; Healthcare Marketing; Healthcare Business; Modern Healthcare Marketing; Hospital Marketing and Promotion; Improving Patient Outcomes.

I. INTRODUCTION

In October 2016, the leapfrog group – a nonprofit nation's premier advocate of hospital transparency, released a report on hospital grading in the United States. Overall there were 38 city hospitals on the list, and NY State particularly has performed poorly according to the provided data. This reliable data proves that avoidable death still remains high, especially in the hospitals of underserved communities.

As public and non-profit hospitals are chasing the budget for the research and improvement of the facilities, it's becoming more and more challenging for them with the given statistics of poor performance. The hospitals are in need of adopting new ways of conducting management and marketing, in order to regain the trust of communities and be able to secure more funds from the government.

There are numerous ways to improve the healthcare facility, but one of the most challenging is marketing and promotion. This study is prepared by expertly assessing the latest technology and its effectiveness available for the B2C (Business-To-Consumers) organizations and healthcare facilities.

II. TRADITIONAL VS. NON-TRADITIONAL MARKETING

Hospital marketing is a complex process, where HIPPA compliance has to be in place and patients have to be engaged with the message. From the hospital's point of view it has to be effective and yet precise for the specific target market at accumulated budget. From the patients view it has to be educative enough to understand the information clearly at the most engaging medium. There are different types of business marketing that play a major role in success of the healthcare

facility. Those types are traditional marketing and non-traditional marketing.

Traditional marketing could be defined as a method of promotion and advertising, which has been used for years by professionals around the world. Such marketing methods include print, TV, billboards, flyers etc.

Non-traditional marketing is everything that falls outside of the traditional marketing category, the most successful ones are: search, mobile, inbound, outbound, word-of-mouth and guerilla marketing.

Most hospitals nowadays still rely on traditional marketing, where we see outside banners and TV ads. The problem that poses traditional marketing is that it's hard to scale the actual return on investment (ROI) from the budget spent. Where in non-traditional marketing, specifically Internet marketing - hospitals could tell exactly where the patient or interested party took place, and they can accommodate specific budget for the most performing channel. Additionally, mobile marketing puts hospital's promotional message right in the hands of patients, where it's hard to ignore it. While most people in the world are shifting towards computer and mobile era, it's important for the hospitals to adopt the change and be on the edge with the patients who are seeking quality care.

III. EMERGENCY MARKETING

Going back to the 2016th leapfrog group hospital grading, it's important to understand that hospitals, which were graded poorly, need to have an emergency marketing PR in place. The communication between hospital and public in this critical moment is very important, and by not having a strategy in place, could ruin reputation of the hospital and patient's trust, which can lead to the numerous negative outcomes.

One of the most effective ways to implement the emergency marketing is planning ahead. There are certain steps need to be taken such as, what medium to utilize, who is responsible for writing the press release, how the release is communicated, the person in charge etc. Back in old days press release could take weeks to become available to general public, nowadays it could simply be distributed through PR service providers at cost of no more than \$500 or even less with the appropriate company's relationship.

IV. METHODS

An overview of various marketing methods has been observed in B2C organizations, where non-traditional marketing drove the highest ROI through digital marketing mix

implemented by me. The digital marketing mix includes: website, blog/content, social media and mobile marketing.

The most important part of effective modern marketing for healthcare facilities is to have optimized and consumer friendly virtual properties, and proper utilization of each one of them. Virtual properties could be identified as website, blog and social media. These properties are proven to be the most effective ones for the interaction with patients and general public. Some hospitals are still struggling to improve their online image, and these hospitals tend to be from the underserved communities or public hospitals.

V. STEP-BY-STEP GUIDELINES FOR HOSPITALS

The first step in improving successful marketing, is to start with the website. Website represents an image of the hospital, communication with general public and announcement, which could be distributed directly to public for educational or promotional purposes. The website has to be optimized, meaning that it has to be searchable by search engines. If it's not searchable then patients who are looking for services or doctors looking for work simply can't find it. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the abbreviation commonly used by modern marketers, it's a set of methods of improving the ranking of the website on the search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Bing etc. A research done by Chitka - search targeted advertising company in 2013, shows a significant drop in traffic of the websites found on the 2nd page of Google in compare to the 1st page. The websites found on first page of Google, drive around 95% of traffic, where second page drove only 4.8%.

The second step is to write a relevant and highly customized content on the website. Patients who are looking for answers for the particular disease can easily find the content such as a blog post. This way not only hospital positions itself as an expert in the treating this disease, but also enhances its brand identity. It's a modern way of engaging virtually.

The third step is to make sure the website is mobile friendly. As more and more people accessing the websites from their mobile devices, it's imperative to have your website properly scaled to the size of the multiple devices. A better optimized and scaled website brings more people to the facility. Baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) and millennials (born between 1981 and 2000) are looking for health information on their phones or tablets, therefore it is very important to have a website that can scale to the screen of mobile devices.

The fourth step in implementing successful marketing plan, is to develop a set strategy for utilizing social media. It's important to notice that full HIPAA compliance guideline has to be in place in order to implement marketing and promotion strategies on social media. Many hospitals make a mistake by advertising their services on every single social media. This is where the scarce budget is wasted, as some social media channels are simply not suitable for the given audience. Facebook tends to be a universal social media for brand awareness & brand recognition, and also for educational materials to general public such as awareness week - could be easily implemented. Since acquisition of Instagram by Facebook, hospitals can now increase their reach by promoting the content

not only on Facebook but on Instagram as well, for the budget of one.

Another social media channel that proved to be an excellent in delivering urgent messages is Twitter. A short 140-character PR message could be easily distributed right from the mobile device or the desktop. Not to mention, many influencers in the healthcare and political government figures are there, who might be able to support your press release by re-tweeting or mentioning you in press.

For gender specific messages - Pinterest could be an ideal tool for the hospitals. As 80% of the audiences on Pinterest are females, a message such as breast cancer awareness week could be beneficial.

If a hospital is looking for authority in the online space, it will be good to utilize LinkedIn as a network. LinkedIn is a professional social media network, where professionals of all specialties are present. If press release is targeted towards physicians or businesses, LinkedIn is a great place to start utilizing it.

Also an emergency press release could be successfully utilized on given social media for urgent announcements.

The last but not least is G+. Google plus network allows facilities to create and claim their businesses on Google verified business finders. People who are registered with Gmail account can leave the review of the hospital, and it's visible to everyone. Hospital managers can manage this account by replying/ updating the information relevant to the healthcare clinic. As Google has become a dominant search engine of the Internet, it must be clear for the hospital to be there when somebody is searching for the particular healthcare facility.

The social media right now represents a global community, if hospital would like to connect more with the community and increase it's brand image, it must be good at utilizing social media channels.

Another very important part of medical marketing is collecting emails. By collecting emails, hospitals can stay in touch with their patients 24/7. If, for example patient requires ongoing follow-ups, it would be advisable to supplement communication through the email with this patient. It's important to stay connected with the patients at the convenience of this technology, as patient outcome has the potential to be improved with the relevant communication between physician and patient. If casualty such as Zika virus occurs in the particular region, a mass email could be sent out to the affected community. This way doctors can have a clear action of pre and post care outcomes. Some private clinics send out awareness email marketing, however, there is a certain detachment between relevance and many patients tend to ignore these emails. To improve the relevance and engagement of the email with patients, healthcare facilities must include personalization features such as name, location or disease associated with the particular patients. This technique is accomplished by detailed email segmentation of groups by categories.

VI. PREFERENCE OF THE CONSUMERS FOR DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

I surveyed 20 people who are between ages 20 – 55 on their experience with the clinic they attend. Both males and females of

this category are owners of ios (iPhone, iPad) and android (Samsung, Motorola etc.). During survey on preference of the clinic, they pointed out to the ads found on Google (40%) and social media ads (60%) influenced their decision on choice of clinic. They said it's important for them to find the clinic at the click of a button and when they are able to find relevant information or reviews from people online.

VII. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

When promoting or advertising hospital services, it's important to focus on benefits for the patients, and include physician's specialty for the last part. While it's important to note the professionalism of the hospital's staff, most patients are just oblivious to certain doctor's specifications and focused more on the information of disease cured. A study done by Microsoft confirms that people generally lose their attention after 8 seconds, and it's important to get the promotional message across first within these precious seconds. So, it's very important to repeat and incorporate promotional message on relevant online and social media networks that work for the hospital.

By marketing and advertising the healthcare facility, the facility is not only generates awareness about hospital, but it also earns the trust from the present and future patients. Patients that

are treated at particular hospital with good outcome, later on become a free brand voice for the facility they've been treated, which can reduce general marketing spend, as this becomes a referral marketing tool. Practicing marketing implementations online saves more money and generates better ROI for healthcare facilities in the modern day and age.

REFERENCES

- [1] Leapfrog hospital safety grade – New hospital safety grades. (31 October 2016). <http://www.hospitalafetygrade.org/about-us/newsroom/display/489537>
- [2] Chitka - The value of google result positioning. (7 June 2013). Retrieved from <https://chitika.com/google-positioning-value>
- [3] Microsoft – Attention span research. (Spring 2015) Google – Google my business benefits. (Landing page). <https://www.google.com/business/benefits/>

AUTHORS

First Author – Emil Zhalmukhamedov is an executive marketing board member at NYSS and volunteer NYS EMT-B at RVAC, emilzhalmukh@gmail.com