

Branding Your Quality Report

Moderator: Lise Rybowski, Consultant, TalkingQuality; President, The Severyn Group

Speaker:

Lisa Mason, Director of Cost Quality, the Greater Detroit Area Health Council

Lise Rybowski

From the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, welcome to a new podcast from TalkingQuality, a Web site about communicating comparative information on health care quality to consumers. I'm Lise Rybowski from the Severyn Group and I manage the TalkingQuality project. With me today is Lisa Mason, Director of Cost Quality at the Greater Detroit Area Health Council.

We're here today to talk about branding a Web site -- that is, giving a site its own name and using that name to build awareness and draw users to the site. We know that's a real challenge for pretty much all developers of comparative quality reports.

In 2009, Lisa and her team launched a new Web site called My Care Compare. This site offers consumers comparative information about doctor's offices and hospitals in Southeast Michigan. Lisa, thanks for joining us today to share your experience with using branding to create an identity for your site.

Lisa Mason

Hi Lise, thank you.

Lise Rybowski

My Care Compare is a name that's very different from your organization's identity. What led you to decide that you needed to come up with a brand for your quality report?

Lisa Mason

That's right, Lise, it's quite different. We're known as the Greater Detroit Area Health Council or affectionately GDAHC. And we had a Web site for GDAHC and a Web site for one of our major products, Save Lives Save Dollars. And we thought those were some great names but we had a Web vendor that we hired to work with us on designing this site. And that vendor is sort of a one-stop shop; they do everything. They do not just the Web site design and building, but they do focus groups and usability testing and branding.

The first thing that they recommended to us when we got started with them to design our Web site was to consider our brand. They pointed out to us that names like GDAHC or Greater Detroit Area

Health Council or Save Lives Save Dollars are not names that consumers would really connect with. And they recommended that we do a branding project when we start out.

Lise Rybowski

So tell me a little bit, why is branding important for quality care? What do you think it will do for you?

Lisa Mason

Well it's really important to create a recognizable identity, something that consumers can really connect with and remember. As much as you can do to promote your Web site, the easier you make it for consumers to think about your brand name when they're thinking about health care and quality, and health care decisions, the better off you're going to be -- the more they'll remember your site and be able to get to it quickly and easily.

Lise Rybowski

Well that makes a lot of sense. Can you tell us, how did you develop the brand then?

Lisa Mason

Well, again it started with our vendor. Our vendor started out our whole Web site design project with a focus group. We had three different focus groups that gave us input on not only the brand but some of our Web site ideas and concepts, and we got feedback from them on the brand that we ultimately selected, which is MyCareCompare.org.

We also did a lot of internal consensus building, things like talking with our staff; we certainly are vested in it, and have an opinion. And we're a multi-stakeholder collaborative and our leadership comes from all different areas of health care. We got input from not only hospitals and physicians and purchasers of health care, but consumers as well.

Consumers are the people that will be using the Web site and we had a consumer group that gave us some feedback and that was very important. We looked at things like references to the Detroit area since that's where we're based; we considered names that had that in it. We ultimately rejected that idea because we're more than just Detroit and wanted to have a name that was going to resonate with the entire region. So we ended up with something that we think is very catchy and easy to remember.

Lise Rybowski

So during this process, what kind of issues did you have to deal with? And how did you actually deal with them?

Lisa Mason

Well, we did get some resistance from our own internal leadership and staff. They were very vested in our names, Greater Detroit Area Health Council and Save Lives Save Dollars. We have a great sense of ownership and it's really tough to give that up. And they really thought that the best name would be

something that is very descriptive such as “Healthcare Quality Report.” To them, they thought that was what would be most memorable. But it was really on the advice of our vendor who had some expertise in marketing and branding that convinced us that “Healthcare Quality Report,” while that makes sense to us as professionals, that’s really not a name that would resonate well with consumers. And the results of our focus group really bore that out.

Lise Rybowski

Now that you have this name, what have you been doing to build awareness of it in the community?

Lisa Mason

We have a number of things that we’ve been doing. As a small non-profit, we don’t have a lot of money to do marketing and advertising so we use our stakeholders. Again, we’re a multi-stakeholder collaborative with people that come to the table to work with us on these initiatives. And that includes our hospitals and health systems who happen to be some of the biggest employers in the Detroit region right now. So we ask them to promote the Web site to their employees and in doing that, we reach a large segment of our population.

And to make it really easy for them to do that, we created a toolkit of materials that they could use with their employees and really get the word out. So for example, we provide them with newsletter articles, sample e-mails, blurbs that they can put on their Web site to link to our Web site and instructions for that linking, meeting talking points, content for open enrollment materials, short and long, things like that. And we also created business cards; we call them our Web site business cards. And we have them just like you would use business cards anytime you’re at a meeting. We put them on the table or hand them out to our attendees.

And of course we do press releases and announcements to the media every time there’s an update or we add some new information. And occasionally, there may be a presentation where we have an opportunity to give a plug for the Web site. So we try to be as creative and innovative as possible in using all kinds of different ways to get the word out about our Web site.

Lise Rybowski

That’s great. And now that you’ve actually been around for a while and you’ve done all of this promotion, do you have any plans to assess the impact of this branding strategy?

Lisa Mason

Absolutely. We’re looking for some resources to do more focus group testing on not only the brand but the Web site itself and how to make it more consumer-friendly. And of course, hits to the Web site is a real clear number that you can get to see how successful you’re being. We use Google Analytics to measure the use of our Web site: how many people come to the Web site, where they come from, how long they stay there, which pages they look at, and of course, all of that is a direct result of how memorable our brand is.

Lise Rybowski

I wish you a lot of luck with that. I'd be curious to see what happens. For my last question, I'd like to ask, what advice would you give to other report developers that may be considering a branding strategy like yours. Would you recommend this approach to others? And what tips would you give them?

Lisa Mason

I would definitely recommend it. I think it's an important step and I think this investment of thinking about it ahead of time, really having a conversation, giving it more than a passing thought, making a deliberate decision about the brand can be something that really yields results later. It's something that's important to do in the beginning because it's hard to change once you've made a commitment and gotten started.

And I think that when you consider brands, it's important to keep it short, make it memorable and catchy, and know who your audience is, who you're trying to reach, and what will resonate with your audience.

And finally, do plan to dedicate resources to the promotion part. It's going to take resources, time and effort, and energy -- and not only to promoting the Web site but also evaluating its impact as you just alluded to Lise.

Lise Rybowski

Well, thank you, Lisa. This is really excellent advice for the many organizations like yours that are developing quality reports for consumers.

You can check out the report that Lisa is talking about at www.mycarecompare.org. I'd also like to encourage our listeners to visit the TalkingQuality Web site at www.talkingquality.a-h-r-q.gov [www.talkingquality.ahrq.gov] to read about other strategies for designing and promoting comparative reports on health care quality. To hear about future podcasts, be sure to subscribe to the TalkingQuality e-mail list by clicking on the little red envelope at the top of our Web site.

If you have any questions or would like to suggest other topics, please contact us by e-mail at www.talkingquality@a-h-r-q.gov [talkingquality@ahrq.gov]. Thank you for joining us on TalkingQuality.

(END OF TRANSCRIPTION)