

STRATEGIC MARKETING TOOLKIT



Success Strategies for Hospice

Hospice
MINNESOTA
for care of the dying

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THE
HOPE
WISCONSIN
The Hospice Organization and
Palliative Experts of Wisconsin

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A GUIDED TOUR OF THE TOOLKIT

If you're reading this, either there's nothing good on TV or you're really interested in how you can use Marketing to take your hospice to the next level (or both!) I promise to do my best to make it worth your while.

Since a toolkit is quite literally a set of tools, its usefulness really depends on the user. A hammer, nails, a saw, a handful of screws, a screwdriver, and a drill won't get out of their case and build you a book case by themselves; you need the tools, but the toil and the sweat is all yours. If you leave the tools on a shelf, they'll collect dust and you'll never build anything at all. If you misuse them you can very well hurt yourself, adding blood and tears to the toil and sweat. Handle them with care and use them well, perhaps call a carpenter you know for tips if you're not quite sure how to do something, and you may end up with a book case so beautiful you won't believe your eyes.

The same goes for this very toolkit: It offers a variety of Strategic Marketing tools and advice on a broad range of topics, from measuring patient, family and employee satisfaction to fundraising, training, volunteers, brand management, hiring marketing experts, and many more. Do nothing, and you'll be in possession of nothing more than an oddly shaped doorstop. Cut corners in implementing the advice or use the tools carelessly, and you may do more harm than good. Implement the advice with due diligence, asking an expert you already know and trust for pointers when you need them, and you will see positive results. I *know* you will, because not only can I justify every last recommendation, but I've implemented them before myself, seeing the results with my own eyes. Don't take my word for it, however: Look around you, and you'll see thousands of examples of just how successful well-executed Marketing campaigns can be. Yours can be one of those success stories too!

When you're a Professor and you've been teaching for nearly twenty years, it's tempting to keep writing in a cryptic academic dialect that would require a team of interpreters to decipher. I resisted the temptation, because I wanted to offer you something you can actually use. This toolkit designed to be user-friendly rather than formal; it is instructional without being overly

technical, and it's full of examples (from the field of hospice and palliative care, but also many others) to illustrate the concepts it presents.

From time to time the examples mentioned in various chapters refer to specific hospices or other organizations by name, or recommend specific experts ranging from graphic design to photography and more: In the interest of full disclosure, none of the individuals or organizations you'll read about in this toolkit have been asked for, offered or provided compensation of any kind whatsoever in order to be mentioned herein. Any endorsements or positive comments about them by the author are both genuine and entirely unsolicited.

Although this toolkit consists of multiple sections, a Marketing program is something cohesive, not compartmentalized: As a result, you'll find common threads and ideas throughout the toolkit. Each chapter is distinct, but it's also one part of a puzzle whose many pieces belong together.

If you're a hospice Executive Director, here's your chance to direct and execute! None of this can happen without your buy-in, and without the buy-in of everyone in your organization. It's up to you to ensure that buy-in, but remember that if your hospice consists of more than three staff members, attempting to implement elements of this toolkit by consensus could result in half-measures or even non-implementation. Buy-in can be achieved through open channels of communication, dialogue, and inclusive decision making—but you ultimately have to make decisions on action, and it's impossible to make decisions that everyone agrees with. Be decisive, and implement the things you believe will make your hospice stronger and better. Don't micromanage others, but don't be micromanaged by them. Provide leadership, because management-by-committee (whether that refers to staff or your board) is inefficient, frustrating for all involved, and not known to have led any organization to greatness.

When the Bremer Foundation funded the grant that made this toolkit possible, and did so in economically challenging times for all, it acted out of conviction that this is a project of importance, urgency, and great practical use. Although your own resources may be scarce, instead of approaching the toolkit's recommendations with preconceptions of "we can't afford to do this," I urge you to consider "*how* can we afford to do this?" You can get stuck pondering problems or you can look for solutions—especially when the task is very important to complete. Doing nothing is often *far* more expensive than you think: We try and try

to convince legislators that not funding hospice benefits is actually far more expensive than funding hospice benefits, and get infinitely frustrated when “they just don’t get it!” Accordingly, not using Marketing tools to conduct research, engage in effective branding, train staff, recognize volunteers, add professional-quality photographs to your website and publicity materials, etc. is ultimately going to be far more expensive than actually doing those things.

If you’re at a very small hospice, maybe you can pool resources with a larger hospice, or a couple of other small ones—and create something (be it a survey, a brochure, a training program, and so on) you can all use. Maybe you can partner with a hospital or clinic, which could use some of the very things you’re creating. Maybe you can prioritize and do things one at a time. Maybe you can raise money specifically to fund one of these efforts. Naturally you have to be mindful of budget considerations, but it’s possible to do it all—and very costly (not to mention strategically short-sighted) to say “we just can’t do it.”

Without some sense of urgency, you may be unable to take advantage of important opportunities, respond to threats in a timely manner, or correct critical deficiencies as soon as possible. How you get to the airport is pointless if you don’t get there on time. It’s not just the correct course of action that matters, but its prompt execution does as well.

Not having tools you know you need to become more effective, more competitive, more distinguished, can be frustrating. Having the tools and not using them is simply a waste of resources. Your background may not be in Business, but this is a Strategic Marketing Toolkit for the non-Marketer; something everyone can understand and use. I know that helping your hospice means helping you provide better care for more people at their hour of greatest need, and if this toolkit makes even the slightest positive difference in your organization, it will have well been worth the effort.