

MEETING: Trust Board
15 March 2006

TITLE: Communications and Marketing Strategy

SUMMARY:

Research has shown that the most successful providers of health services will be those who respond effectively to patient preferences and who focus on clinical standards, waiting times and patient comfort. In addition, as both the public and GPs are highly sceptical about 'official data', reputation, based on the real service delivered, is critical. This communications and marketing strategy has been developed to reflect this.

ACTION:

For agreement

REPORT FROM:

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SPONSORED BY:

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Communications and marketing strategy

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Research has shown that the most successful providers of health services will be those who respond effectively to patient preferences and who focus on clinical standards, waiting times and patient comfort. In addition, as both the public and GPs are highly sceptical about 'official data', reputation, based on the real service delivered, is critical. This communications and marketing strategy has been developed to reflect this.

Whilst the Whittington's communications function is already established, the introduction of marketing techniques is new and evolving. As a result, this strategy is seen as a working document that aims to provide a guide and focus, and which can be revised and updated as we progress. Much of the work outlined requires a change to the way we think about our patients and, if as an organisation, we are to be truly effective, this change also needs to take place at a strategic level. It also needs to be part of a coherent plan to improve the patients' experience across the hospital.

2. Aims

The aim of the communications and marketing strategy is to ensure that The Whittington Hospital is 'the hospital of choice for local people'.

3. Objectives

- To develop the Whittington brand and communicate it to all audiences.
- To ensure the organisation has the appropriate market intelligence to inform decision making.
- To promote the hospital as an employer which values, develops and motivates its staff and listens to and learns from their concerns.
- To improve the care, treatment and hospital experience of all patients.
- To make the Whittington the 'preferred hospital' for all GPs in the area.
- To make the Whittington the 'hospital of choice for local people' and encourage the community's involvement in hospital business.
- To develop relationships with influential local opinion formers to ensure a positive image and reputation for the organisation.
- To continue to develop a proactive media programme to ensure positive coverage of the Whittington both locally and nationally and to ensure that issues which might result in negative publicity are dealt with swiftly and damage is limited and contained.



4. Strategy

4.1 Brand development

4.1.1 Objective

To develop the Whittington brand and communicate it to all audiences.

4.1.2 Approach

A brand is who you are, your reputation, what you do and how you do it. A logo is a visual tag that identifies you. Effective brands work as hard internally as externally and your brand is involved in every aspect of how the org is seen. It has a part in all forms of contact, from marketing literature down to the way in which the phone is answered. We now need to develop the Whittington brand.

In order to do this, we need to be clear about who we are, what makes us unique and what strengths we want to build on. We also need to draw up a distinct set of brand values and behaviours that represent us and the way in which we do business. This defined position needs to become the bedrock for everything we stand for. It must have belief and support internally and be part of the fabric and culture of the organisation.

The hospital has a strong visual identity, using the black cat wherever possible, and the strapline, 'the hospital of choice for local people', has recently been approved to sit alongside the logo. We now need to be clear what this visual identity stands for and, once agreed, this must be effectively and consistently communicated to all audiences. The opening of the new building later in the year provides an ideal opportunity for us to do this. (Please note a separate communications plan has been developed for the opening of the new building).

4.2 Market intelligence

4.2.1 Objective

To ensure the organisation has the appropriate market intelligence to inform decision making.

4.2.2 Approach

Intelligence, in a variety of forms, is required to inform the communications and marketing strategy and to measure change. In particular, information is required on:

- Patients feedback (qualitative and quantitative)
- GP feedback
- Referral patterns
- Comparative data
- Staff attitudes



Much of this information is already held within the organisation and an audit is now required to find out where it's stored, how it's used and what the gaps in our knowledge are. In addition, we need to identify key areas for measurement and evaluation.

4.3 Staff

The Whittington recognises that, as a service provider, the people working within the organisation are key to the development and promotion of its reputation. The attitude and behaviour of our staff can provide 'added value' to the organisation and can be the reason why patients and GPs choose the hospital. In addition, being such a large local employer, staff can play a vital role in influencing the reputation of the hospital in the community.

4.3.1 Objective

To promote the hospital as an employer which values, develops and motivates its staff and listens to and learns from their concerns.

4.3.2 Approach

A combination of training and internal communication tools will be adopted to ensure that all staff are aware of the hospital's values and the way in which they are expected to behave. The development of a contract between patients and the hospital (see 4.4) will provide staff with clear guidelines and an internal and external audit will identify best practice. 'Patient care' will be included in annual performance reviews, where relevant, and also in the annual staff awards.

Communications - effective internal communication can make a significant contribution towards helping the Whittington achieve its objectives and will contribute towards better patient care. A variety of mediums are used to inform staff about developments at the hospital. Those that are working well are:

- The Link, the monthly magazine for all staff;
- The quarterly staff open meetings with the chief executive and other directors;
- The Chairman's coffee mornings, held every six to eight weeks, for a selected group of staff who are updated on developments and invited to feedback their comments and concerns;
- The annual Whittington staff achievement awards;
- Management visibility. Senior management are encouraged to regularly "walk the job" and be open to communication from staff.

In order to increase their effectiveness, further work needs to be done to develop the following:

- The Whittington forum and chief executive's briefing. This takes the form of a monthly briefing by the chief executive to which all staff are invited. A written briefing is then cascaded down to staff by managers



and circulated by email to all staff after one week to ensure thorough coverage. Research is currently taking place to find out if this method of communication is working well.

- The hospital's intranet is well-developed, accessible and straightforward to use. All staff identify it as being the place where they would look for information. However, due to the way in which it's managed, the information contained on the intranet is often out of date and inconsistently presented. Work is now required to address these problems.
- Noticeboards. Whilst the corporate affairs office attempts to keep these updated and clear of junk, they could be put to better use.

4.4 Patients

4.4.1 Objective

To improve the care, treatment and hospital experience of all patients.

4.4.2 Approach

The desirability of developing a contract between the hospital and its patients, which is fully supported by staff, and which is based on the organisation's values (see 4.1) will be looked into. The contract would provide patients (and staff) with a clear statement of our values and the way in which we do business. It would need to be developed with the involvement of both patients and staff and, once completed, be fully backed by senior management.

Communications – patients receive written information from the hospital through a variety of means:

- Patient information leaflets. Our award winning patient information leaflets provide advice on the hospital's services and treatments, as well as more general topics. This range will be built on, to ensure information is provided on the issues of most concern to patients (eg cleanliness, waiting times and success rates), as well as information about the new building. In addition, information that can help patients choose where to have their treatment, eg the range of services we offer pregnant women, will also be developed.
- Website. The hospital website is becoming an increasingly important medium which is easy to keep updated. However, work is required to ensure the information is kept up-to-date and is presented in a consistent manner (see 4.3).



4.5 General Practitioners

4.5.1 Objective

To make the Whittington the 'preferred hospital' for all GPs in the area.

4.5.2 Approach

GPs are a critical audience for the hospital and will be most influenced by the reality of our services, as experienced by themselves and their patients. Research amongst GPs, conducted in 2005, identified a number of areas for improvement, but on the whole the hospital was given a positive endorsement. This work now needs to be built upon.

The problems identified by GPs have become priority areas for the organisation to focus. These are:

- Discharge summaries
- Waits for ultrasound appointments
- Electronic micro-biology results
- Speed of delivery of imaging results
- Linking diagnostic and outpatients appointments

Relationships management with the most influential GPs and those working on the outskirts of the hospital's catchment area is also important. As is the encouraging and supporting consultants to develop their own relationships with GPs.

Communication – the following is currently provided:

- The Link, monthly in-house staff magazine
- GP Update, bi-monthly update on services
- Mailings, as required.

An extranet website, for all NHS staff but primarily aimed at GPs is due to be launched later in the year.

An effective communication strategy for GPs now needs to be researched and developed.

4.6 Local community and voluntary organisations

4.6.1 Objective

To make the Whittington the 'hospital of choice for local people' and to encourage the community's involvement in hospital business.

4.6.2 Approach

The opening of the new building later in the year provides an ideal opportunity to 'relaunch' the hospital to the local community. Promotion of the Whittington brand and what it stands for will be the main focus of activity.



A communications and marketing plan targeting all areas of the community will need to be developed.

4.7 Opinion formers

4.7.1 Objective

To develop relationships with influential local opinion formers to ensure a positive image and reputation for the organisation.

4.7.2 Approach

The hospital seeks to maintain good relationships with local MPs, Lynne Featherstone, Jeremy Corbyn and Glenda Jackson, through regular meetings and invitations to hospital events. We also have good working relationships with the locals councils and mayors, including the Lord Mayor of the City of London.

4.8 The media

4.8.1 Objectives

To continue to develop a proactive media programme to ensure positive coverage of the Whittington both locally and nationally and to ensure that issues which might result in negative publicity are dealt with swiftly and damage is limited and contained.

4.8.2 Approach

Our media strategy is well developed and focuses on the following areas:

- Seeks and promotes positive news stories from within the hospital;
- Provides timely and accurate information in response to requests from the media;
- Identifies and trains relevant spokespeople for the media.

5. Conclusion

This is the first joint communications and marketing strategy developed for the hospital and it will provide a guide and focus to our work. This strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated as we learn from our experiences and gain in our knowledge.

