

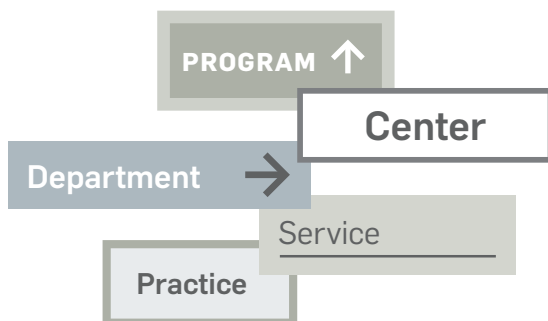
Meeting Naming Challenges in Hospitals

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At the Brand Union, in our work with hospitals, we have found that the industry as a whole grapples with a complex and confusing approach to naming their services.

Not that long ago, hospitals were chosen based on a single recommendation from a friend or doctor, or by reputation. Not so today. With so much information available, consumers are seeking out the hospitals that offer them exactly what they're looking for. Sure, references still matter, but with the dawn of the Internet and consumers taking charge of their own health care, the game is changing and hospitals need to optimize all of the ways they interact with consumers in order to be considered.

According to a McKinsey survey with U.S. patients, 41% of patients' choice is based on non-clinical experiences. When considering a hospital, consumers are on a quest for transparency and helpful information. They use the Internet to research institutions that will give them the best care and the best experience. In a time of crisis, clarity goes a long way. This means that hospitals have to move away from basing their reputations on clinical services alone and build their reputations through all of their communications.



This paradigm shift from reactive—waiting for a patient who is recommended, to proactive—reaching out to attract consumers, is a huge opportunity for hospitals. Becoming proactive requires communicating in a clear manner in order to stand out among competitors and to attract

and keep more patients. Key to excellent communications is a consistent, consumer-focused naming structure. Although often overlooked, a naming system is a crucial component of clear communications.

A naming system delivers order to names. It provides consumers and other audiences with an intuitive understanding and at-a-glance view of a company's divisions, entities, products and services and communicates how they relate to the company and to each other. Sometimes the association is communicated through a word or a letter. A good example is Apple: iTunes, iPod, iPhone. A successful naming system makes a complex portfolio of products or services easy to understand for consumers.

At the Brand Union, in our work with hospitals, we have found that the industry as a whole grapples with a complex and confusing approach to naming their services. These naming pitfalls include:

- Missing verbal and visual hierarchies, which inhibit an intuitive understanding of relationships between services
- Complex way-finding often due to confusing building names and lengthy donor names, which makes it hard for consumers to navigate/find locations inside buildings
- Inconsistently or unsystematically named services which are difficult for consumers to understand

A clearly structured and simple naming system articulates the services that a hospital offers so that the patient is able to find and understand what they are looking for. This is important not just to attract consumers, but also to keep them by familiarizing them with offerings they may need in the future.

Meeting the customers needs today as well as in the future helps to build reputation and encourage growth. Hospitals that take steps to address the situation can stand out among competitors.

A good naming system is based on the consumer perspective. A proper review and analysis of all service offerings should be completed, taking clinical realities and best industry practice into account. Moreover, the naming system should leverage design, since visual expression helps consumers understand relationships between services intuitively. Finally, creating naming development guidelines and naming decision tools provide a long-term consistent approach to naming and helps the marketing team make future decisions.

A clear, coherent and consistent naming structure is an opportunity for hospitals to differentiate themselves through better serving their patients and families. Recognizing this opportunity creates a positive experience for patients and develops brand and patient loyalty.

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