

COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

A small hospital fights back against the big-box competition in its own way – and wins.



The Problem

A 130-bed community hospital in the suburbs of a Southern California city found itself fighting for its survival against a much bigger and better funded downtown tertiary hospital.

The hospital was losing physicians and patients. Employee morale was low and what flicker of public awareness existed for the facility was dwindling.

The Solution

We launched an aggressive, confident grassroots campaign that emphasized the hospital's unique strengths, its social history and the convenient, intimate care we could offer that the big downtown medical megacomplex could not match.

We began with a quick analysis of the territory. We took a snapshot of the market and each hospital's product line strengths and deficits. We conducted a baseline public opinion survey of the hospital's primary and secondary communities. And we tested a sampling of messages to determine those that best energized our physicians, our nurses and our patients.

With that in hand, we formed a committed in-house team and together crafted a two-year campaign targeting every audience that mattered to the hospital – from custodians, nurses and physicians to community opinion leaders, patients and family members.

The message was never combative, but it clearly differentiated the community hospital in the market. It celebrated the hospital's unique position and service. It honored its quirky culture and the close-knit community of nurses and others that supported it.

A variety of tools were used – community forums, advertising, one-on-one dinners, speaker bureaus and more. Some were obvious. Others were more...creative. The more people the campaign involved, the more energy it generated.

We were the hospital's campaign manager, helping the in-house team stay focused on the plan while adapting to new opportunities.

The Result

Within 24 months, the hospital was named "Business of the Year" by the local Chamber of Commerce and its CEO was named "CEO of the Year" for the hospital's reemergence into the community. The once-faltering patient census rebounded, physicians and payers returned, and the hospital continues to grow and serve.