

Revitalizing a Brand

SNAPSHOT

Institution:

Plaza Home Health Services, a recently established home health agency

Location:

Georgetown (population 45,857), located in the West North Central region of the United States

Characters:

Ms. Nancy Edwards, Co-Owner and Nurse
Ms. Jennifer Moore, Co-Owner and Nurse
(both of Plaza Home Health Services)

Context:

In this case, two entrepreneurs establish a home health agency and quickly encounter overwhelming success, giving them the opportunity to rethink some hastily made branding decisions.

Nancy Edwards and Jennifer Moore, co-owners of Plaza Home Health Services, are celebrating their 1-year anniversary as healthcare entrepreneurs and, at this juncture, have decided to invest in some much needed identity enhancements for their company. Specifically, the two entrepreneurs are seeking to elevate the status and stature of Plaza Home Health Services by upgrading its associated brand image, bolstering corporate

identity and consumer recognition in an effort to position the firm for continued success in coming years.

Plaza Home Health Services was established rather hurriedly 1 year ago by Nancy and Jennifer. The two were employed as staff nurses at a medical center in Georgetown, a city of 45,857 located in the West North Central region of the United States, and saw an opportunity to capitalize on the growing demand for home health services in the marketplace. In their informal marketing research endeavors, Nancy and Jennifer witnessed unrestrained enthusiasm for their proposed business, so much so that they decided to fast-track its development and rollout.

Despite this rush to commercialization, Plaza Home Health Services' results have been nothing less than stellar, with the company quickly assuming the market leadership position amidst a pool of three very established and highly competitive home health service providers in Georgetown. Pleased with their good fortune, Nancy and Jennifer attribute the success of their business to their commitment to deliver home health service excellence in a comprehensive fashion, taking great pains to exceed the expectations of customers and eclipse the service levels offered by rivals in the market.

As home health agencies deliver services remotely, the two entrepreneurs had a thorough understanding that their caregivers must be top quality, leading them to assemble a compensation and benefits package that permitted them to recruit the most capable personnel in the market, creating a key competitive advantage. Further, they ensured that Plaza Home Health Services' policies addressed every facet of business operation and service delivery. Providers, for example, followed strict protocols on everything from grooming and attire to professional courtesy and patient care delivery.

Plaza Home Health Services is financially viable and, thanks to the discipline of Nancy and Jennifer, has acquired significant cash reserves for future growth. One year on, Plaza Home Health Services indeed presents a very different financial picture than that witnessed when Nancy and Jennifer initiated the venture. Like many small business entrepreneurs, the two had only a small amount of personal savings to draw on as they launched their company. Their rush to market, together with insufficient cash reserves, forced Nancy and Jennifer to make some identity compromises which they now seek to upgrade, enhance, and repair, courtesy of the receipt of business success and proper funding.

The compromises in identity were numerous, but they each centered around one thing—Plaza Home Health Services' poorly conceived logo. This, in turn, resulted in aesthetically displeasing and uninspiring business cards, promotional brochures, and building signage, as each incorporated the establishment's logo. Indeed, one could question whether the agency even has a logo, as the only visualization is simply the text "Plaza Home Health Services" in the bold, italic version of the Times New Roman font. This simple brand display is used, in black, on both Plaza Home Health Services' office building and on its roadside signage. It also is used in all of the company's sales literature, with each piece being laser-printed with black toner. Even the company's business cards are laser-printed, using perforated sheets of paper which are then separated to form individual cards.

All in all, the appearance of every branding element associated with Plaza Home Health Services is very amateurish; a necessity at one time, but no longer needed thanks to business success and resulting cash flow. The time has finally come for Nancy and Jennifer to craft a plan to upgrade the elements of identity associated with their company.

Meeting to discuss improvements, Nancy and Jennifer made the decision to first review a variety of branding considerations in the context of the company's current image and associated brand attributes. From this discussion, the two entrepreneurs indicated high satisfaction with the brand name of their operation and they agreed that no changes were necessary, especially as this would create confusion among their customers who already had grown very familiar with the Plaza Home Health Services brand name. They next turned their attention to the components of the logo, including its text, symbols, and color or colors to be used.

As for the components of Plaza Home Health Services' logo, Nancy and Jennifer indicated a desire to incorporate both text and symbol components to identify the company, as they believed that this served to better attract attention and facilitate recognition. Given that their current text design used one of the most common fonts, the two preferred something that was a bit more exotic. In order to identify preferences, Nancy and Jennifer looked through several font books and came to realize a preference for sans serif as opposed to serif fonts. Making a short list of possibilities, Nancy and Jennifer decided to delay their ultimate selection, as they wanted to experiment with variations using a graphics software package.

As for the symbol, Nancy and Jennifer found this to be especially challenging, as the three competitors in the marketplace were already using perhaps the most common medical symbols—the hospital cross, the medical caduceus, and the pulse trace—leaving the two entrepreneurs at a major loss for something relevant but also unique. After some debate, though, Nancy and Jennifer decided that they easily could look to variants of these symbols. This would permit them to incorporate classic symbolism into their logo, but do so in a manner that would enhance brand identity, as the ultimate design would possess a unique creative treatment. Having made good progress in this area, Nancy and Jennifer decided to table their discussion on symbols pending a review of clip art catalogs to examine symbol variants, although they also indicated that they would be interested in adding nurse images to the list of symbol possibilities for consideration.

As for the color or colors used by Plaza Home Health Services, Nancy and Jennifer definitely were interested in leaving black behind, as they have exclusively been using this by default, courtesy of their monochrome laser printer. Of the three other home health operations in Georgetown, Nancy and Jennifer were very aware that the colors of red, blue, and green were already being used. To eliminate the possibility of confusion in the marketplace, Nancy and Jennifer agreed that they should avoid these colors or close variants, as they plan to use color to help differentiate their home health operation from others. On their color short list, they decided to include purple, gold, and orange, with both entrepreneurs agreeing to give the ultimate selection some thought in coming days to ensure that the selection proved fitting for the establishment. They also agreed that Plaza Home Health Services should use a single color for their logo, as multiple colors, at least in some cases, can increase the costs of printing.

Nancy and Jennifer were pleased with their first steps toward improving the brand identity of Plaza Home Health Services. In coming days, they planned to further investigate their various text, image, and color options and then work to sketch a design combining the items to form a rudimentary logo. They then planned to submit this rough illustration to an area graphic designer, who they would look to for the purpose of professionalizing the image, perfecting the artwork for inclusion across the range of Plaza Home Health Services' various marketing communications.

DISCUSSION

1. For an entire year, Nancy and Jennifer marketed their home health service using very primitive forms of identity. They were very fortunate that clients looked beyond the firm's marketing communications in deciding to extend patronage. Place yourself in the role of a potential client receiving business cards and brochures like those distributed on behalf of Plaza Home Health Services. What thoughts would go through your mind?
2. Nancy and Jennifer have made a wise decision to upgrade Plaza Home Health Services' elements of identity, with the establishment's business cards being slated, among other things, for improvement. How might business cards be even more important for establishments delivering offerings remotely, like home health agencies, than for establishments delivering offerings at a central location?
3. Based on your own preferences regarding color and design, create a mock-up of a business card for Plaza Home Health Services. Place your own name and contact information in the business card. Your business card must be sized in accordance with the designated standard for such in your area of the world (2" × 3.5" in the United States). While a hand-drawn sketch will suffice, a card designed using graphics software is preferred.
4. Nancy and Jennifer plan to use Plaza Home Health Services' revised logo in a number of communicative devices, including a promotional brochure. Aside from the logo itself, what other visual elements would you include in such a brochure? Be sure to give specifics regarding the various visual elements you would include, as well as your justification for using them in Plaza Home Health Services' brochure.
5. Nancy and Jennifer have indicated that they plan to upgrade Plaza Home Health Services' building signage. Is this necessary for businesses that provide services that are delivered remotely (i.e., at the customer's location rather than corporate headquarters)? Why or why not?