

Consulting

Speaking

Anthony CV

Senior
ProvidersPress
RoomSatisfied
ClientsCase
Studies

Products

Contact

Home

Profiles in Healthcare Marketing, September/October 1995 News Hound Program involves employees, increases media coverage.

Media relations

Rancocas and Zurbrugg Hospitals introduce "News Hound" idea

Hospitals involve employees as number-one PR ambassadors to spread good news, increase employee morale

Employees are the true number-one public relations ambassadors, not the public relations and marketing staff.

That's the contention of the marketing and public relations department at Rancocas and Zurbrugg Hospitals in Riverside, N.J.

Results of an employee survey conducted in late 1993 brought that idea into sharp focus.

The survey was primarily designed to gauge employee job satisfaction, but it also included two other questions: one regarding employee perception of quality of care provided at the hospitals, and the other regarding their perception of the reputation of the hospitals as viewed by employees and their neighbors.

The figures were disturbing. Quality of care was rated 3.37 out of a possible 5. (This was 0.28 lower than the national norm for this question.) Reputation was rated at 3.46, lower than the national norm of 3.92.

The hospitals had fared well in their most recent Gallup survey, conducted in late 1991. But now, the perception of employees did not necessarily match the perception of the community.

Objectives

The challenge to the marketing and public relations department was to increase employee morale by making employees more involved in

spreading the good news about the hospitals. That's when the News Hound idea was conceived.

According to Anthony Cirillo, director of marketing and public relations for Rancocas and Zurbrugg Hospitals, "We've always believed that employees are the number-one public relations ambassadors for the hospitals."

The idea is simplicity itself. Employees are encouraged to submit newsworthy story ideas to the public relations department through a form in the monthly employee newsletter, or by picking up the phone and calling the PR department with an idea. It's then up to the PR staff to pitch the idea to the local media.

Published articles win awards

If a newspaper story is published, the employee who suggested it is recognized at a department director meeting and given a News Hound T-shirt, two movie tickets and a bag of microwave popcorn. If a story is placed on television, the recipient is given two additional movie tickets.

Because of its dual purpose (improving morale and generating positive publicity), the program is more than just an internal communications program.

The marketing/PR department's objective was to generate and place at least one human-interest story per

continued on page 32

VITAL STATS

Program type:
Media relations

Program budget:
Approximately \$300 annually

Program dates:
April 1994 - ongoing

Facility size:
318 beds - Rancocas Hospital
154 beds - Zurbrugg Hospital

Facility type:
Full-service, not-for-profit hospital,
part of Graduate Health System

Competitors:
Two locally, plus other regional hospitals

Institution:
Rancocas and Zurbrugg Hospitals
1 Hospital Plaza
Riverside, NJ 08075

Contact:
Anthony Cirillo
Director of Marketing and PR
609-835-3415

Results:
The program far exceeded expectations. Fifteen stories have either been aired or received newspaper coverage. Employees are enthusiastic about the program, and two story ideas submitted for 1995 already have resulted in a 90-second feature on Philadelphia TV.

Fast Forward Consulting
Anthony Cirillo, FACHE, ABC; Principal
15645 Northstone Drive
Huntersville, NC 28078
704-992-6005 / 704-992-6160 (fax)

cirillo@4wardfast.com