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Why Empathy Matters in Healthcare Communications

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The message of this 1959 comic strip still resonates today; especially in the current turbulent times that include having endured a long and demanding COVID-19 pandemic. It's no wonder that many feel like Linus, and are often thinking the same thing, that "it's people I can't stand."

This is a sentiment supported by facts from an October 2022 Bain & Company article on the current state of the healthcare workplace:

- + Turnover is about 30%, and average cost of replacement is \$40k-\$50k per person
- + The percentage of caregivers that are considering a different career entirely is 25%
- + Almost 90% of those people cite burnout as the primary reason

- + Only 6% of hospital-based caregivers would recommend their workplace
- + 40% of employees of physician-owned clinics would recommend their workplace

Given this context, it's no wonder that the residual effects of the daily routines and interactions in healthcare contribute to forming ambient clouds of doubt and negative feelings, shaping views on work, relationships, and one's own sense of worth.

When we think of routines and interactions this way, the need for empathetic, emotional, and engaging communication is more important than ever when considering why something is said, what is said, how it said, and to whom.

ASC communication is an afterthought for many. It's seen as a luxury only for those who have the time and resources to plan how to engage with their audiences. These include patients,



professionals, and staff who are seen as essential to growing, building, and sustaining an ASC. This is especially true in an environment of increasing competition, rising patient expectations, shifting staff demands for greater flexibility, and the ever-present demand from regulators to do more with less.

Meeting these different demands requires communicating with substance; communications that embody a collective shared purpose and content that resonates individually to meet the moment for each of the following:



Networks

The cornerstone of effective care is the doctor-patient relationship. As such, word-of-mouth recommendations are the gold standard of healthcare growth strategies. The credibility that is the result of the positive experiences of medical professional and patients is at the heart of

outreach marketing efforts, required to build an effective multi-constituent referral network.



Staff

Internal communications to ASC staff enable them to be effective stewards of the patient experience and as a result the ASC's reputation. Outreach efforts, i.e., recruitment advertising, need to communicate a commitment to quality. When communications are based upon a foundation of empathy, existing and new staff members feel appreciated and valued.

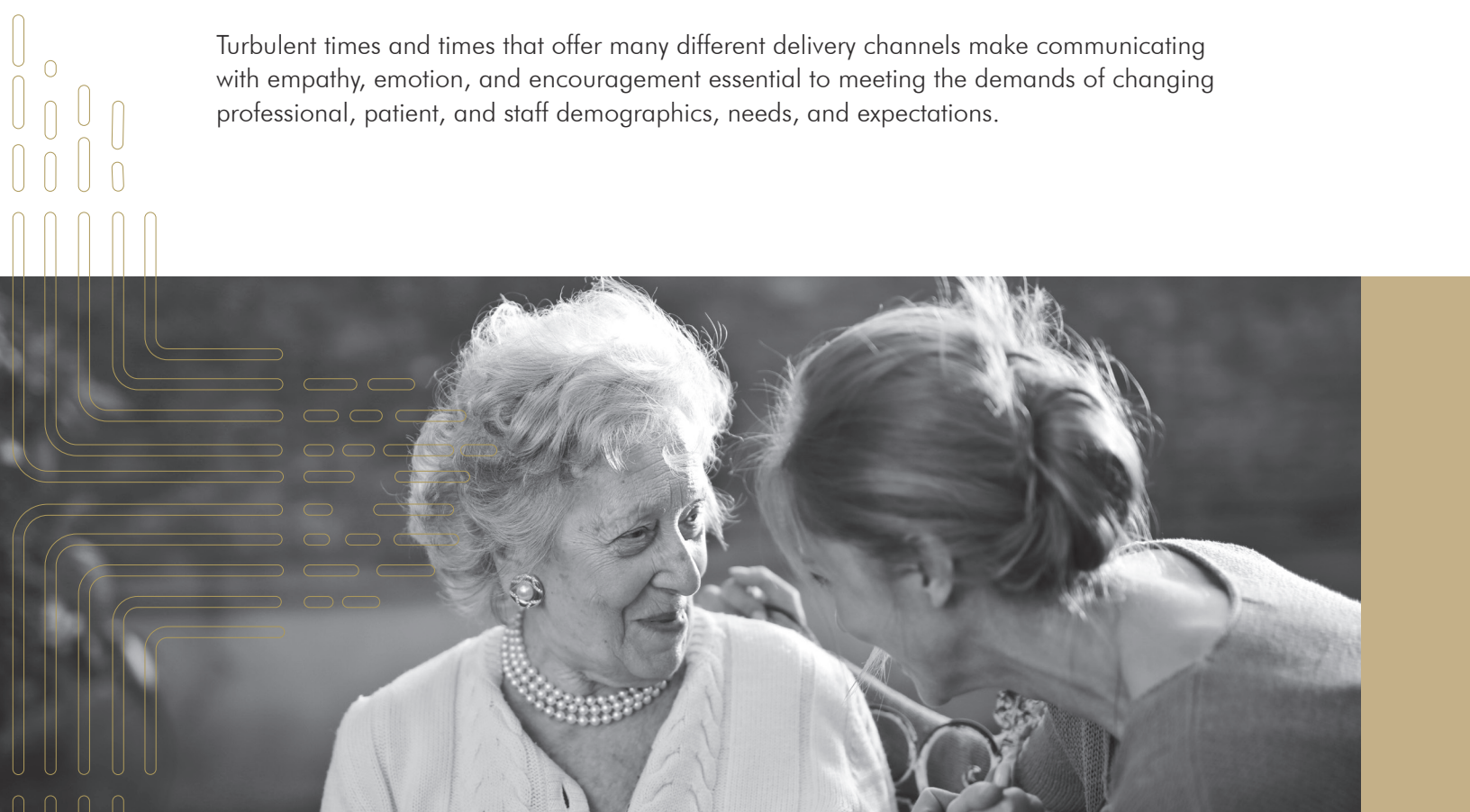


Patients

Endless sources of information have empowered patients to the point that many feel they are co-pilots in care. Depending on where you are in the healthcare value chain, this is a mixed blessing. Given that healthcare can be complex, the need to make communications simple and understandable to patients and their family is essential to improving outcomes and lowering rates of readmittance.

Effective communication speaks to the head and the heart. It deals with both sides of our brains. It makes logical sense, and it makes emotive sense. That is doubly true in healthcare, where empathy and sense of purpose is a larger component of the employee's personal value system, as well as those of the people it partners with and serves.

Turbulent times and times that offer many different delivery channels make communicating with empathy, emotion, and encouragement essential to meeting the demands of changing professional, patient, and staff demographics, needs, and expectations.



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