



Press release

Hospital Marketing Execs Must Embrace Online to Capture Consumers

White Horse, a leading interactive marketing agency, found that healthcare marketing executives need to better target and execute the online marketing of their facilities and services directly to consumers. Numerous factors indicate why it's now essential for hospitals to revisit their online marketing strategy, including consumer-driven healthcare trends, clinical worker shortages, and consumers increasing preference for the Web when researching healthcare information.

Portland OR, October 4, 2006—Hospital marketing executives need to better target and execute the online marketing of their facilities and services directly to consumers. They can no longer rely on yesterday's tactics to influence the awareness, preference, purchase, and loyalty of today's healthcare consumers. That's what interactive marketing agency White Horse found in researching hospital and health plan online marketing efforts.

According to White Horse, there are several reasons why it's now essential for hospitals to revisit their online marketing strategy:

- The aging of the significant Boomer population
- Consumers' increasing proficiency with the Web and their increasing predilection for the Web when researching healthcare information
- The rise of consumer-directed healthcare such as CDHP
- Changes in the healthcare industry, including increasing competition among healthcare providers for consumer dollars
- Continued pressure to improve operational efficiencies and cut overall costs
- The shortage of qualified healthcare workers—nursing, clinical and IT professionals, in particular
- Emergence of new interactive tools

As healthcare costs rise and employers put more responsibility on consumers for choosing how to spend their healthcare dollars, consumers are wielding greater influence and demanding reliability, credibility, and value from their healthcare providers. But according to numerous industry studies, many hospitals, even though they have a Web site, haven't yet stepped up to the challenge. The usability and usefulness of their Web



sites lag far behind those of other industries. And few provide the hospital with a distinct competitive advantage.

White Horse, a leading interactive marketing agency in Portland, Oregon, is helping hospitals respond to consumer and industry demands through a number of online marketing strategies. Recently the agency worked with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and East Texas Medical Center to help evaluate and improve their online marketing efforts.

Eric Anderson, Director of Agency Services for White Horse, says, “Successful hospitals will be able to understand and capitalize on the rise of consumer control. They will realize the Web’s potential for building brand awareness and consumer preference, reducing operational costs, and influencing consumer behavior, including purchasing decisions and disease management. By demonstrating quality of care and being a source for health information, hospitals can attract more patients, increase the number of physician referrals, and recruit prospective employees.”

White Horse recommends that hospital marketers implement the following to ensure that their Web site is contributing optimally to the hospital’s bottom line:

- Evaluate your current Web site’s usability
- Understand your site’s visitors and their needs; consumers at different ages are likely to search for different information in differing ways
- Based on the usability evaluation and user research, address critical sites issues such as navigation to improve patient access
- Clarify and refine your online brand to better represent your hospital’s image, change or build consumer perception, and differentiate yourself from competitors
- Structure your Web site to allow for future growth and integration of interactive capabilities
- Implement search marketing for broader online reach and awareness building
- Evaluate, recommend, and implement a content management solution to cost-effectively keep your content fresh and up to date.
- Measure and analyze site performance; recommend, and implement enhancements; tie revenue to the Web



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A March 2006 survey of health care executives indicates that reputation in health care is a top priority for the majority (two-thirds) of industry leaders. A usable, effective Web site can be a way for a hospital to distinguish itself in its market. And the nation's Most Wired hospitals, according to the journal of the American Hospital Association, are currently developing Web sites that provide such interactive features as online health coaching for obesity, smoking and chronic conditions; online pre-registration for services from scheduling tests to appointments online; ability for patients to check test results online; online bill pay; and the opportunity to visit a physician virtually. All of these efforts will help forward-thinking hospitals reduce costs, compete more effectively, win consumer favor, and improve resource efficiencies.

For more information contact Eric Anderson at 1-877-471-4200, e-mail HealthCare@whitehorse.com, or visit <http://comps.whitehorse.com/healthcare/>.

About White Horse

White Horse can help hospitals engage the reach and interactivity of the Web to change consumer perception—to build online brand and influence consumer preference for—and loyalty to—their facility. And through Web use, improve efficiency and reduce costs. The privately held, woman-owned interactive agency specializes in marketing for healthcare plans and hospital/clinic systems. Its client roster includes global, national, and regional clients such as Columbia Sportswear, Knowledge Learning Corporation, Microsoft, Cisco Systems, Celestial Seasonings, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

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