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As we continue to persevere in our daily healthcare delivery efforts during this lengthy pandemic, it's important to keep our **spirits up** and our **mindsets focused** on providing stellar results for those in our care.

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The Leading Edge

Marketing Amidst the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is undoubtedly wreaking havoc on occupancy and revenue streams, and unfortunately it doesn't appear like there's any end in sight. Healthcare providers are focusing on how to remain afloat, and marketing (and marketing dollars) may seem like a distant memory and activity. However, healthcare organizations must not jump the marketing ship. It may feel counterintuitive, but now is the time for providers to shift marketing into high gear. Such an effort can help create a competitive advantage and help your organization recover faster once the crisis has passed.

Strategies for Marketing during the Pandemic

The current environment will indeed cause you to shift from your conventional marketing tactics to more non-traditional methods. Here are some strategies to consider:

- **Proceed with caution.** If you were executing marketing campaigns when the pandemic began, take some time to review and assess if you can or should continue with those campaigns. If you had general campaign that promotes your organization and its overall services, it should be alright to continue with that campaign. However, if a campaign has a call to action, like making an appointment or visit, you'll likely need to cease it. Also keep in mind that many marketing campaigns can come across as insensitive or tone deaf during these times. That said, creating campaigns around any new telemedicine options or new safety and sanitation processes would be appropriate as your patients need to know what's available.
- **Leverage digital channels and education.** Americans are spending more time online and have more free time on their hands due to the pandemic. Moreover, just because the healthcare landscape has changed a bit, it doesn't mean that people don't need or aren't looking for services. With that in mind, now is a great time to create and host webinars and virtual informational seminars. Allow attendees to interact and ask questions—this will allow you to capture what's on their mind and identify opportunities.
- **Shout your success stories from the rooftop.** With the never-ending cycle of bad news surrounding the pandemic, positive uplifting stories are in dire need. Media outlets are eager to report on any angle or story that offers hope. Look for positive stories within your facility that can be pitched to media outlets. Get your experts in front of a camera to talk about how your organization is successfully tackling the virus and what it's doing differently than competitors.
- **Make sure your website and social media are updated regularly.** Prospects and families will get very irritated if your updated processes and policies aren't at their fingertips. Are visitors allowed? Which entrances are opened? Who will be screened? Don't harm your brand by making it difficult to find relevant, timely information. It doesn't take much for a frustrated customer to send an angry tweet voicing their frustration about your facility. Avoid this scenario by keeping your website and all digital channels up to date.

Remember, now is the time to double-down on your marketing efforts. Fortunately, it doesn't require large marketing dollars—it just calls for some strategic moves, which have been outlined above.

*"When I hear somebody sigh, 'Life is hard,'
I am always tempted to ask, 'Compared to what?'"*
—Sydney Harris



Dealing with the Stigma of COVID-19

As the pandemic continues to rage on, healthcare professionals continue to be impacted by the stigma related to the COVID-19 virus. Such stigma includes others' fear of contact with those treating patients with COVID-19. Healthcare workers may also have a self-stigma about voicing their needs and fears. And if employees are struggling with acknowledging or recognizing these stigmas or have a fear of being removed from their duties, they may fail to ask or seek support when it's direly needed. Given this, employers need to quickly act to provide a supportive working environment free of stigma and fear of negative consequences.

Do's & Don'ts

Providing a supportive and nurturing environment for healthcare employees can prove quite challenging given that healthcare professionals are not only dealing with current stigmas, but also often prioritize the needs of others over their own. With this in mind, it's important for employers to foster and continually focus on these behaviors and strategies.

Do:

- Encourage regular check-ins with colleagues, family, and friends. Talk to employees. Are they seeking out and sharing social support (which may need to occur virtually)? Maintaining strong social connections is key to managing stress.
- Ensure employees are working in partnerships or in teams. You'll want to make sure employees are checking in with other colleagues to discuss work experiences. They'll find comfort and solace in sharing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
- Offer multiple brief relaxation/stress management breaks, as well as time-outs for basic bodily care and refreshment. More importantly, make sure your employees are taking these breaks.
- Remind employees to focus their efforts on what is within their power and push them to accept situations they cannot change.

There are also key items that you should make every effort to avoid when it comes to combatting stigma and creating a supportive working environment.

Don't:

- Have employees work too long by themselves without checking in with

colleagues. It's important that employees connect and check in with one another often in times like these. When employees *go it alone*, they will quickly feel isolated.

- Avoid conversation about how employees are coping with stress. Are they using negative coping strategies like excessive eating, caffeine, use of alcohol, illicit drugs, etc.? Ask them how they're coping with stress and encourage healthy behaviors like deep breathing, walking, taking a bath to relax, etc.
- Allow negative self-talk around the workplace. If you hear employees getting down on themselves, shut it down. Examples include statements like:
 - "It would be selfish to take time to rest."
 - "Others are working around the clock, so should I."
 - "The needs of patients are more important than the needs of caregivers."
 - "My contributions are nothing in the grand scheme of things."

If you hear these types of comments, counter them with statements like:

- "You can't care for others effectively if you don't care for yourself first."
- "You'll be better equipped to stay healthy and care for others over the long run if you take the rest and care you need"
- "Every patient counts. Don't minimize your impact."

Do your best to encourage positive self-talk. If negative self-talk persists, it can lower self-esteem and an employee's overall sense of worth.

If you see employee stress that's interfering with their functioning for longer than two to three weeks, encourage them to seek professional physical and mental assessments. Professional care and treatment may be required.

*"I am thankful for all of those who said NO to me.
It's because of them I'm doing it myself."
—Albert Einstein*



News You Can Use

CMS Keeps Stance that Providers must still give Ombudsman Access to Residents

According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the ongoing public health emergency shouldn't stop providers from giving ombudsman access to nursing home residents. The CMS recently issued an updated memo reminding facilities that federal nursing home regulations, along with the CARES Act, require that the state long-term care ombudsman must have continued direct access, or virtual access, to residents during any portion of the public health emergency.

CMS noted that in-person access may be restricted during the public health emergency if there are concerns about infection control or the transmission of COVID-19. If that's the case, providers must facilitate resident communication by phone or through the use of technology with the ombudsman.

CMS officials noted that the CARES Act does not repeal or amend CMS requirements under sections 1819 or 1919 of the act or implementing regulations. Nor does it place a time limit or expiration date. Instead, it affirms that the current pandemic requires the ombudsman program and long-term care facilities to support resident access and communication in a variety of methods.

"The work you do when you procrastinate is probably the work you should be doing for the rest of your life."

—Jessica Hische



Just For Fun

Bet You Will Crack a Smile

These jokes may be silly, but they're bound to make you smile and giggle!

Remember: Teamwork is important. It helps put the blame on someone else.

Why did the can crusher quit her job? Because it was soda pressing.

I just heard the company's going to fire the employee with the worst posture. I have a hunch that might be me.

You know what a clean desk is a sign of? A cluttered desk drawer.

I got fired from the calendar factory. Don't know why — all I did was take a day off.

I always tell new hires, "Don't think of me as your boss. Think of me as a friend that can fire you."





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