



# Case Study: **External Brand Experience**

## COMPANY DESCRIPTOR

Especially known for its in-hospital care, the nation's preeminent mental health hospital admits patients from across the United States. In addition to patients and their families who directly contact the hospital, admissions come from a variety of referring health professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed therapists, educators and family physicians.

## THE NEED

Newman & Newman had formulated messaging articulating the hospital's value and significance for targeted external audiences and strategic partners. To enhance its impact, the hospital subsequently contracted Newman & Newman's Experienced Messaging™ services for its admissions teams. As the organization's front-door experience, admissions-related staff are critical to the hospital's success and serve as ambassadors of its values to inquiring families, patients and referring health professionals.

Five of the hospital's key messages were identified as particularly relevant to the admissions process. A two-month assessment period evaluating their authenticity applied multiple research instruments, including online surveys of referring professionals, observation visits of the admissions and call center departments, one-on-one interviews with regional marketers who interact with professionals who refer their patients, and multiple Anonymous Experience Assessor encounters.

Findings included that although the very capable staff share a strong passion and commitment to their responsibilities, communication throughout the admissions process lacked cohesion and effective interaction. A lack of policies for keeping referring professionals informed of patient status contributed to inconsistencies in what external audiences experienced. Required efficiencies and challenging calls had also reduced empathetic communication skills.

A comprehensive report of identified opportunities for improved experience, and recommended tools supporting implementation of those opportunities, was presented to the hospital's President & Chief Executive Officer and admissions, clinical, human resources and marketing leaders.

## RESULTS

- Hospital leaders leveraged the findings of communication and culture silos to implement plans they had been considering for merging staff into one cohesive access department.
- To ensure authenticity of messages aimed at referring professionals, the hospital contracted Newman & Newman to develop communication tools for standardized, timely follow-up and materials to improve understanding of admissions criteria for use by its marketers. Once fully implemented, a repeat survey of referring professionals will be conducted for empirical measurement of improvements.
- Newman & Newman developed custom workshops from observed needs and formulated recommendations to improve admissions staff communication skills, use of empathetic language, and actionable strategies for handling difficult conversations. A post workshop survey of the trainees found that 100% rated the experience excellent or very good and 100% strongly agreed or agreed that the workshops were helpful and of practical value to their work. In addition to ranking their favorite tailored topics, 100% answered that they "definitely would" recommend a similar type of workshop for other hospital employees.
- The hospital is in the process of implementing Experienced Messaging™ for its clinical services, beginning with those that have the next greatest contact with referring professionals.

