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Digital Marketing 101 for Healthcare Organizations: how to get started

Marketing is a critical aspect of any healthcare system's revenue generating operations. And healthcare systems are searching for the most effective marketing tools that are capable of giving them successful results especially within the tight budgets allocated.

Digital Marketing is the effective tool to do just that—but getting started can be challenging and layered with some uncertainty. In this white paper, we'll show you exactly how.



In a previous white paper, [“Organize and Promote Your Health Campaign in 5 Easy Steps,”](#) we shared how to organize and promote your health campaign in 5 easy steps. One of those steps is to *choose tools and tactics*. And to see the best results in today’s landscape, **digital** should be one of those tactics.

The value of a digital marketing program is in its ability to track effectiveness and immediately measure in a very quantitative manner the impact of your efforts (and budget resources). But the natural question is ‘how to begin’.

To start digital marketing on the right foot, do it gradually. You don’t have to dive in head first to see results. Dip your toes in, with a Newcomers campaign, for example, and see if you can impact your bottom line. If it works (and we are confident it will!), you will have built a clear case to ask the powers that be for a bigger budget.

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change.”

— **Charles Darwin**

Embracing change—integrating digital marketing

Healthcare marketing has been shifting over the past 5-6 years. With the proliferation of technology, the consumer demand model for creating awareness for products and services has changed too. In response to that shift, a number of large health systems who have started integrating digital marketing are starting to see significant results ([like Orlando health did](#), see pg 9).

Digital marketing is undoubtedly the way the world is going. It’s time to get on board.

PART **1**

The benefits of digital marketing

If your healthcare system likes *results*, digital marketing shines for many reasons:

DIGITAL MARKETING IS TARGETED.

Are you unsure exactly who is seeing your marketing materials because so far you've been using a blanket approach?

With digital marketing, you can segment your list and create different strategies for each. For example, “new movers” or “newcomers” who live within a certain proximity to your health system will be more likely to use all of your services, while those who live farther away are more likely to come for your specialties, like your top-notch cardiac care.

DIGITAL MARKETING IS TRACKABLE.

Do potential patients reach out with questions then disappear into thin air? Maybe they've booked an appointment—maybe they haven't. With digital marketing, you will know exactly what's working and who's converting. By capturing an inquiring patient's email address along with their mailing address, you can build their profile and therefore capture their actions and participation. You will know who attends and who doesn't—who signs up and who doesn't. Based on those actions, you can segment further, targeting specific groups with the most relevant communications.

Email addresses are important because they have value. For example, in the Consumer Packaged Goods segment, an email address is worth approximately \$10, according to digital marketing specialist, Anjun Shah, MBA, PMP and Principal of [Artsvue](#). “That's why you see so many retailers willing to give you \$10 off for your opted-in email. In the retail segment, on average, you see a 3X return over the customer life cycle. So over a year you'll net \$20 on a \$10 investment—that's a 100% return.”

DIGITAL MARKETING IS A LIST-BUILDER.

Even if you do have contact information for patients and prospects, it's likely this information is all over the place. Digital marketing lets you capture relevant information that enables you to build a coherent profile for each person—all in one place. This is where the true power of digital marketing lies! By keeping each individual's profile updated, you can continue to refine your marketing efforts and give them exactly what they need.

DIGITAL MARKETING GIVES YOU THE POWER OF INSIGHT.

Because digital marketing is trackable, you can analyze your results and begin to gain *understanding*. For example, if you start to get information on certain household clusters, you can project those across the market footprint. That makes your marketing efforts even more powerful, targeted and effective.

DIGITAL MARKETING IS COST-EFFICIENT.

Without a digital component, your traditional marketing *might* be working overall, but it's unlikely you can pinpoint the success of a particular effort. This means money is potentially being wasted. Instead of seeing it as a "cost," reframe it as an investment. This will allow you to see 'gains' on your spend. Because you are dealing with a literal customer life cycle, you could potentially have someone in your system from cradle to grave, allowing revenue over a 60-70 year period.

PART 2

Proof that digital marketing works (even if you're starting with zero email addresses)

Recently, we had the privilege of learning about University of Iowa Health Care's first digital marketing campaign from Cheryl Hodgson (University of Iowa Health Care) and Sara Dykes (LionShare).

When they started in 2006, University of Iowa Health Care had zero email addresses. Today, they have over 100,000 email addresses that can be used for marketing purposes.

How did they do that?

STARTING A NEWCOMERS CAMPAIGN

The University of Iowa wanted to start conversations with newcomers in hopes that they would turn into long-term relationships. With help from their marketing partner, LionShare, they embarked on a mailing campaign over a period of 18 months.

We've created the below infographic to show the goal, plan, and process The University of Iowa and LionShare followed to execute their mailing campaign.

Newcomers Campaign

The University of Iowa Health Care Case Study



THE CLIENT

University of Iowa Health Care, guided by their marketing partner, LionShare.



THE GOAL

To start conversations with newcomers in hopes that they would turn into long-term relationships.



THE PLAN

Embark on a strategic mailing campaign that would include **2 mail drops over a period of 18 months.**

CONTROL GROUP: Before beginning the Newcomers Campaign, they set aside a control group similar to the people they planned to target—but never reached out to them. This would be to address the question they knew would come later: “Wouldn’t they have just come here anyway?”



DROP 1

- ✓ Mailed each month to 47 zip codes in their target market.
- ✓ The mailer discussed primary care opportunities and key specialty service lines.
- ✓ A BRC (business reply card) was included that could be returned via mail or online. The recipient was asked to share contact information, including email address.
- ✓ This information was automatically entered into the database, initiating each person’s digital record.



DROP 2

- ✓ Mailed 8 weeks later to those who didn’t respond to Drop 1.
- ✓ In the nearest zip codes, a mailer with BRC was sent promoting primary care.
- ✓ In the farther away zip codes, a mailer with BRC was sent to promote specialty care.



Drop 1 had a response rate consistently in the double digits.



Drop 2 consistently had a 3% response rate.

BUT THAT’S NOT ALL!

University of Iowa Health Care didn’t stop there. They wanted to know what was happening beyond these response rates. **Were people actually using their services?** They underwent a utilization study with LionShare in which they worked closely with their finance and IT departments. (At this time, the patient data didn’t exist in the marketing database.) Here are the results:



Compared to the control group, the 7000 households University of Iowa Health Care reached out to generated 10x the gross charges in 18 months.



For every \$1 dollar they spent in marketing they generated \$5 in net revenue for the organization.



This was the first time in our organization that we were able to stand in front of key leaders and be able to demonstrate the financial impact of a marketing program. It really helped change the conversation about what marketing was. It got away from the subjective aspects of ‘I like blue’ or ‘I didn’t see our television ad, therefore we’re not doing anything.’ It allowed us to say, ‘It’s working, and here’s the proof that it’s working.’

—Cheryl Hodgson,
University of Iowa Health Care

PART 3 Start your own digital Newcomers Campaign

Health systems and hospitals have been doing these types of campaigns offline for ages. That's why it's the perfect campaign to take *online*! Here's how:

FIRST, YOU DON'T NEED EMAIL ADDRESSES

Don't have email addresses or comprehensive data? It's okay. Many organizations start without data. As you saw in the previous example, digital campaigns are a way to collect data.

NOW, WHAT YOU DO NEED:



A goal: Use this [white paper](#) to define your goals, organize your campaign, and ensure your effort exceeds your goals.



The ability to create new website pages/microsites/sign-up pages: If you are asking people to share their information online, you will need to add someplace they can do so. This will need to feed directly into your CRM.



Zip codes: If you don't already know, figure out which zip codes are nearby, and which are a little farther away but still within reasonable proximity.



A call to action: Make it easy for recipients to take action and be sure to ask them to do so. Make sure to get their first name, last name, zip code and email.



CRM system: You will need a customer relationship management system to keep, organize, access and segment the information you gather.



Design. Make sure that your marketing initiative is visually coherent and reflects your brand. This will be their first impression and you must represent your brand clearly and authentically.



A responsive website: This means your website can be readily viewed from all devices including desktop, mobile phones, tablets and laptops.



Photography. Good photography is essential for effective digital marketing. Don't use stock photos, instead, budget at least one photo shoot a year to shoot images within your community. You want them to identify the images and think, "This is our town." It's not a huge investment and it's well worth it.

NEW MOVERS: WHAT MATTERS

by Aimee Chamberlin (Reprinted with permission from [Lionshare Marketing](#))

Do you want to attract new, unique patients? New movers, people who have recently moved into a healthcare system’s defined market area, are the perfect audience who will be seeking out healthcare services – when the need arises make sure they seek out yours. Increase volume to your entry points (primary care, urgent care and ER) and connect with these high-value consumers to drive brand preference. There are many components and metrics that contribute to new mover success. Below are a few to consider for your strategy and audience selection.

MULTIPLE TOUCHPOINTS

In this case, a touchpoint refers to marketing sent out to targeted consumers (either direct mail or digital). Although single-touch programs are successful, our years of testing and analysis shows that the more touchpoints to new movers the higher their utilization rate of healthcare services. The more your brand is in front of new movers with multi-touch direct mail, digital and nurturing campaigns the more likely they are to use your services.

LIST SELECTION CRITERIA

Our targeting capabilities help you identify the new mover segments that matter. Whether including an income screen for those with a desired payer mix, presence of children in the home for pediatrics or long-distance moves for “true” new movers to your market, we’ll help you find the right segmentation plan to maximize your budget.

LIFETIME VALUE

Our healthcare new mover clients see a higher percentage of new patients to the health system from new mover campaigns when compared to other consumer marketing campaigns. New movers often enter the system through primary care, urgent care and the ER. Converting the new mover to a new patient creates lifetime value to your health system.

UTILIZATION RATES

Every marketing dollar is precious, so we determine the utilization rates per zip code and compare them to the marketing spend for each of those zips. When it doesn’t make sense to spend marketing dollars to go after a zip or area that historically doesn’t respond, we adjust our strategy and target audience.



Stephanie Helline
OWNER +
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Ready to embrace digital marketing?

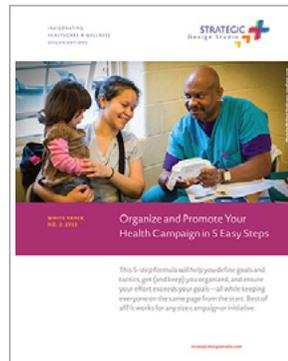
We would love to help you develop and implement a Newcomers Campaign that will drive results.

To learn more about how we can help, let's talk. [Schedule a complimentary consultation today.](#)

And be sure to read our other reports here:



WHAT TO DO ...
When your external audience will see your internal healthcare messages



Organize and Promote Your Health Campaign in 5 Easy Steps



Video: The Strategic Healthcare Solution



Everyone Builds the Brand



4 Questions for a Successful Healthcare Communications Project