SCRS Webinar Spotlight

Research Program Structure and Branding

A CONTINUOUS THREAD FLOWS from a research program's vision statement and mission statement to its structure, and into how it presents and markets itself to internal and external stakeholders. SCRS thanks Rhonda J. Paz, PhD, CRCP, Chief Operations Officer, and Shirley Trainor-Thomas, MSHA, Chief Strategy Officer, both from Guidestar, for making themselves available on short notice to provide a detailed presentation on the topics covered in this article.

A research program structure reflects both what it is and what it intends to become. Consequently, the structure requires the development of a vision statement and a mission statement. Without clearly articulated goals, it isn't possible to develop a structure that aims at success.

Developing that program structure requires the input of everyone. The IT manager has as valuable of information about the organization's capabilities and culture as the study coordinator. Everyone has something to contribute in setting goals and evaluating strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).

The structure and everything else about the research program should then be shepherded by a research advisory board. Using measurable goals, the board can advocate for necessary resources to meet those goals.

The staffing structure of a research program is designed to benefit both the organization and staff members. Specialization and succession planning benefits the organization by improving quality and compliance. Staff members benefit by having a career path available and being able to focus on their core competencies. When a research program grows without a staffing plan, the study coordinator can end up doing all of the tasks. This can lead to burnout and errors.

Staffing structure and organizational goals also reveal the business case for middle management. Too often, research programs grow unchecked into an organization where the entire staff reports to one person. This makes good management oversight impossible, hurting both the organization and employees who need attention to their concerns.

A well-run research program creates a "halo effect" for both internal and external stakeholders. Physicians are attracted to organizations where research is conducted. In a survey by healthcare marketing firm Neathawk, Dubuqye & Packett, 75% of patients indicated that participation in research is an important factor to consider when choosing a physician.

That halo effect is part of a comprehensive communication strategy. Having a plan for what to communicate and why, as well as

understanding the qualities that differentiate the organization, allows for effective communication with marketing professionals to develop the marketing materials. Here are a few communication topics and outcomes to consider:

Audience	Communication Topic	Result
Organization Leadership	Accomplishments	Support Research
Physicians	Awareness	Engagement
Patients	Awareness Invitation	Satisfaction Enrollment
Community	Awareness Education	Enrollment Reputation

By tracking the effectiveness of advertising, you will know your most effective messages and communications tools. These topics are just a start.

Having a plan for how to grow your business drives everything from staffing structures to marketing plans. More information about all of these topics can be obtained by viewing the webinar, found in the Learning Campus section of the website under the title, *One Size Does NOT Fit All – CTO Organization: A Best Practices Approach to Packaging and Branding.*

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