

From Skepticism to Celebration:

Smoothing Out an Equal Partnership Between Competitors



The Client Challenge

Two prized regional health systems wanted to partner to tackle major health issues in their home state—and ward off out-of-state competitors eager to snap them up. But influential state lawmakers were skeptical of this merger of equals. Meanwhile, staffs and physicians were already grappling with change fatigue since both systems had launched separate major initiatives independent of the merger.

Navigating to Next: The Solution

Cognizant that both systems were partnering from positions of strength, the Jarrard strategic communications team worked closely with leaders to create a broad understanding of “the why” behind the merger. It was imperative to demonstrate clearly that the organizations weren’t growing just to grow but had made a strategic decision to improve access, service, and long-term stability. Together, they could ward off encroachment from larger systems in neighboring states and focus efforts on a state-based solution to healthcare. Conjoined, the erstwhile rivals would enjoy blended leadership with existing CEOs sharing at the helm.

The Jarrard team worked simultaneously on the merger and integration, convening legal and government relations, leadership from both systems, and transaction advisers. Once crafted, the team delivered a cohesive story in a deliberate, highly cadenced drumbeat that engaged internal audiences, regional media, and state and federal regulators. The plan called for intentionally overcommunicating—and even formation of a dedicated website to help explain the partnership. Jarrard supported respective internal teams, aligned leadership, and worked together to navigate the political dynamics.

BARRIERS TO A SUCCESSFUL MERGER

- Anti-trust activism
- Accusations of growth for financial gain
- Questions about profit over mission
- Concerns about local control

NAVIGATING TO NEXT: KEY COMPONENTS



CREATE CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

Identify all relevant stakeholders and messengers, and define what each is looking for



IDENTIFY THE POWERFUL STORY

Showcase why a partnership is beneficial and mission-driven



CENTRALIZE INFORMATION

Ensure all messengers are singing from the same hymnal for consistency



DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL

Use existing channels and behaviors to deliver critical information

Client Impact

Potential roadblocks cleared, the two clients successfully completed the deal ahead of schedule. The comprehensive strategic communications campaign approach centered on the website, which served as a single source of truth, allowing the partners to tell a powerful, consistent story about the importance of the deal to staff and physicians and to the communities served. The existing strategic initiatives were brought under one umbrella in service to the wider strategic goals of the new organization. Critically, the aligned leadership of both systems was able to leverage existing communications channels to ensure their compelling message reached everyone affected. Today, the unified, mission-driven organization is highly regarded and operating virtually statewide to improve care.



How We Are Making Healthcare Better

“We focused on telling a compelling story that emphasized how the partnership would serve the missions of both systems and allow them to better serve their communities. Growth and scale are valuable, but they must be put in the context of how those features can sustain or strengthen care, not just benefit the organizations in question.”

—Isaac Squyres, Partner, Jarrard Inc.

While many transactions are slowed or stymied by regulatory hurdles and community pushback, this partnership moved smoothly:

18

months of M&A, integration, and strategy support

2,800

total physicians

28,000

team members aligned and brought along for the process

NEXT INTELLIGENCE:

Effective communications for a successful long-term initiative such as a partnership and integration must be:

Steady

Use multiple channels to disseminate information and collect feedback, carried out consistently and frequently.

Rooted in culture and mission

Align internal and external stakeholders by focusing on mission, using facts and data to underpin the story.

Ongoing

The change has only just begun once a deal is signed. Communication must continue and evolve during the post-merger integration.

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