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California Health Care Foundation (CHCF): Media Coverage Drives Launch of Online Hospital Report Card

How the launch of CalHospitalCompare.org, a consumer-friendly online report card for California hospitals, obtained in-depth, statewide media coverage to drive consumers to the website

The Company

The California HealthCare Foundation (CHCF) is a non-profit philanthropic organization committed to improving the way healthcare is delivered and financed in California, and helping consumers make informed healthcare and coverage decisions. CHCF was a key driver in developing a statewide hospital performance reporting system that, in addition to serving California citizens, could serve as a model for other states.

Strategic Issues

Led by the California HealthCare Foundation, a taskforce called the California Hospital Assessment and Reporting Taskforce (CHART) was established in 2004 to define key aspects of measurable hospital performance data that could be uniformly reported and made available to consumers. CHART brought together stakeholders in California healthcare, including hospitals, health plans, doctors and nurses, consumer groups and employers, to voluntarily work together to establish uniform hospital ratings and a website, CalHospitalCompare, to make this information available to consumers in an easy-to-understand, easy-to-read format.

The Tactical Approach

Media coverage was identified as both the initial driver of traffic to the site and the vehicle through which to communicate the success of CHART's voluntary initiative. The media relations plan included:

- Development of press materials including a release, consumer "tip sheet," FAQs, and user scenarios.
- A pre-launch telephone press briefing and site tutorial hosted by key shareholders of CalHospitalCompare to provide media with the opportunity to directly question spokespeople.
- No "exclusives" were provided, to ensure a level playing field for the media.
- The briefing was held on a Monday, traditionally a slower news day, to increase pickup probability.
- The following day, both a media release and a Radio News Release (RNR) were distributed.

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Results

The media coverage of the CalHospitalCompare launch was both broad and deep within California, and drove considerable traffic to the CalHospitalCompare.org website, collecting more than 55,000 hits in the first two days of the launch.

Several spokespeople were interviewed separately by key opinion media for print and broadcast stories focusing on the voluntary stakeholder angle. Both the *Associated Press* and Dow Jones *MarketWatch* ran national stories. Broad consumer media coverage included such major outlets as *Contra Costa Times*, *Los Angeles Daily News*, *North County Times*, *Oakland Tribune*, *Orange County Register*, *Riverside Press Enterprise*, *Sacramento Bee*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *San Jose Mercury News*. Business media coverage included *Orange County Business Journal*, *San Diego Business Journal*, *San Fernando Valley Business Journal* and Bizjournals.com.

Healthcare publications also covered *CalHospitalCompare*, including *AHIP Solutions SmartBrief*, *California Healthfax*, *California Healthline.org*, *FierceHealthcare.com* (which ran the story twice), *Health IT Strategist* (*Modern Healthcare's* Daily IT e-newsletter), *Healthcare Intelligence Network* and *iHealthbeat*.

Eight broadcast outlets covered CalHospitalCompare – four each for radio and television – with three of the radio stations and one television station airing interviews with spokespersons for CalHospitalCompare.

Within weeks of the site launch, additional media coverage included 17 wire placements, four placements on health plan sites, and a mention in the *Wall Street Journal* that received 265 pick-ups. Additionally, the RNR generated an estimated 141 radio hits for a total of 1,913,370 listeners.

Scott Public Relations...

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For More Information

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Can a media relations strategy effectively drive traffic to your site?

Ask yourself the following questions before considering this approach:

- Do you have a new service or product that needs to be identified and clearly communicated to a wide target audience?
- Do you want to educate as well as inform the media, opinion leaders, industry participants and the public?
- Is the information you are presenting easy to access and understand?
- Do you have credible experts and resources to backup the data collection, analysis and interpretation?

If the answer is “yes,” then developing a robust media relations strategy could be the key to accelerating your company’s profile in the market and increasing the number of consumer hits to your website.