

Coming of age

Re-branding a healthcare business isn't a decision to be taken lightly, with a company's key messages easily lost in translation. Nina Lees looks at how aged care provider, SummitCare, tackled its re-branding process.



Branding tells the community what your core values and service are all about.

A brand says more about a healthcare business than some might realise, but underestimate its importance at your peril.

The right logo, signage and corporate identity can ensure the public identify what your organisation stands for – or could see them walk right by and not even notice your presence.

Changes to the national healthcare system have also been responsible for changing patients' attitudes, with people yearning to turn to a brand they can trust.

But within the hospital and aged care sector, there are examples of organisations getting it wrong, with ineffective brand identity diluting companies' key message in the increasingly cluttered healthcare market.

NSW operator SummitCare has just undertaken a re-branding process, and knows first hand

how challenging the process can be. The organisation is putting a new foot forward; with a refreshed look that's effectively changed the entire brand focus and corporate identity.

The aged care operator is a major player in the NSW market, with 865 places across nine different facilities as of this month, with further developments in the pipeline.

But SummitCare's CEO, Cynthia Payne, admits the company logo and corporate branding was getting lost in the sea of aged care facilities in and around the harbour city, with a lack of brand consistency the core problem.

Payne says the decision to undertake a major brand revitalisation saw her seek advice from a team of branding experts, hoping they could better align the various aged care facilities that came under SummitCare's

control. She said the facilities weren't easily identifiable as belonging to the same company, which meant marketing messages weren't as effective as they could be.

Payne engaged Sydney design firm, Inchbold Nettleton, to undertake the process. The two parties firstly worked together on the company's vision statement and identified corporate shifts within the organisation as they worked to present the company's key messages in the most succinct way.

"The new logo moves the organisation away from the traditional pyramid to that of a rolling hill with multi-dimensional colours reflecting the symbolism of change and diversity," Payne explains.

It isn't as 'harsh' as the previous logo, with a softer look more fitting for the aged care facility, she says.

The original company logo incorporated a gold trim, which has been incorporated in the new look, with gold in the centre of the logo linking SummitCare to its heritage. Payne says gold and mountains symbolise being at the top and a gold standard, which are critical to SummitCare's proposition and purpose, which is to provide all day, every day, exceptional care and service to people requiring residential care.

With the re-brand complete, all signage, its website, newsletters, stationary, complaint forms etc are now aligned, she says.

Payne, who has been in the CEO role since 2002, says the re-branding process began six years ago and has been a slow and steady undertaking that's cost SummitCare in excess of \$100,000.

The re-branding process was finally wrapped up in October last year, with the last of the new signage erected at SummitCare's facilities.

Payne says the changes have better aligned the facilities in a move that's heralded a new era for the company.

The process taught Payne that it's important to look at what's happening externally within the marketplace when undergoing a brand transformation, including changes in patient attitudes, the economy and other external factors.

She says the re-brand incorporates all elements of SummitCare's key branding messages, which has resulted in its marketing dollars now achieving far greater cut-through.

"As an aged care provider we've come of age, so to speak.



SummitCare brings its old logo (left) to life with a fresh, soft new look (right).

We looked at what kind of presence we wanted in the market and what we were already saying; and also what we wanted to say symbolically.

“It’s been hugely important for us moving forward. Now when you drive around Sydney and see our signage, people can connect with our brand. And it’s instilled new pride in our staff who love that our branding now expresses better what we stand for.”

And while engaging a specialist design agency can be costly, it will ensure key messages are communicated effectively.

Sydney design firm, Levitch Design Associates, has specialist knowledge when it comes to re-branding healthcare organisations. Its marketing and business development manager, Summer Thompson, says a brand is the symbol that connects all the information about an organisation.

“A brand typically includes your organisation’s name, the core element of your logo and other visual components such as photographs, fonts, colour palette or symbols. These elements combine to create your brand image, which is a symbolic construct created within the minds of the public and consists of all the information and expectations associated within your organisation,” she says.

Good design adds value of some kind to an organisation, and, when done well, can make recall of an organisation’s name easier, she says.

“It’s easier to remember a well-

designed image than one that is convoluted. Yet communicating these philosophies to a discerning and disparate public is a challenge.”

Thompson says that logos are an important marketing tool because they need to immediately represent a company and still manage to communicate the message.

“The logo will be seen in many different contexts, across multiple media, including on the internet, in a practice brochure, signage and so forth. In each of these applications, the logo could be used on dark backgrounds, on textured surfaces, embroidered on staff uniforms and it could be used in various sizes – from business cards to a building. An effective logo must have the ability to be utilised in all of these contexts and still embody the practice successfully.” **HA**

WHO IS SUMMITCARE?

SummitCare has been providing residential care for more than 40 years. The group began with Frenchman’s Lodge in 1966 and Phillip House was added a decade later. The organisation has been through various incarnations, initially called Wohl Management Group, then Summit Health Care and now SummitCare. The operator is a major player in the NSW market, with 865 places across nine services under its belt as of this month, with further developments in the pipeline.



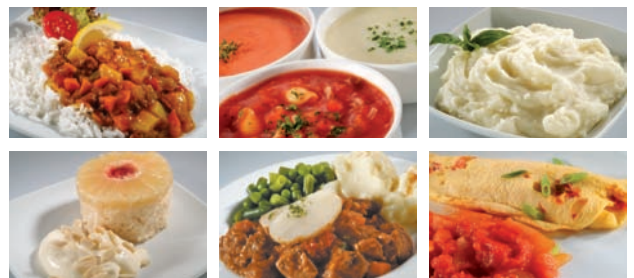
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