

## Marketing 202

# Executing a Successful Healthcare Marketing Campaign

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In our previous article, "Marketing 102 - When It's Not Enough to JUST Know The Industry," we provided examples of how and why office furnishings dealers and manufacturers are falling short when it comes to marketing their products and services to the healthcare market. This week, we will focus on the tactics that will help your organization build the brand awareness and recognition necessary to deliver real, measurable results.

By now, you have learned the key to successful healthcare sales is more complex than just knowing who the facilities manager is at a local hospital. It is imperative you know how the hospital buys, who the influencers and buyers are, how to navigate through the myriad of challenges the buyer faces and how to effectively position yourself to the customer. We will now focus on effectively planning your marketing initiatives and how to demonstrate your understanding of the buyer's situation.

## Planning...

In order to achieve your marketing goals, you must be able to effectively demonstrate what makes you special, unique and different. You may have a good idea, but true success comes through goal setting, planning and execution. To aide you, we recommend beginning with the following plan:

**Step 1 - Market Analysis:** This first exercise is the identification of market variables in your area such as the healthcare trends and market segments. Some of the questions you should ask are: Where are the new hospitals or departments being built? Are doctors leaving the hospital due to DRG/cost constraints and starting outpatient or specialty practices? Are local hospitals joining an IDN? Where are the specialty hospitals and departments? What are the "money" procedures that are being done in your local market?

How else can you get information? We suggest a focus group. Gather your good, bad and wannabee customers in a room for a day and ask away! Find out about your competitors, the new projects and at the same time be able to demonstrate your desire to work in healthcare.

After you have your arms around the "big picture," you then must define your target market. While the simple answer may be hospitals, the correct definition of this market is more entailed. While every hospital has numerous departments, you need to understand which departments are necessities and which provide revenue streams for the organization. Take the Emergency Room as an example. This department is there out of necessity, and in the

majority of cases, does well to break even. Now, take the Labor and Delivery or Dialysis business units for a facility. These departments can be selling/branding tools for the hospital and thus will receive more attention and investment by the organization.

**Step 2 – Company Analysis:** Once you have a solid understanding of where the industry in your market is heading and where the hospitals/medical centers are placing their emphasis (i.e. spending money), its then time to take stock of what you and your competitors have to offer. During this analysis, you should identify how your existing products and services can meet the healthcare buyers' desire for a solutions partner and what opportunities exist to fill these gaps. This is important! As we have discussed over the past several weeks, the healthcare buyer wants a partner who truly understands how to minimize their challenges and maximize their positives. This buyer wants to know who has the complete solution to meet these needs as opposed to just who is selling the latest and greatest ergonomic chair.

**Step 3 – Goals and Objectives:** The definition of real, measurable and obtainable goals is one of the most important elements of your marketing plan. For your healthcare initiative, these should be broken into two categories – Sales Goals and Marketing Goals. For instance, a Sales Goal is: "To Achieve Five Million dollars in Healthcare Sales With a 20% Revenue Margin by May 1, 2005." An example of a Marketing Goal is: "To Create Measurable Brand Recognition for Your Organization by December 1, 2004."

**Step 4 – Strategies:** Strategies are your road map to achieving your sales and marketing goals. For the purposes of this exercise, strategies should be broken into at least five different segments – Positioning, Product, Pricing, Distribution and Communications/Promotion. At this point, you will define how you market these new programs and what it takes to succeed. For example, a Distribution Strategy would be to develop a mutually beneficial partner agreement with a regional medical supplier to offer a more comprehensive line of healthcare solutions. A Positioning Strategy would be to brand your organization as an expert on a profitable or "hot" aspect of healthcare such as bariatrics or diabetes. The complimentary Product Strategy would be to have products and services specifically designed to meet the customers' unique needs in this area.

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**Step 5 – Action Plan and Implementation:** Now that you know where you want to go, how do you get there? You need to define the Budget, Schedule and Assignments necessary to execute your strategies and tactics. This will avoid surprises later and will be used for future measurement.

**Step 6 – Evaluation and Measurement:** To ensure a successful program, this plan needs to become a living, breathing document. Measuring and monitoring the progress of your success is the key to maximizing your investment to achieve your goals. It is recommended that your organization evaluate progress on a regular, defined basis while being flexible to refine your tactics.

**Successful Tactics...**

While planning is crucial to program success, the associated tactics are important in the execution of this plan as well. Below are the areas you should focus on when executing your sales and marketing strategies. Every market, dealership and hospital is different, but what remains constant is that well-designed and professional initiatives will prevail over cookie-cutter solutions almost every time! Outside of face-to-face sales, the most important facets to successful marketing execution are your message and the delivery.

**To Help You Get Started...**

**Corporate Message –** To successfully market yourself to healthcare organizations, it is imperative you have a well-defined message that demonstrates your understanding of the client and the industry. For example, instead of stating you “offer unique products solutions,” it’s wise to say, “Company X offers a comprehensive line of bariatric products and services specifically designed to accommodate your hospital and patient needs.” This message goes further than just brochures. You must develop an overall communication message that is consistent in ALL communications from Sales Letters to Tag Lines to Voicemail Greetings to Presentations.

**Public Relations –** PR is an area that is often under utilized and misunderstood by many. In order to build the necessary healthcare brand identity for your company, you need to make buyers aware of your company and services. For example, this can be accomplished through the distribution of press releases if you 1) Kick-off the new healthcare division; 2) Form a partnership with a medical supplies vendor. ;” OR 3) Successfully complete a job. Other areas of opportunity include write-up/contributions in local and trade publi-

cations. There are also valuable opportunities to sponsor/co-sponsor events, such as a diabetes roundtable, a local AMA event or focus group.

**Direct Marketing -** The volume of unsolicited marketing has reached epic proportions. Have you ever noted the amount of unsolicited mail you get each day at home or at the office? Now, think about what the executives and staff members of a purchasing department receive at any given healthcare institution. They are woefully overburdened by sales people, telemarketers and companies that have experience in the industry and can offer them a “great product at a great price.”

So, what do you do to avoid being lumped into the “Junk Column?” You must be creative! Though you have the correct message, you need to get your prospect’s attention. For example, HCFI has a marketing tool which enables you to build an online custom brochure just by entering the company name, contact name and logo. It electronically displays and sends this information to a “print-on-demand facility” which in turn prints, binds and mails. And all for much less than a local printing company! Direct mail is a traditional medium that is still effective or why not try a new medium, such as a custom e-mail that provides enhanced tracking and reporting? The key to success in these overused areas is outstanding design, creativity and message. Your materials cannot look “common” and must entice review through creative packaging or freebies.

In closing, what you say and how you say it to your healthcare customer is tantamount to your success. The biggest and best PR firms can assist you with your healthcare brochures or advertising, but they rely solely upon YOUR knowledge for input in most cases. If you lack the thorough knowledge of healthcare, you can not guide them appropriately. You’ve heard the saying “garbage in, garbage out”. The same applies here. We see it all the time. Be careful not to waste dollars or use firms who do not understand your healthcare market.

Don’t forget to register for the Health Care Furnishings Forum, co-sponsored by MMQB & Healthcare Design Magazine. This forum will be held in Chicago on June 15th during NeoCon and is designed to give you an excellent insight into what the healthcare market needs and expects. You will hear from a variety of individuals from the A&D community, GPO’s, IDN’s, Distributors and Manufacturers of Healthcare furniture specializing in healthcare and many others on how to effectively penetrate the furnishings market in healthcare. Also, learn what not to do! Please visit our website at [www.hcfi.net](http://www.hcfi.net) where you can download the Registration Form or call HCFI directly at 949-481-6888 to register immediately.

**The Best Place to Hide From a Terrorist Threat - Under Your Desk!**

GUNNAR Manufacturing, a Canadian manufacturer of office furniture, and Special Services Group International (SSG), a high technology firm, introduced a new line of protective office furniture incorporating US Global Nanospace’s G-Lam Antiballistic and Blast-X blast mitigation materials.



“To meet the challenge faced in this century of growing terrorist threats and natural disasters the GUNNAR/Special Services Group International Inc. team has combined its over 35 years of experience to produce the first office furniture to significantly increase the safety of personnel as well as provide a mechanism to expedite rescue and reduce time for recovery of injured personnel after a major terrorist attack or a natural disaster,” the company said.

The hardened office furniture was extensively tested with support from the Defence Research and Development Canada-Suffield through a series of blast and crush tests. DRDC is an agency within the Canadian Department of National Defence.

The system was tested against 250 pounds of flake TNT at 90 feet comparing it to standard furniture. Ordinary furniture became flying debris while the GUNNAR/SSG system remained completely intact.

“Now when you go under your desk you will have a high probability of survival,” the company concluded. Availability and price were not announced.

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