

## Health Care System Gains from Centralized Marketing



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### **Problem to Solve**

As consumers demand more consumer-friendly health care options, amenities, and convenience, providers must market their services in ways which differentiate them from their competitors. At the same time providers also face financial pressures constraining their marketing budgets.

A large health care system sought to centralize its individual affiliate-based marketing teams, covering brand, digital, creative and research work, into a single enterprise-wide marketing organization. The goal was to gain efficiency with scale, reduce duplicative efforts, and better market the system's overall brand. The new marketing organization included several new leaders and staff members, many with consumer products experience, to facilitate new ideas and conceive different ways to market the organization. These new staff additions did not necessarily have health care experience.

As with any new team, it was taking time and effort for the updated marketing organization to come together, due in part to existing team members adhering to past operational processes and practices and having differing

approaches to project management and tool use. Processes were not documented or integrated into one overall campaign approach. Given resource limitations, competing priorities often created internal conflict. To address these issues, Freed Associates (Freed) was engaged to establish a new, single operational standard for the marketing organization.

### **Strategy and Tactics**

As planning began for the health care system's next fiscal year, the marketing organization's leadership had originally identified more than 100 projects or priorities to be tackled. However, the system's CEO specified that all company projects needed to be focused on a specified set of key company initiatives. To streamline the marketing organization's future workload down to approximately 20 manageable projects, Freed and the client held multiple facilitation workshops to:

- Identify duplicate projects (e., same work but different names)
- Ascertain areas of consolidation and synergy
- Define high-level project scopes and establish criteria for prioritization

The health care system had previously engaged an outside firm to evaluate and assess its marketing operations and recommend improvements. This effort yielded several false starts and stops. By the time this firm provided its final recommendations, many marketing leaders who had sponsored this initiative had left the organization, and remaining team members, who did not feel part of the process, did not buy into the key findings. All agreed process improvements needed to be made.

Freed and the client picked up where the prior initiative had ended, and defined a new integrated campaign process flow, representing all marketing teams. As new ideas for processes were offered and developed, these were implemented on a trial basis on current campaigns and adjusted as needed. This approach allowed for immediate and incremental process enhancements. The one downside was that the department's project teams had to absorb constant changes as processes were refined in-flight.

Finally, as new leaders with strong innovation experience joined the marketing department, the department's work teams initiated new techniques to build patient-centric marketing campaigns that aligned with the health care system leadership's business goals. New, specific key performance indicators and other metrics facilitated team members' critical thinking to ensure clarity of goals and tactics.

### **Results**

This initiative yielded a new, centralized marketing organization capable of more efficiently producing higher-quality marketing campaigns and materials. This was made possible by:

- Instituting foundational project management principles
- Developing a new, integrated process flow based on lessons learned by piloting new processes
- Aligning the marketing organization's campaigns with the overall initiatives of the health care system
- Using more appropriate tools and innovative campaign approaches

With common goals, the marketing organization's disparate teams now feel more integrated and aligned with one another and display a higher level of collaboration and cooperation. With documented process flows and new tools which assist in developing and launching campaigns, staff satisfaction has been significantly enhanced.

### **Conclusion**

By centralizing marketing, improving campaign processes at the grass-roots level, and implementing new tools, the marketing organization successfully achieved more targeted, efficient, and timely campaigns to better align with the organization's overall goals and objectives. Going forward, the marketing group plans to invest in additional project managers to maintain these improvements and ensure that future campaigns are managed in a standardized, repeatable manner.