

# Patient Experience: The Key to Marketing Effectiveness



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# Patient Experience: The Key to Marketing Effectiveness

In the era of health reform and ongoing financial challenges, marketing teams face increased demands to demonstrate results from their expenditures. Though the debate continues as to the validity of different evaluation models, the method used by Houston-based MD Anderson Cancer Center for justifying its annual advertising budget and spend seems to be working. More than simple revenue calculations, success appears to lie in linking the actual patient experience into the marketing equation.

At each step of the patient journey, the goal of marketing is to play a continuing role in influencing attitudes and behaviors. From setting expectations with health care consumers to reinforcing communications with former patients, the marketing professionals at MD Anderson strive to demonstrate the impact of their marketing communications investments. MD Anderson and other academic medical centers such as Barnes-Jewish Hospital and University of Michigan Health System have used this approach to uncover messaging, develop authentic patient testimonials, align communications to manage expectations and drive operational improvements.

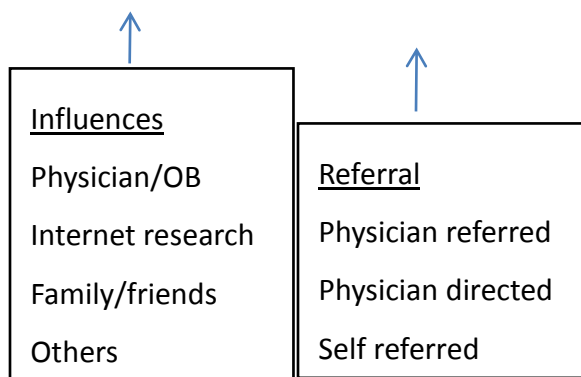
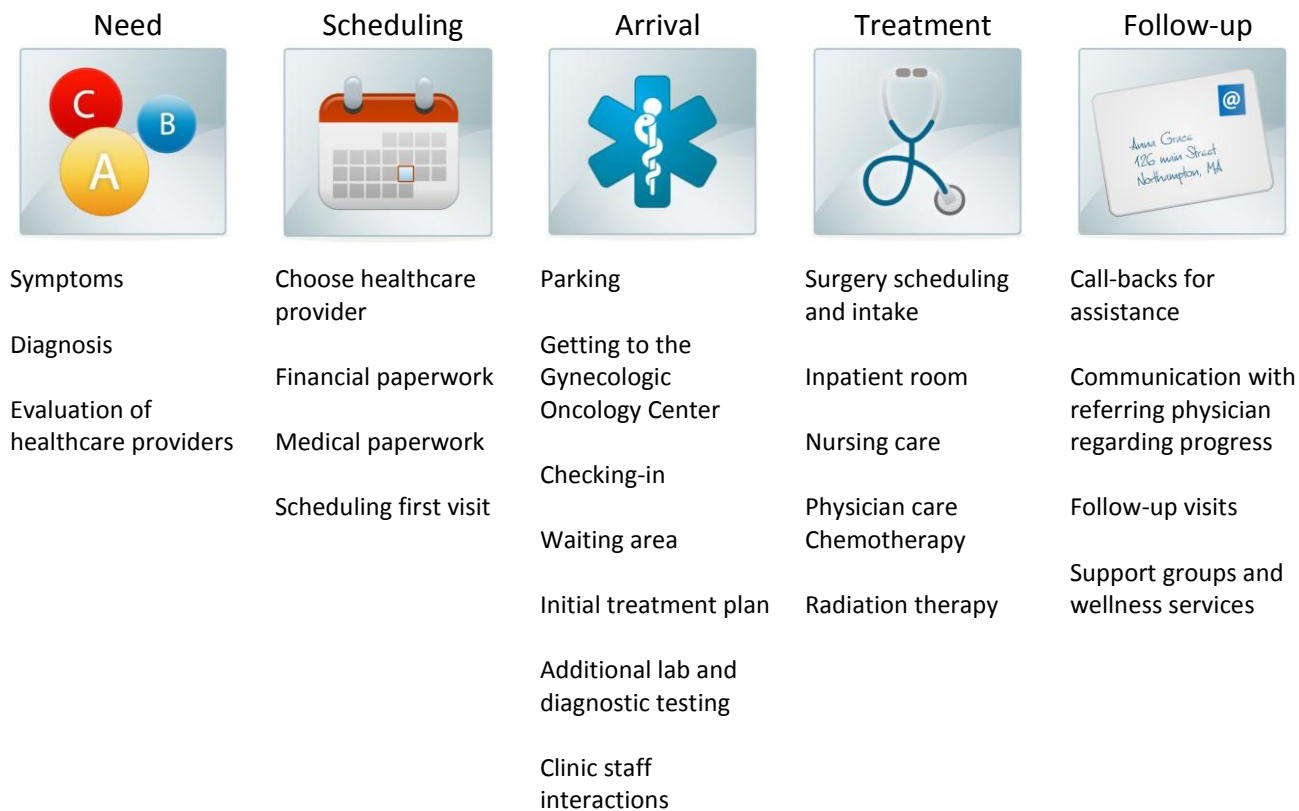
## **Mapping the Patient Experience**

Prior to every advertising campaign, MD Anderson—one of the nation's best known and most highly rated cancer centers—undertakes extensive research to integrate “Voice of the Customer” research into marketing and clinical operations. Patients, caregivers, physicians and front line staff convey expectations and reflect on both positive and negative experiences within the hospital. This customer insight creates authentic patient stories, and ensures operational readiness prior to launching a campaign.

Experience Mapping, a qualitative research method employed by Gelb, is used as a framework to understand the patient experience. This technique utilizes a visual cue, the experience map, to help interviewees recall details in their journey. The experience map aids respondents in recalling their needs, expectations and specific interactions with the hospital by breaking down their experiences into stages. These stages begin prior to the point of diagnosis and continue through treatment and beyond.

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Within each stage, relevant touchpoints are examined and assessed. A touchpoint is the interaction between an organization and its customers, and includes human interactions, physical and digital environments, and written communications. The performance of each touchpoint is analyzed and placed into high, medium and low performance categories for relative comparisons. This approach enables the marketing and operations teams to share a common understanding of patients' needs and encourages collaboration for future decision making.



To help customers recall their experiences across multiple Touchpoints, we use an Experience Map.

Interviews are typically conducted within the clinical setting, making the process efficient and convenient for patients. Comments are anonymous and are acquired through digital audio recordings of interviews, improving staff empathy and enabling the marketing team to enhance advertising messaging. Family members are encouraged to participate in the interviews, as they often play an integral role in the patient's experience. Also interviewed are staff members and physicians who support operations, manage the clinic or regularly interact with patients to identify additional insight or service gaps.

By examining each step of the journey – from initial diagnosis to continuing care in their communities—MD Anderson's marketing team has created an appreciation for the expectations it sets and the primary touchpoints that influence patient decisions

### **Marketing with the Patient Experience in Mind**

In an effort to increase the volume of uterine cancer patients within the Gynecologic Oncology Center, the MD Anderson Marketing team looked to Experience Mapping research. Administrators were interested in understanding how patients choose the center, how well patient expectations are met during their time at MD Anderson, and identifying opportunities to improve the patient experience. By developing a deeper understanding of patients' expectations and needs, they could create the ideal experience for existing patients and an advertising campaign to encourage others to choose the center.

Utilizing the experience map to help patients recall their experiences when researching and selecting a health care facility, the team was able to gain key insight into why patients chose MD Anderson for treatment. Women with uterine cancer were often referred to MD Anderson

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by their local physicians and reported being extremely frightened by their sudden diagnosis. Friends and family assisted patients in their treatment decisions by endorsing MD Anderson with their own positive personal experiences, yet patients conducted very little online research prior to treatment.

By studying multiple activities and touchpoints, the team was able to recognize changes in attitudes as patients went through each stage (Need, Scheduling, First Visit, Treatment, Follow-Up). They were also better equipped to grasp the emotional needs of patients. Digital audio clips of interviews were presented to the clinical teams, thereby improving staff empathy and enabling the Marketing team to enhance advertising messaging. Ideal emotions patients expressed included “There is hope,” “This will be taken care of for me,” “I am confident in our plan,” “Help is here,” and “I am ready to move forward.”

The final advertising campaign featured patient Katherine Hale, who took part in the interview process. As she shared her story, it became clear that her journey with cancer and experiences with the clinic were a good fit for the marketing campaign. Katherine was able to tell her optimistic and hopeful story of overcoming cancer in her own words, and explained how a customized care approach was used to help her fight cancer.

#### **Relating Investments to the Patient Experience**

Experience mapping research conducted with uterine cancer patients provided critical insight to achieve operational and business objectives:

- **Operational Results** – Based on an action planning workshop after Experience Mapping, the clinical operations team was able to increase utilization of support services, as well as registrations into the myMDAnderson online patient portal to positively affect patient satisfaction scores. Upon new patient registration, all patients in the Gyn Center are now asked to provide their e-mail addresses, and the clinic reports 100 percent signup of those with email addresses. The ability of patients to access their medical records online has decreased phone calls asking for assistance. Time to answer e-mail questions has been reduced to less than two hours per day, and is measured on a monthly basis to ensure compliance. Offering regular e-mail communication is better connecting the clinic with patients. According to the clinical administrative director, “This type of communication helps maintain the connection to our patients even if they live far away ... and gives them the perspective that we are still thinking of their well being even if they are getting ongoing treatment elsewhere.”
- **Business Results** – The advertising campaign developed from the Experience Mapping research exceeded business objectives for new patient calls and clinical volume. The foundation of the online program was a campaign microsite, [www.makingcancerhistory.com](http://www.makingcancerhistory.com), which served as the call to action on all advertising executions. Visitors are able to learn more about featured survivors through extended video interviews, share their own personal stories and complete interactions such as requesting an appointment or donating to MD Anderson. After one week in market,

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patient volume increased by 28 percent and by the end of the fiscal year, patient volume was up nearly 40 percent.

### Reporting Results Based on the Patient Experience

Given its application to communications, patient care and coordination, Experience Mapping has become a common frame of reference for marketing, operations and executives alike. It places marketing in a much more strategic role, reinforcing the connections between communications and operations. As such, this context is also used to highlight marketing successes beyond financial outcomes (e.g., profitable patients, more volume, etc.) and to bridge the patient experience with marketing results.



Like any good marketing campaign, the persuasion of executives requires a theme, some sort of context or lens through which to demonstrate results. Simply creating a scoreboard without context runs the risk of causing the business case to get overshadowed or lost. By linking all the steps in the patient journey as part of a continuum, it is easier to demonstrate the relationship between marketing campaigns and increased activity by service line. Just as patients move through the continuum of their hospital experience (from Need to Follow Up), an effective marketing campaign spans Awareness to Advocacy.

While messaging and creative effectiveness is important, the experience map was critical in building a case for senior management. Executives are like any other target audience – they need context and a compelling story to make effective decisions. Reporting marketing results in the same context as patient experience management creates a framework that is more easily understood and gives marketing the importance it deserves.

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### **About Endeavor**

Endeavor Management, is an international management consulting firm that collaboratively works with their clients to achieve greater value from their transformational business initiatives. Endeavor serves as a catalyst by providing pragmatic methodologies and industry expertise in Transformational Strategies, Operational Excellence, Organizational Effectiveness, and Transformational Leadership.

Our clients include those responsible for:

- Business Strategy
- Marketing and Brand Strategy
- Operations
- Technology Deployment
- Strategic Human Capital
- Corporate Finance

The firm's 40 year heritage has produced a substantial portfolio of proven methodologies, deep operational insight and broad industry experience. This experience enables our team to quickly understand the dynamics of client companies and markets. Endeavor's clients span the globe and are typically leaders in their industry.

Gelb Consulting Group, a wholly owned subsidiary, monitors organizational performance and designs winning marketing strategies. Gelb helps organizations focus their marketing initiatives by fully understanding customer needs through proven strategic frameworks to guide marketing strategies, build trusted brands, deliver exceptional experiences and launch new products.

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