

STRATEGIC AD-VISORY

In This David and Goliath Tale, David Loads His Slingshot with Flowers, Interactive Ads, Clever Media Buys, and Direct Mail

by Peter Hochstein

When a neighborhood changes, a hospital's marketing sometimes has to change. All the more so, if it's a not-so-large community hospital a few miles from a number of big teaching hospitals that seem to have a lock on prestige (and probably a lot more marketing money).

That was the situation facing Swedish Covenant Hospital in Chicago's north side. In the late 1990s, the area began to transform from a largely Swedish ethnic neighborhood to a gentrified area with a younger population. In real estate terms, the area was hot.

But Swedish Covenant Hospital's image didn't reflect the neighborhood's sizzle. First, there was the tangible physical problem.

"We're in a *very* competitive market in Chicago, and there are giant medical centers that dwarf our campus, even though we're a hospital [with 337 licensed beds] with a fairly good-sized campus," explains Leigh Ginther, Swedish Covenant's director of marketing and public relations. "We knew we were being judged on that," she says, noting her big competitors as Northwestern Memorial Hospital and NorthShore University HealthSystem. "Comparatively, we look small."



Early-stage ads encouraged interactivity. "How would you fill in the blanks? Tells us at whatmakesyoufeelbetter.com" said the copy under the photograph. Inset copy in the photograph discussed the role that the hospital's "crew of specially trained dogs" could play in helping inpatients control blood pressure and anxiety.

Focus groups revealed that while local awareness of the institution was high, consumers "really didn't know what was happening at Swedish Covenant," says Ginther.

Even though the neighborhood was growing, the hospital hadn't enjoyed a significant increase in new patients. So, in 2006, the hospital turned to Remedy, a Chicago company that defines its work as "brand strategy and communications."

The company began by talking to people who worked for Swedish Covenant "about what might make the hospital unique and different," says Deanna Stallsmith, Remedy's chief creative officer. "One of the unique things was that Swedish had a very innovative and impressive approach toward creating an actual healing environment inside the hospital."

The healing environment ranged from friendly dogs for patients to cuddle to yoga lessons, massages, musicians strolling in the halls, and menus with a variety of ethnic foods.

What's interesting, says Stallsmith, is the way the hospital presents those features. "Other hospitals might just look at these as warm and fuzzy ... which they can be," she notes. "But Swedish is also very committed to



Subscribers to the *Chicago Tribune* found four-panel Swedish Covenant brochures attached to the front page of their newspaper.



On the streets of Chicago's north side, people were handed free sunflowers. A miniature advertisement attached to the flower discussed how Swedish Covenant incorporates flowers into its healing approach.

understanding clinically how those kinds of approaches can actually speed the healing process.”

With that in mind, Swedish Covenant and Remedy launched an interactive campaign that asked people to explain, “What makes you feel better?” They set up an Internet microsite where people could give their answers. “Getting a seat on the train” was one answer probably texted from one of the elevated trains where some of the advertising appeared.

The transit media buys were often nontraditional. Instead of interior placard ads, train exteriors were “wrapped” with advertisements. Inside the cars, ads appeared on the ceilings, a new kind of media space in Chicago that quickly gained the handle “Michelangelos,” after the Italian Renaissance artist who painted the Vatican’s Sistine Chapel ceiling.

While the advertising invited people to explain what they thought made them feel better, there was a branded answer, too. What makes you feel better

“... is healing,” said the advertising, which appeared in a variety of places.

Chicagoans found the ads on tags attached to sunflowers handed out in the street by people wearing yellow T-shirts (the campaign’s signature color), on a giant vinyl poster on the hospital’s façade, on bottled water, air fresheners – and yes, in traditional advertising spaces, too. At the time, the *Chicago Tribune* had a weekly health and women’s section, where Swedish Covenant had exclusive rights to buy the center spread.

Outdoor billboard ads also were brought into the mix. Still another media space was created by tacking “tag-alongs” – little four-panel brochures – to the front page of the *Chicago Tribune* delivered to subscribers.

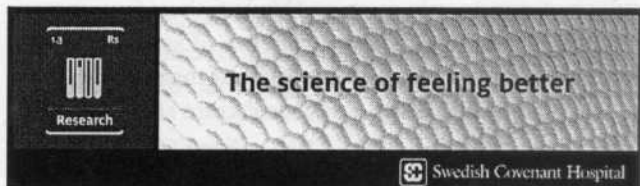
To all that add a very traditional element – “highly targeted direct mail around key service lines,” says Ginther. “Direct mail for us is like our Energizer Bunny. It’s kind of behind the scenes, and it just chugs along every month.”

The self-mailer described the hospital’s expertise in a particular area and encouraged readers to call an 800 number or go to a URL to arrange for screenings or a physician’s appointment.

Interestingly, the most successful direct mail pieces omitted a promotional offer, says Ginther.

The campaign morphed in 2008 to one that retains the identifying yellow background color but switches to a tagline that Swedish Covenant can own, “The science of feeling better,” thus expanding the hospital’s image to something more than “warm and fuzzy.”

Reinforced by so much image advertising, the direct mail without promotional offers pulls hard. “In 2008 we saw a 9 percent increase of HMO patients,” attributable to direct mail, says Ginther. She adds that direct



Less interactivity, more science, but still easily identifiable by Swedish Covenant’s signature yellow tones (take my word for it), this new iteration of the campaign in the form of a billboard focuses on a reason to believe.

mail drove an impressive 13 percent increase of patients with PPO insurance.

And that's what is making the hospital's marketers feel better.

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Three Lessons from Swedish Covenant Hospital's Campaign

1. Bad news about media advertising revenues is good news for advertisers. You may be in a position to argue for unusual advertising displays now that publishers and others are getting hungrier. A brochure attached to the front page of a newspaper that's been laying off staff? Why not ask? Train or bus "Michelangelos," or ceiling ads on your area's revenue-starved transit system? Maybe. Perhaps more than ever, media planners now have an opportunity to contribute some creativity of their own to campaigns.

2. "You don't have to be on TV and you don't have to be on radio to make an impact," adds Leigh Ginther, the hospital's marketing director. "We were really, really pleased with the tactics that [the] Remedy [agency] helped develop for us – because our competitors aren't handing out flowers. They aren't the first to wrap [ads around] the trains. They aren't the first to say, 'Sure, we'll try Michelangelos.' One of the things I say to Remedy is, 'Put us where people don't expect us.'"

3. Guerrilla marketing tactics like offbeat media buys, handing out flowers, and New Age messaging drove the advertising; direct mail drove the patients through the doors. While I lack scientific evidence, I've always believed that what used to be called "general advertising" lays the groundwork for better direct response results because people are more likely to buy from companies (or hospitals) they've heard of and esteem. Remedy's Deanna Stallsmith points out that the use of both forms of advertising was a deliberate strategy.

Peter Hochstein ■

Do you have a marketing communications, business development, or physician relations story to share with other readers? Contact Michele von Dambrowski at Michelevon@strategiehealthcare.com.

Brand and Business Benefit from Sports Celebrity Partnerships

by Joan Trezek

One question that will never be asked on a quiz show is "which sports figure is featured in a product endorsement – Derek Jeter, Roger Federer, Danica Patrick, or Lance Armstrong?" These sports stars are among many that have endorsed cars, watches, deodorant, cereal, clothing, and countless other products. Winners, particularly those who are young and attractive, clearly draw attention to a product and influence purchase decisions. Whatever a company spends in endorsement fees can be small in comparison with the increased sales and profits anticipated – and often realized – from celebrity involvement.

It is not uncommon for hospitals or health systems to sponsor a sports team in their local market. Typically, the provider has an arrangement whereby its physicians serve the team's health care needs, both on and off the playing field. Providers also secure signage on the field or logo placement on the scoreboard and in the program. The hospital mascot may appear on the field for some kind of ceremony. Members of the team may visit hospitalized patients or encourage people to get screened for the disease of the month.

Two health care organizations, located on opposite coasts, are adding some new dimensions to their marketing efforts by using a notable sports figure who is also a local resident. K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital, part of Jersey Shore University Medical Center in Neptune, NJ, and a member of Meridian Health, has an arrangement with 2008 Olympic gold medalist Christie Rampone. Captain of the U.S. women's soccer team in Beijing, Rampone has lived on the New Jersey coast for much of her life, delivered her daughter at the medical center four years ago, and now uses a pediatrician affiliated with the facility. Palomar Pomerado Health in San Diego has a partnership with Chargers running back LaDainian Tomlinson.

Children's hospital seeks its own identity

Looking to highlight the grand opening of a \$300 million expansion of the medical center and its children's hospital, which includes a new dedicated pediatric emergency department, the marketing and public