

SOLUTION: Word of Mouth Marketing



CREATING AMBASSADORS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

Sue and I have long known that we have the most brilliant and creative partner organizations, and this Solution is written about an idea from Southwest Health Services in Platteville, WI. When CEO Dan Rohrbach needed to get the word out that he and his team had recruited a hometown local physician to return to Platteville to begin an orthopedic practice (a new service line for SWH), he didn't want to run radio ads and create more billboards. He needed walking billboards and turned to his employees to make it happen.

The results were astonishing. SWH experienced extreme growth with both their Orthopedic service line, and their Women's Health service line, and their team of engaged and empowered employees made it happen for them.

Your organization may have a leader-led, and employee driven team specifically designated to create a larger footprint in the community. However, there are times and situations where the community team, and the steering team working together may want to begin a program we refer to as **WOMP** (Word of Mouth Program), or **WOMM** (Word of Mouth Marketing).

THE WHY BEHIND A WORD OF MOUTH PROGRAM FOR EMPLOYEES

SWH began to use WOMM when they had new service lines to market in the community. Their market share area, and the outlying communities they serve are surrounded by a state border and competing larger facilities. They needed a way to let their community know they could stay home for excellence, and the specialty services they needed.

Your community is not the same as Platteville, WI. What are the dynamics of market share and growth for your community? Some of our partners have successfully used WOMM to create "buzz" around a new building, a large project, a new physician in town. All of them have successfully gained needed growth when they involved their employees as a key strategy in marketing.



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THE HOW OF A WORD OF MOUTH MARKETING CAMPAIGN

- Annually, when the organization's strategy for the upcoming year is set; determine how employees can get the word out on strategy. What is coming up for the organization that requires a strong message to be delivered to your community? How can employees help?
- Design your WOMM message that employees will deliver. This should be carefully crafted by the Senior Leaders and Steering Team members. Whatever happens, you don't want WRONG information in your community.
- Determine how your CEO will request the assistance of your employees. It is best explained at your quarterly CEO forums, and then followed up in staff meetings, and via email communication. The impact of a CEO asking for the help of employees in a marketing strategy is so powerful. Again, employees need to be trained the correct things to say. Prepare handouts at the forum so that they can print and take them home to share with friends and family members.
- The WOMM campaign is often held as a challenge for employees, and when Dan (CEO) at SWH in Platteville did their first WOMM campaign, he stated to his employee team "Let me know what responses you get from your friends and family. I want to hear the stories, I want to hear their questions". Then, Dan followed up with those stories and questions at the following CEO forum of relatives and friends stating, "We are going to bring our surgeries here, we won't go to the larger city out of state any longer".
- **See examples of WOMM & WOMP campaigns in the TOOLS section of the Community Team.** These are examples of different ways our partners have made campaigns like these happen. Most partners create a log so that employees can turn it in for a prize drawing, or to keep track of their "stories" to tell the CEO at the next forum.



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An excerpt from Rainy Lake Medical Center in International Falls, MN.

<p style="text-align: center;">My WOM Log</p> <p>Employee Name: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Return this form to your supervisor when complete.</i></p> <p>Supervisor signature: _____</p> <p>2020 Strategic Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• RLMC's surgery expansion with Dr. Margo and Dr. Rudolph• \$10,000 referral bonus to anyone who helps us find a physician that delivers babies• Our exciting, top of the line, new EMR: Epic! <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Who did you share a RLMC story with? _____</p> <p>How did you share our story? (face to face, Facebook share, etc.) _____</p> <p>What story did you share? _____</p>
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- Another extremely valuable word of mouth tactic is for your leaders to share with patients who are visiting the hospital in an outpatient or hospitalized as an inpatient to spread the great work of the organization during Validation Rounding on patients. We call this “Managing Up” the organization during these rounds. However, most often the impatient leaders have an audience with family visiting the patient and can explain the great work happening around the campus, and the “why” behind it.

Use planning time on the Steering Team, and Community team meetings to create a word of mouth strategy for leaders to get out while rounding on both patients and employees.

FREQUENCY OF WOMM CAMPAIGNS.

Some partner organizations have begun the cadence of quarterly “WOMP out’s”. We really encourage you to use this valuable tool to create excitement around BIG strategies, or it may lose its effectiveness. Do not ask your employees for assistance just to tick a task from your journey plan off your list! Make sure you are getting great feedback and marketing from your WOMM campaigns!



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