

From Big-Town Medicine to Small-Town America:

Using Communications to Rally a Community Around a New Partnership



The Client Challenge

Leaders of a financially fit, three-hospital system in rural Pennsylvania sought a partner to deliver on population health and invest in the troubled local economy. While confident in the out-of-state, investor-owned partner, they knew physician, political, regulatory, and union challenges could stymie the deal. They were, after all, the region's economic engine. They needed a smart internal and external communications campaign that would connect with key players and the community to ensure a successful transaction.

Navigating to Next: The Solution

Jarrard Inc. immediately assembled a campaign team of leaders, board members, and deal counsel to define goals and roles. Objectives were: Rally the troops around the system's vision for the future, neutralize opposition, complete the transaction, and launch a new foundation. The first step in the campaign was to broadly share the board's vision for the future and demonstrate why partnership was the right path to get there. Jarrard took a unique approach to avoid or negate pushback from each possible group of detractors. Two months later, the organization announced the selected partner, and then focused on clearing regulatory hurdles and getting both internal and external stakeholders (including employees, local officials, labor unions, and the media) comfortable with the partner.

Throughout the process, the merging systems presented a united front. Leadership from both organizations attended most engagements. This joint approach provided consistent messaging for employees, physicians, the media, and the local community as they scrutinized the new partnership. Jarrard also developed for the client a "pressure valve" of constructive ways for audiences to express concerns and ask questions.

POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS TO COMPLETING A PARTNERSHIP

- Rejection by regulators
- Challenges by labor unions
- Pushback by state and local politicians
- Loss of morale among physicians and employees
- Negative media coverage driving community sentiment

NAVIGATING TO NEXT: KEY COMPONENTS



DEFINE GOALS AND ROLES

Align with leadership on the desired outcome and organize the team



CUSTOMIZE THE MESSAGE

Develop specific communications relevant to each stakeholder group



LEADER TOOLKIT

Create materials to help leaders internalize and then effectively present the complex changes



START INTERNALLY

Alignment is most effective when it begins with employees—who can be your biggest advocates... or detractors



EXPAND EXTERNALLY

Communicate clearly, regularly, and transparently with the broader community

Client Impact

The Jarrard communications campaign featured a compelling vision and grassroots work to ensure a welcomed transaction. On the partnership announcement day, the communications cascade generated relief, excitement, and celebration by internal and external audiences. Leadership dubbed the partnership as an investment of “big-town medicine in small-town America,” which led to similar headlines. Media coverage was balanced and fair. Unions never challenged. The team neatly navigated regulatory requirements to convert from a non-profit, closing within 6 months of the letter of intent announcement. The transaction’s \$100 million foundation was viewed as a stunning benefit for the region.



How We Are Making Healthcare Better

“Jarrard takes a ‘political campaign’ approach to communications. This is the most effective way not only to communicate with the wide range of stakeholders in any partnership but also to bring those stakeholders together in support of it.”

—Anne Hancock Toomey, Founding Partner, Chief Development Officer, Jarrard Inc.

Even a needed or necessary transaction can be scuttled by pushback by the stakeholders affected. Our campaign approach neutralized opposition and resulted in:

6-month

timeline from
letter of intent to close

\$500M

transaction

\$100M

community foundation
established

NEXT INTELLIGENCE:

Buy-in for large-scale change can best be achieved by:

Providing multiple opportunities to hear feedback...and then responding to that feedback consistently and frequently.

Offering proactive, regular communications tailored to each stakeholder group.

Committing to responsible transparency by speaking not just to what is required but what is useful to the audience.

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