

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

**LESSON #4:
BIG CHANGES ARE
BITTER MEDICINE**



HEALTH CARE'S EVOLUTION MEANS TROUBLING FINANCIAL TRENDS FOR NONPROFIT HOSPITALS, INCLUDING:

- Lower reimbursement rates
- Shift to outpatient care
- Growth in M&A activity

It's no wonder hospitals are closing some service lines to focus on more profitable areas of care. Outreach is key to avoiding a community backlash.

When Good for the Bottom Line Is Bad for Business

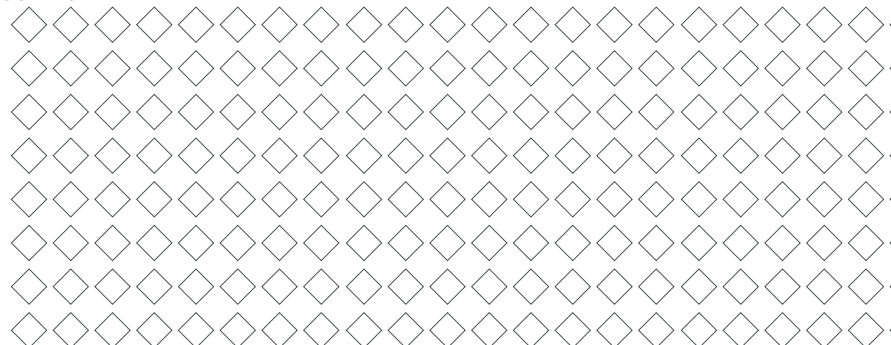
Health care research has shown that improving stagnant patient volume trends and service lines helps hospitals improve the short-term financial outlook.

But changes to a local hospital can be tough to swallow for the community – particularly in smaller towns and rural areas where there are fewer providers to begin.

Without careful outreach, hospitals making big changes are likely to find themselves in the crosshairs and under harsh scrutiny from patients, staff, providers and the community.

Avoid being taken by surprise.

Focus on the fundamentals of effective communication – and your reputation can weather the changes fine.



ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL OUTREACH:

1. Own Your Own Announcement

Plan carefully and consider outreach to every key audience, internal and external, that needs to know.

Avoid letting information drip out. Time the internal announcement with the public one to avoid leaks.

Strong messages are your home base, they:

- Clarify what's changing (and what's not)
- Correct misperceptions
- Are targeted to the concerns of key groups (e.g., patients, providers)
- Show support for impacted staff and patients

2. Aggressively Seek Media Coverage

Coverage not only helps us spread transition messages broadly. It helps increase the credibility of our messages – and how they are perceived by the community.

3. Know When to Turn the Page

The transition message starts by recognizing the difficult changes, then gradually shifts to focus on the services and providers that will define the next chapter of the hospital's service to the community.

4. Don't Keep a Low Profile

Communicate broadly about the changes — and offer a steady stream of content highlighting your hospital's positive contributions to the community.

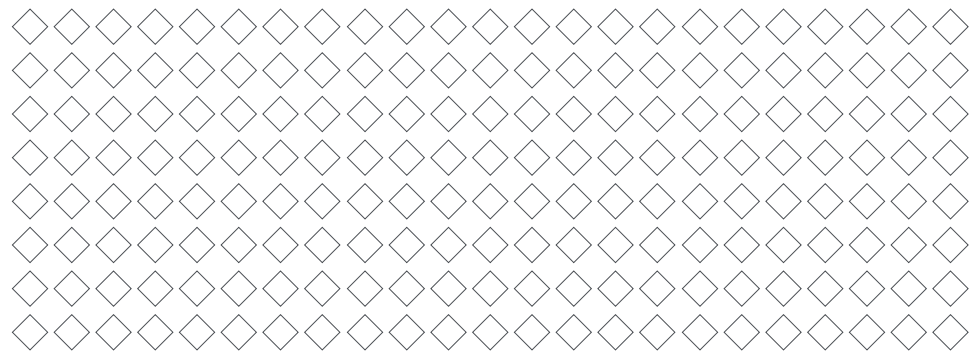
Staff and providers should receive regular updates, information tailored to their concerns, and have opportunities to engage with and question hospital leaders.



5. *Move the Messengers*

Influential community members can either help smooth over – or rile up – the community's response.

Ensure trusted members of the community like faith leaders, elected officials and business owners are well-informed about the changes and receive special consideration and outreach by hospital leaders.



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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