



# Spectrum

Society for Healthcare Strategy and Market Development®

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## MARKETING



### Doing the Dance: A Lesson in Audience Engagement

For a South Carolina community hospital, winning the Pink Glove Dance video competition was exciting, but winning the hearts and minds of its employees and community was the real prize.

Many hospitals have recently shifted their marketing focus from producing and disseminating advertising about their organizations to engaging and interacting with consumers on a variety of communication platforms. Within that new paradigm, although credible content is paramount, it is equally important for marketers to identify and create opportunities for engagement to take place. Successful engagement occurs when organizations

provide relevant, accessible content that meets an individual's need for information, entertainment, community, affiliation, or one of many other unmet needs.

Although digital platforms play a major role in consumer engagement, engagement is also a "real-world" phenomenon that occurs through in-person communication, interaction, and experience. Handled correctly, these actions will lead to value creation and brand adoption. This article focuses on the lessons Lexington Medical Center, a community hospital in South Carolina, learned about engagement through its participation in the Pink Glove Dance video competition.

Most healthcare communicators are familiar with the Pink Glove Dance

phenomenon (see sidebar on page 3). The original 2009 Pink Glove Dance video, featuring Portland, OR, hospital workers dancing in pink gloves, attracted more than 13 million views on YouTube and became an Internet sensation. It also helped fuel the desire by hospitals around the country to produce their own "viral" videos.

Let's face it: With more than 48 hours of video being uploaded to YouTube every minute, most videos will not become viral sensations, even with the best planning and creative thinking. Only a small percentage of YouTube videos gains even 1,000 views. Despite the odds, in September 2011, almost 140 organizations entered videos in Medline's inaugural Pink Glove Dance competition in the hope that their videos would become the next online sensation. A great deal of energy went into producing these videos, and even more work went into rallying support and getting people to "like" the videos on Facebook. The hospital with the most "likes" at the end of the competition would be crowned the 2011 champion and would receive a \$10,000 cash prize to be donated to the breast cancer charity of its choice.

If there is little hope that its video will go viral and generate millions of views, in what ways does a hospital benefit from participating in a competition like this? And how does a promotion like the Pink Glove Dance competition offer an opportunity for audience engagement? The answers can be found in the experience of Lexington Medical Center, the eventual winner of the 2011 competition.

#### The Back Story

The impetus for participating in the Pink Glove Dance competition came from two OR nurses who heard about the contest and brought it to the attention of hospital

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Doing the Dance

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administration. Although no funds had been set aside for video production, the hospital's leadership recognized an opportunity to rally employees and the community behind a cause for which all shared a common passion: breast cancer awareness and prevention.

From day one, the hospital understood that the Pink Glove Dance competition represented an opportunity for employee and community engagement. Importantly, the video, to be filmed and edited by the hospital's marketing department, would feature hundreds of hospital employees, several of whom are breast cancer survivors. An objective was to include as many employees as possible in the video.

Execution

Lexington Medical Center began filming its video on the evening of September 6, 2011. Approximately 400 employees gathered in the hospital parking lot and danced late into the night while wearing pink gloves and waving pink glow sticks.

To engage the community, the hospital turned to media relations tactics combined with social media and grassroots marketing. News outlets were invited to cover the filming of the video. Three local TV network affiliates and *The State* newspaper, the largest newspaper in South Carolina, attended the shoot and published stories about the Pink Glove Dance competition. To sustain interest among the hospital's employees, photos, news coverage, and teaser videos from the shoot were posted on Facebook, Twitter, and the hospital's blog over the next several days and weeks. These helped to build excitement as employees and friends anticipated the release of the final video.

The Contest

The impact of involving hundreds of employees in the video, combined with the extensive media coverage and frequent social media updates, meant that Lexington Medical Center hit the ground running when the contest was officially launched. That's when social media marketing and grassroots efforts took center stage. Throughout the contest, the hospital relied

heavily on Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and other social media to maintain momentum and interest. This was vitally important given that the time from the initial video shoot to the announcement of the contest winner spanned nearly two months—an eternity for sustaining interest.

Recognizing that Facebook is a powerful tool for audience engagement, Lexington Medical Center had worked diligently over the years to build up its Facebook community by posting relevant, interesting health content. Its Facebook page is ranked in the top 10 percent of hospital Facebook pages in the nation on UbiCare's "engagement quotient," a measure of fan interaction. The hospital also has a well-established blog that is widely read by employees and other brand constituents, along with a women's blog with a dedicated following in the community. This solid foundation of audience engagement would serve the hospital well as it entered the Pink Glove Dance competition.

For a viral marketing effort, repurposing content across platforms is essential. The team at Lexington Medical Center posted all video and news coverage to each of its social media sites. Every news story was shared on numerous Facebook pages, Twitter, LinkedIn, and the hospital's blogs. Several times each week, the marketing team posted Pink Glove Dance updates to 64 different Facebook pages in South Carolina, with a combined reach of 350,000 followers. The hospital also reached out to healthcare bloggers, who were encouraged to write posts about the competition. One such contact led to a story in the *Wall Street Journal's* online Journal Community. Throughout the competition, Lexington Medical Center's public relations staff successfully pitched news stories about the breast cancer survivors featured in the hospital's video.

Viewing the South Carolina state fair as another opportunity for community engagement, Lexington Medical Center asked WIS-TV, the most-watched TV station in South Carolina, if the hospital could share its tent at the event. The TV station agreed. So, while fairgoers waited in line for autographs from their favorite news anchors, on-site computers made it easy for them to vote for Lexington Medical Center's video on the spot. The hospital also promoted the Pink Glove



Dance competition at its annual Women's Night Out, a fundraising event celebrating breast cancer survivors.

On October 28, 2011, Lexington Medical Center was notified that it had won the contest, garnering a total of 61,054 "likes" on Facebook. *Fox & Friends*, the popular morning program on the Fox News Network, did live shots from the hospital all morning to announce the winner. More than 600 employees gathered on the hospital campus in pink gloves and pink T-shirts that morning to dance on national TV and celebrate their accomplishment.

**The Payoff**

Although none of the videos in the 2011 Pink Glove Dance competition went viral, Lexington Medical Center's video received—in addition to the more than 61,000 Facebook "likes" that put it in first place—an impressive 120,000 YouTube views, more than 50,000 daily impressions on Twitter, and appearances on ABC's *World News with Diane Sawyer* and *Fox & Friends* morning show, along with an abundance of regional media coverage.

Even with all the publicity, the

marketing team believes that an important outcome of its participation in the contest, second only to the increase in breast cancer awareness, was the boost the hospital received in employee and community engagement. Employees and community members rallied to support the hospital, embracing the opportunity to be a part of something special. The hospital discovered there was an incredible amount of value in simply participating in the competition—an adventure it shared with its employees, community members, and other brand constituents.

On the heels of the Pink Glove Dance competition, the community expressed its support by naming Lexington Medical Center "Best Hospital" in the highly competitive Columbia, SC, market in an annual readers poll by *The State* newspaper. The hospital also was recognized by WomenCertified as one of America's 100 Best Hospitals for Patient Experience in its size category. Internally, the hospital's universal employee fund, created to assist employees facing financial hardship, had a record year, with more employees donating than ever before—a true measure of employee engagement. Finally, it probably comes as no surprise that employee satisfaction was at an all-time high following the Pink Glove Dance competition.

Through its participation in the Pink Glove Dance competition, Lexington Medical Center learned the truth of the adage, Success is a journey, not a destination. Through its strategy of engagement, the hospital put its employees and the community at the heart of its journey.



**The Dance That Inspired a Movement**

The original Pink Glove Dance video premiered in November 2009 and featured 200 hospital workers from Providence St. Vincent Medical Center in Portland, OR, wearing pink gloves and dancing in support of breast cancer awareness and prevention. The video has inspired hundreds of Pink Glove Dance videos and breast cancer awareness events across the country.

Last year 139 organizations from 40 states and Canada participated in the inaugural Pink Glove Dance video competition, created and sponsored by Medline Industries, manufacturer of the gloves worn in the videos. The competition quickly became a social media phenomenon, with the videos receiving more than 1.2 million views, half a million votes, and thousands of tweets, blogs, and texts. Lexington Medical Center won first place with 61,054 votes—more than four times the population of the city of West Columbia, SC. The winning video may be viewed at [pinkglovedance.com/competition/entry-39](http://pinkglovedance.com/competition/entry-39).

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