

Ulympics

Princeton HealthCare System, Jan 1, 2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Internal Communications — Business (Fewer Than 10,000 Employees)

After more than nine years of planning and development, Princeton HealthCare System on May 22, 2012 opened the new University Medical Center of Princeton at Plainsboro (UMCPP), a \$522.7 million hospital that replaced the 93-year-old University Medical Center of Princeton, located in Princeton, N.J. To help educate the Health System's 3,200 employees about the transition to the new hospital and to generate excitement in advance of the move, we launched the Ulympics: Moving Toward Our Future – a series of events that engaged employees and enabled us to disseminate information and answer questions in a fun, interactive environment.

Internal communications includes programs targeted specifically to special publics directly allied with an organization, such as employees, members, affiliated dealers and franchisees.

Full Text: SITUATION ANALYSIS

After more than nine years of planning and development, Princeton HealthCare System on May 22, 2012 opened the new University Medical Center of Princeton at Plainsboro (UMCPP), a \$522.7 million hospital that replaced the 93-year-old University Medical Center of Princeton, located in Princeton, N.J. Staff began seriously planning for the transition and move to the new hospital more than a year before its opening. A transition team was formed comprising eight overall teams and more than 100 workgroups within those teams that were responsible for all aspects of moving into a new hospital. The Health System's 3,200 employees were excited about the move but also had questions about the new space, about the logistics of the move and about how the transition would affect them directly and their ability to do their job. We wanted to make sure employees had all the information they wanted and needed so they felt comfortable with the move, could serve as ambassadors for the new hospital, knew how to do their jobs in their new space and most importantly, were equipped to move 100 patients from the old hospital to the new hospital safely.

RESEARCH

As part of the transition planning process, the Health System worked with a consulting firm to assist with managing all aspects of the hospital's move to the new location. We used the firm as a resource for best practices, and with its help, surveyed employees on how they would like to receive news about the new hospital project. Employees told us that they wanted and needed information about the transition and preferred to receive that information not just through electronic communication, but also through regular staff meetings and events. This response underscored the need to do something beyond our traditional communications to ensure employees were receiving information and were engaged in the transition.

PLANNING

Based on our research findings, our strategy focused on creating a series of interactive events that would educate employees about the transition and generate excitement about the move to the new hospital. Recognizing that the new hospital would be opening in an Olympic year, we used the Olympic theme and named the events the Ulympics tying into the name of the new hospital – University Medical Center of Princeton at Plainsboro. As part of the planning process, we established the Ulympics workgroup, a committee within the Marketing and Communications transition team, to organize and oversee the events. We also developed a unique logo based on the Olympics logo. Additionally, our strategy addressed the need to keep excitement and engagement up throughout the transition process and between the events. To that end, we planned for the Ulympics torch to visit every unit and department throughout the Health System in the months prior to the move.

Our target audience totaled 3,200 employees, both at the main hospital and at several off-site locations and included workers on all shifts. We set a goal of achieving 100 percent employee participation. The budget for the Ulympics was \$50,000 for the following four events as well as the “torch run.”

- June 30, 2011 – Ulympics Opening Ceremonies
- October 13, 2011 – Ulympics Celebration
- January 18, 2012 – Ulympics Celebration
- April 20, 2012 – Ulympics Closing Ceremonies

EXECUTION

To start, members of each of the eight transition teams were asked to develop a flag, a theme song and a game for each Ulympics event. The events featured information tables that also included fun, interactive games. The games all had a theme that revolved around the building and transition to the new hospital. For example, one team developed a “Pin-the-Tail-on-the-Donkey” style game in which employees had to pin different locations such as the Emergency Department, the visitor entrance, and employee parking on a map of the new hospital. Another team put together a Jeopardy-style game, while another had employees guess the number of bolts and nails in a jar in keeping with the ongoing construction of the new hospital. Our Physician Readiness team offered employees a chance to try their hand at “Operation” and another team organized a tossing game in which employees tossed stress-relief balls in the shape of hard hats into targets. As an added enticement, each team gave out tickets for people to play their game, and then the tickets were part of a drawing for gift baskets.

We kicked off the Ulympics with the lighting of the official Ulympics torch. Employees also had an opportunity to meet the members of the transition teams, ask questions, play games, register for door prizes and enjoy refreshments.

At our second Ulympics event held in October employees received updates about the transition team’s work and had an opportunity to record a video message to be placed in a time capsule that will be unsealed in 2047 – 25 years after the new hospital opened. We also unveiled two digital countdown clocks with a picture of new hospital that were installed in the lobby and in the cafeteria. Employees could also show their skills in the X-Box Ulympics games and register for prizes, including a tour of the new hospital with the President and CEO of the Health System. Fall themed treats such as apples with caramel sauce and popcorn were served.

After this event, a handful of symbolic torches began a journey throughout the current hospital, stopping in each department for a week. The torches were collected and delivered every Friday by a longtime volunteer who carried the Ulympics spirit throughout the hospital. Photos were taken with each unit with the torch and featured in the monthly internal newsletter *Happenings*.

During our third Ulympics event employees had the chance to participate in carnival-themed games as well as test their hand at the Wii Ulympics games, record a video message for the

time capsule and ask questions and receive updates about the transition. Carnival-themed treats were served. The closing ceremonies for the Ulympics were held in April 2012, just a month prior to the new hospital opening. Employees shared their favorite memories of the old hospital by writing them on a celebration banner. The ceremonies concluded outdoors with a fond farewell to the old hospital. Speakers included the president and CEO of the Health System, the president of the hospital, the president of the medical staff and an employee who has worked at the hospital since 1954. Another employee sang “Wind Beneath My Wings.” Employees received a special Ulympics umbrella to commemorate the closing ceremonies.

Employees who worked overnight shifts and were unable to attend the daytime Ulympics events got a chance to participate as Ulympics committee representatives made rounds in the hospital during those shifts delivering cookies and cupcakes and other giveaways. Employees who worked off-site were invited to attend the Ulympics. All employees received special gift mugs with apples and popcorn delivered to their location. Attendees at all Ulympics events had the opportunity to have their picture taken in front of a banner of the new hospital. The theme of this activity was “Picture Yourself at the New Hospital.”

Promotion of the Ulympics was conducted through a Ulympics teaser video that was debuted at the Annual Employee Recognition Dinner in April 2011; fliers and posters; the employee newsletter; staff meetings and HR materials.

A month after the hospital opening, the Health System hosted a celebration to place items – including a CD with the messages recorded during the Ulympics – in the time capsule. Scores of photos were placed in the capsule, including photos taken during the hospital construction, the grand opening event and Patient Move Day at both the new hospital and the old hospital. Other items ranged from a list of current hospital charges to a silver shovel used in the groundbreaking in 2008.

EVALUATION

We measured the participation in the Ulympics by the number of employees who signed for their giveaway and are pleased that we achieved our 100 percent participation goal. Moreover, the symbolic Ulympic torches passed through every department in the hospital, generating excitement about the move with employees making sure to get their picture with the torch. Most importantly, the patient move to the new hospital on May 22, 2012 went smoothly without any major glitches, evidence that employees were well informed and educated as part of the transition process.