



# 7 Lessons Hospitals Can't Afford to Learn the Hard Way

**LESSON #2:  
THINGS CAN ALWAYS  
GET WORSE**



Health care is central to our economy, communities and families.

The industry's issues – quality, patient experience, cost, community and economic investment – are equally complex and wide-ranging.

When the information is viral and the outrage is manipulated, everyday issues can turn from tricky to treacherous in a heartbeat. And if you aren't actively managing issues like cost, quality and community investment – you might find these issues are managing you.

## *You've Got Issues — Get Your Sh\*t Together*

If you aren't asking (and answering) questions about your hospital's intersection with everyday health care issues, it's likely that the community – or the press – is.

Consider how you communicate important themes to key audiences like patients, employees and community leaders:

- Quality and patient safety
- Cost and accessibility of care
- Community investment and economic impact
- Urgent local health concerns (e.g., opioid abuse, childhood obesity)

Bring together colleagues to study and better understand the issues. Use their insights to back up claims made in messaging materials.

## *Don't Overestimate what Consumers Understand*

Never mind that a hospital can't control health care or coverage costs. If people in your community are upset over cost, rest assured you will face some of the ire.

With thorny, foreseeable issues, the best offense is a good defense.

## **DEVELOP MESSAGES AND STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING ONGOING ISSUES.**



- ◆ Make sure your hospital regularly touts – via social, in-person outreach, earned and owned media – investments in the community and how they drive local economic activity.

## IDENTIFY AND TRAIN YOUR AMBASSADORS

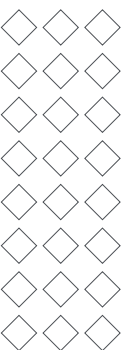
Make sure your ambassadors and third-party allies (senior leaders, board, volunteers) are prepped with messages, training and materials to effectively address the community's concerns.

## *We Stepped in It, Now What?*

Issues, if not managed, can spiral into full-blown community relations crises.

If your hospital has lost community trust due to issues like quality or cost, here's some action that will help turn the tide

## EXPRESS EMPATHY AND STRESS SOLUTIONS.



We all want to be heard, understood and have our concerns validated. It's human nature -- and the bridge to any effective interaction.

Address your community's concerns and express appropriate empathy and concern. Leading with understanding and a human touch doesn't necessarily mean taking responsibility – just acknowledging the hardship it creates.

Empathy alone won't cut it. You have to make it clear what the hospital is doing to address the issue and ease the burden on the community.

## ENLIST YOUR AMBASSADORS.

Bring together the hospital's allies to ensure they are ready to carry the message of empathy, concern and solutions.

Provide ambassadors with messages, outreach training and materials to support their conversations.

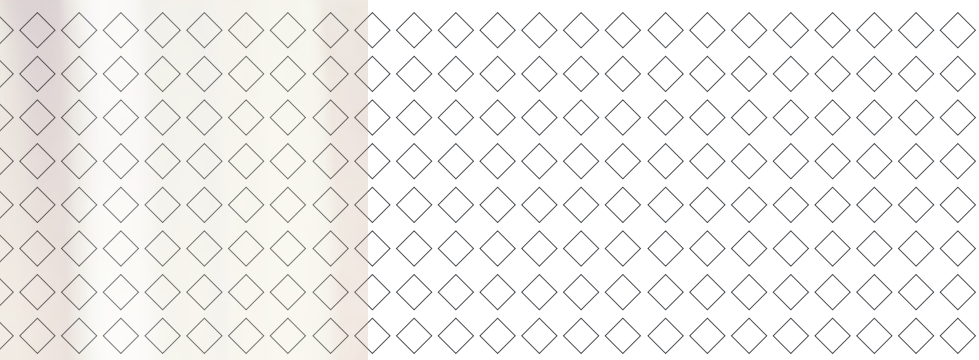




## INFLUENCE THE INFLUENCERS

Focus outreach efforts on influential members of the community, including leaders from business, education, nonprofits, faith communities, and civic life.

Work to increase community leaders' understanding. With their clout and influence, they can impact the sentiments of others in the community.



For over 20 years, SE2 has worked with hospitals and health systems across the Rocky Mountain West to engage and influence providers, patients and policymakers.

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