



URGENCY WRAPPED IN HOPE: IT'S TIME FOR NEW HEALTH CARE MESSAGING

COVID-19 news, garish imagery, social media provocation, political unrest and racial divides has been exhausting. Even a potential escape from reality via sports radio provides more than exciting news of home runs, comeback stories and last-second touchdowns. Instead, for every replay, moment of glory and pause from the plaguing issues, there are unwanted opinions, arguments for moral high ground and reminders that escaping the reality of the times is

and joy are no longer applicable, or that it's tone deaf to include such emotion in current messaging.

This is why health care philanthropy must step up and offer something unique—a special platform to dream, talk passionately about causes that matter, explore altruism, apply the power of gratitude and experience the personal reward for paying it forward. Philanthropy is a lifeline to something bigger, something authentic, filled with hope and unity. More than a safe harbor, health care philanthropy represents an opportunity to put beliefs into action, leaning toward solutions and away from hardships.

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nearly impossible. Commercials still include messages such as: these uncertain times; challenging times; unpredictable times; new reality; new normal and being all in this together. There is a constant reminder of what is already clearly known. It seems the entire world is frozen from hope; that somehow inspiration

Let's be clear. Hope and joy are never tone deaf. Hope and joy don't go out of fashion or need to take a back seat during pandemics. But somehow, in many health care communities, messaging promoting hope and joy are missing—and at a time when it's needed most. Ongoing challenges and concerns have been dominating the country's days and nights. Most are desperate for inspiration. Now.

For many hospitals, messaging has been understandably clinical, focused on immediate realities of safety and the ensuring voice that quality care has not been abandoned. Hospitals have been building and ensuring trust during an untrustworthy time. While necessary at the time, this is the hard side to messaging. Going from the focus of trust to the focus of hope and joy is a difficult transition for hospitals to make. However, it is time to make that transition. There is a sense of urgency to this. People need hope and they need it now.

This is where health foundations play a critical role. Foundations can be a true partner in the hospital's overall brand, culture building, community engagement and encouragement. They are the perfect voice for the soft, hope-filled side of messaging. A foundation's ability to recognize why their voice matters and have the courage to pursue a future mind-set could be a game-changer right now. Their seat at the (C-suite) table may or may not last indefinitely, but a philanthropy leader's positive and progressive actions can make it more of an ongoing reality.

Nearly overnight, health care and philanthropy became the business of everyone. And while hospitals have focused on the business of health care and trust, this is not the messaging that philanthropy offices need to continue moving forward. In truth, the urgency is not just with health care institutions, the urgency is with entire communities.

Dreaming, collaborating, having the same grit and determination your health providers exhibit daily doesn't just bond you to them, it bonds you to your donors. It reminds them why you exist. It's where your communication and messaging must start. It's not a disingenuous rah-rah. It's revisiting your mission, believing in your organization and your community the way your donors do and then promoting that message with passion and inspiration.

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It's time to push your message of hope and optimism out to your donors. Where do you start?

- 1 Critically review the last five donor communications. Do you include messaging to a reality nobody really needs reminding of anymore? It stops now. It's no longer necessary to give a nod to “a time of uncertainty.” The immediate need is to provide a lifeline to the future.
- 2 Review your mission and core values. Don't look for an opportunity to say them, look for and publicize a story that demonstrates them—how your mission lives every day.
- 3 Pick up your cases for support. Renew them with language focused on benefits and urgency to the community, not benefits to your hospital. Replace accolades and awards with community quotes, stories of courage and forward-thinking language.

Nobody expected the current tumultuous world, but passionate, authentic and future-focused messaging can be good medicine for the soul. Go out, be brave, be philanthropic!

About the Author: Michael Beall is a Principal Consultant with Accordant. You can reach him at Mike@AccordantHealth.com.