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7 Deadly Sins of Healthcare Marketing

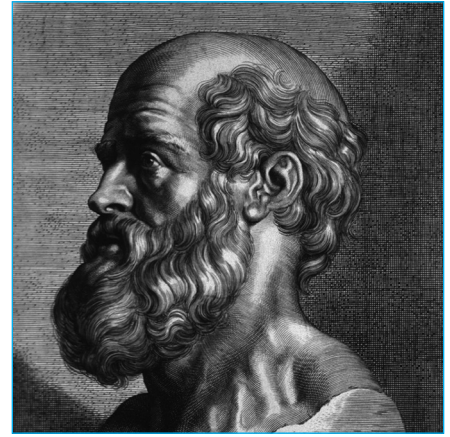


a Healthcare Success eBook



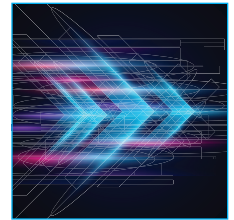
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“First, Do No Harm”

Avoid Mistakes. Diagnose the Problem. Take Action.



It would be a surprise to many outside the healthcare profession that the familiar words, “First, do no harm,” are not part of the Hippocratic Oath. The father of modern medicine did, however, put forward a similar idea in one of his writings, which translates as:

“Declare the past, diagnose the present, foretell the future; practice these acts. As to diseases, make a habit of two things: to help, or at least to do no harm.” Hippocrates

By any translation, this is a popular concept with hospitals and practices when they seek our expertise and guidance in healthcare marketing.

Hospitals and multilocation medical practices want to do no [marketing] harm and actively seek out ways to avoid mistakes.

Boost your effectiveness and take the first of two leaps toward greater success by learning from – and avoiding – the mistakes of others.

Whether you’re running a multilocation medical practice, hospital, medical device company, pharmaceutical company, or other healthcare-oriented organization, marketing can be challenging and costly unless you approach it with the proper knowledge, tools, and guidance. Since its inception, Healthcare Success has helped healthcare organizations overcome unintended marketing mistakes and chart a path toward success.

We’ve curated 7 Deadly Sins of Marketing (and then some), so you’re better equipped to recognize and avoid them in your marketing strategy.





Confusing Marketing With Advertising

Don't use these terms interchangeably; they're cousins, not twins.

Marketing is the process of identifying customer needs and determining how best to meet those needs.

Advertising is promoting a company and its products or services through paid channels. In other words, advertising is a component of marketing.

Although healthcare marketing and advertising can appear daunting, there are six fundamental healthcare marketing building blocks for success. They are:

- 1 Professional Referral Marketing
- 2 Digital Marketing (e.g., email, social media, paid search, SEO, etc.)
- 3 Traditional Advertising (e.g., print, broadcast, outdoor, etc.)
- 4 Branding
- 5 Internal Marketing
- 6 Public Relations

We use this list to guide our healthcare marketing plans and achieve client goals.





Spaghetti Marketing

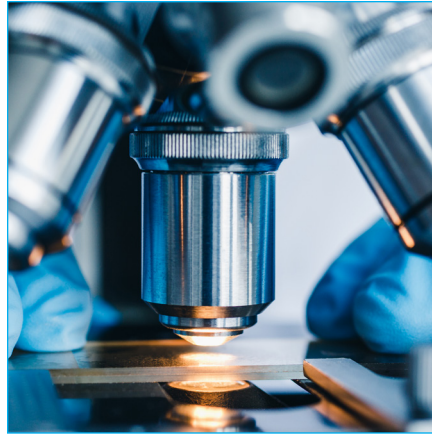
Effective marketing is a well-planned go-to-market strategy that maximizes client spending and achieves optimal short- and long-term results.

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Marketing products and services without a plan is like throwing strategies against a wall to see what sticks. We call this spaghetti marketing, and it can be brutal on your budget and organization.

Plan your marketing strategy carefully, preferably with the guidance of seasoned professionals who can help you seize growth opportunities, boost revenue, and avoid tactics that will fall flat.

Plan
Execute
Adjust
Repeat



Analysis Paralysis

People who work in and around healthcare tend to be scientifically minded, analytical thinkers. That's great when it comes to practicing medicine or supporting it but not so great when launching a marketing campaign.

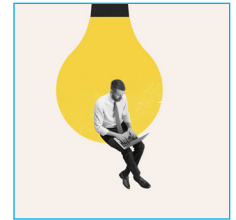
Sometimes analytically minded individuals think so long and hard about what to do that they confuse thinking with action. Thinking and planning alone don't attract patients.

Actions do.

If taking action is a difficult step for your decision makers, gently remind them no marketing strategy is forever. The best marketers test, reassess, and improve their strategy as they go.

Partnering with a healthcare marketing agency means you get the best of both worlds: industry expertise and seasoned marketing professionals making informed decisions and appropriate actions to grow your business.

The best marketers test, reassess, and improve their strategy as they go.



Marketing Decisions by Committee

When it comes to marketing, everyone has an opinion.

Many healthcare organizations have set aside valuable marketing plans because key players couldn't agree on the tiny details. That's the trouble with making marketing decisions by committee. While you're waiting for a complete agreement, your competitors beat you to the punch.

And when you finally do reach an agreement, the result is often a watered-down version that will do little or nothing to accomplish your growth goals.

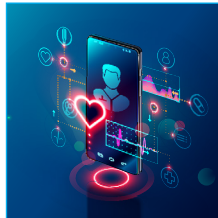
Empower Your Marketing Director

If you want your healthcare organization to seize growth opportunities and boost revenue, it's time to divide and conquer.

- 1 First, align key decision makers on objectives and budget.
- 2 Second, create a strategic marketing plan.
- 3 Third, once the plan is approved, appoint ONE person within the organization to act as "Marketing Director" (if you don't already have one).

Your Marketing Director is responsible for overseeing the implementation and execution of your marketing strategy and aligning it with your organization's priorities.

Empower this person to make all decisions and work with qualified talent firms to ensure messaging is on-brand and meets expectations. This will streamline your marketing initiatives and give you the ability to evaluate their performance based on the results.

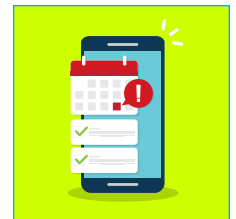


Poor Patient Experience

Patient Experience Is Changing

Patients have more options than ever before. With virtually unlimited access to information and more providers to choose from, they no longer feel the need to visit the hospital or practice closest to their location or on their plan.

Healthcare consumerism is here, forcing big changes in the healthcare industry as it officially ushers in a new era of the patient experience. It's time to implement a patient experience that's digitally connected, patient-centric, and focused on wellness. As healthcare costs continue to rise, more and more consumers are empowered to search for and expect greater value and quality of service, timely and convenient care, transparent information, and an excellent patient experience.



Patients have more options than ever before.



Poor Patient Experience Continued

Organizations must embrace these changes and meet their patients' expectations or risk losing them to the competition. If you do not provide a positive patient experience, patients can simply go elsewhere the next time they need medical services.

Convert inquiries into patients!

Patients who discover your business online or through digital or traditional advertising will predictably be more skeptical or hesitant than referred patients.

Because there was no referral, there's no implied trust. That's why it's crucial to engage with and build those relationships quickly.

For this reason, you must strategically consider HOW you are going to handle new patient inquiries, and WHO will do it. Should you handle calls and electronic inquiries at an office level, or (usually better) at a centralized call center?

Either way, everyone on your team who handles inquiries must be trained to support unique questions, mindsets, and concerns, which will undoubtedly differ from the other types of calls your team is used to.

Consumers demand and expect the same level of service they get in any other industry!

If your team is ill-equipped to deliver a great patient experience, it doesn't matter how strong your healthcare marketing strategy is; you will lose business.



Treating Marketing as a Cost Center

**Marketing is a revenue center,
NOT a cost center.**

It's an investment in your success.

It's time to give your marketing a sufficient budget and time to succeed. And, rather than focusing on how much marketing costs, focus on its ROI (return on investment).

Even if you are comfortable with your current patient volume, your numbers will not be sustainable unless you develop and execute robust marketing and retention strategies.

Your healthcare organization must be willing to give marketing a sufficient budget and time to succeed. Is \$25,000 a month for a given tactic or strategy expensive? What if it brings your hospital or practice \$125,000 or more in monthly revenue?

**Marketing that works is not a cost;
it's an investment.**

Your goal should be to find strategies with a 3:1 to 5:1 (or better) ROI; and when you do, it's time to invest more to make more.

In the end, you'll multiply your revenue streams through successful, ongoing marketing systems. (Try to get returns like these with mutual funds!)





Insufficient Delegation

A well-designed marketing plan involves many moving parts.

If everyone is responsible for a given task or outcome, no one is responsible.

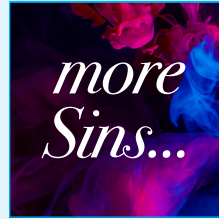
Delegate tasks and use the resources at your disposal to make your marketing efforts blend seamlessly with your business operations.

Build Team Alignment

- Make sure everyone understands your vision and strategy.
- Pick the right people to lead appropriate tasks.
- Assign specific tasks to specific people with specific deadlines.

If you're working with a specialized marketing agency – and generally you should – you'll want to delegate as much as possible to them. However, it's important to help them help you by agreeing on goals, responsibilities, and expectations.

If everyone is responsible for a given task or outcome, no one is responsible.

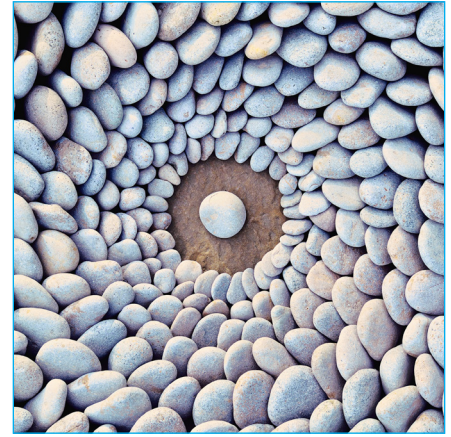


The Marketing Sins We Couldn't Leave Out

The 7 Deadly Sins of Healthcare Marketing are the most egregious and common marketing errors, but we couldn't leave these out...



[More Deadly Sins of Healthcare Marketing](#)



Inconsistency

Decide what sets your hospital, multilocation practice, or pharmaceutical company apart from the competition. Is your hospital family-friendly? Do you have award-winning physicians? Do you offer state-of-the-art technologies?

Identify your unique selling proposition and ensure the messages you convey are consistent with that end. If not, today's patients will quickly lose trust in your organization and go elsewhere for medical services.

Keep your marketing consistent, but know when it's time to pivot. Don't stop running a paid search campaign just because the first insertion didn't light up your call queue. Give your campaigns time to work, but know when a change in direction is warranted.

Inconsistency **dulls your brand image, confuses customers, and turns off prospective buyers**. A seasoned healthcare marketing agency can help maintain consistent brand messaging along the patient journey at each touchpoint, helping you attract more patients.



Failure to Track the Sources of New Patients

In sin #6 (Treating Marketing as a Cost Center), we discussed the importance of considering ROI in each marketing tactic. However, if you're not tracking the source of every new patient, determining the effectiveness of these various tactics is impossible.

As a result, you could mistakenly stop a successful campaign drawing new patients, or worse, continue throwing money at a losing proposition.

To that end, it's imperative to utilize modern technologies like Google Analytics, call tracking, and fully integrated 24-hour reporting dashboards.

Once you have that patient data, you can easily calculate approximate ROIs by strategy, allowing you to make smarter marketing decisions going forward. (More sophisticated marketers take the next step to integrate inquiry data with their management software to attribute new patients and ROI to marketing efforts more precisely.)

Results attribution can easily get complex, and we highly recommend hiring an experienced marketing agency to manage this for you seamlessly.

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Hiring the Wrong Marketing Talent

It's easy – and expensive – to choose poorly.

To help you find the right marketing talent, here are some important things to look for:

Healthcare Marketing Experience

Healthcare marketing is a small, specialized niche, and few people are truly experts; look for experience. Consider professionals and agencies who have marketed dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of healthcare clients.

Marketing Strategist

Most providers don't need to hire a complete digital marketing team (e.g., SEO, paid search, paid social, programmatic), art directors and designers, writers, programmers, videographers, editors, media buyers, etc. These people (assuming they are good) have very specialized expertise and are best suited as part of a larger team led by a marketing strategist. A sales and marketing strategist combines all relevant marketing channels – content development, email, paid media, and more – into a cohesive plan that steers your brand.

Continuing Education

You need a seasoned professional (or team of professionals) dedicated to continuing their education to master their craft (e.g., books, coursework, seminars, newsletters, etc.). You do NOT want someone who hasn't opened a book since college.

Results Orientation

Few marketers have experience directly selling products or services through marketing. It's crucial to work with performance-oriented marketers who recognize which results are important and what steps are needed to achieve them. Instead of focusing solely on the look and feel of past work, asking for campaign performance data will help you find a great match.



“Amateur-Hour” Marketing

Hiring the cheapest talent is actually your most expensive option.

We strongly recommend avoiding the temptation of trying to execute your marketing “on the cheap” with unqualified agencies or employees.

Why? Nothing is more important than your reputation. People judge what they can't see based on what they can see. You want to present a cohesive brand story that engages patients and persuades them to convert.

While to the uninitiated, marketing seems relatively straightforward, convincing patients to pick up their phone and call you is difficult – even if they need your products or services.



Great marketing is so much more than a show-stopping website.

The business of healthcare gets more complex every year, and competition is a huge factor for thousands of organizations and practices. Status quo is no longer an option.

Scrimping on marketing talent won't save you money. Good or bad – media costs the same amount to run.

The time and energy spent on ineffective marketing tactics will not be worth it. What's more, it could lead to burnout, which brings us to the worst sin of all...

Status quo is no longer an option.



Doing Nothing

"Procrastination is the grave in which opportunity is buried."

From time to time, we'll speak with a prospective client who proudly says, "We've never had to do much in the way of marketing."

If you're in business, you're marketing. You may or may not be advertising, but we assure you: you are marketing. As Erik Spiekermann once said, "You cannot NOT communicate."

How effective are you?

Many experts estimate most American consumers are exposed to 4,000 to 10,000 commercial messages each day, meaning you're competing for mind share with marketing agencies that control multimillion-dollar budgets. It also means competing with businesses that employ sophisticated healthcare marketing agencies to get their messages out.

It's imperative to seek out seasoned marketing professionals who can support your business goals and objectives with a cross-channel marketing strategy that helps you develop new growth opportunities and boost revenue.

"You cannot NOT communicate."

Erik Spiekermann





Update Your Marketing Plan

Design + Implement

Now that you know common pitfalls to avoid, it's time to design and implement an effective marketing plan. The first step is a comprehensive self-audit of your marketing plan.

The First Seven Questions

There are several hundred questions to ask yourself and others when you audit your marketing plan, but here are the seven you should start with:

Are you using an evidence-based marketing approach?

Does your marketing system include proven strategies, a well-designed marketing plan, effective implementation, and a means to evaluate results? Each of these components works together, driving the process. If you're missing one or more, you're not operating at maximum strength or capturing full potential.

Is your marketing plan up to date?

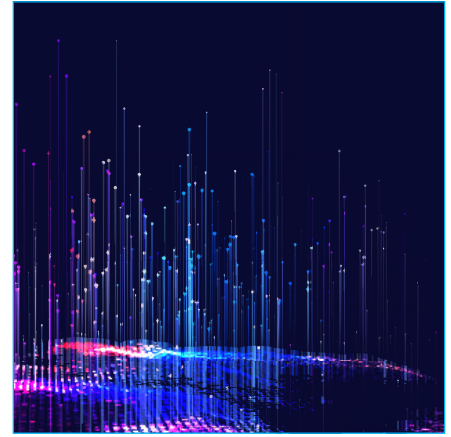
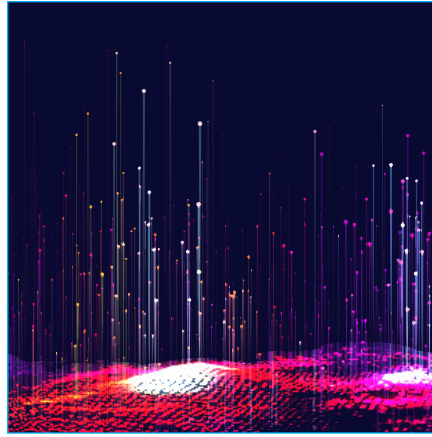
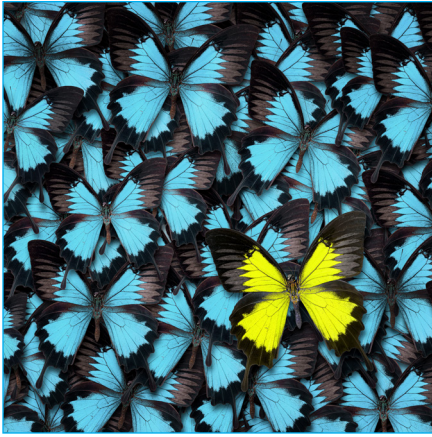
Even carefully considered plans become dated if they are not challenged routinely – at least quarterly. If it's been more than 12 months since you've reviewed your marketing plan, it's time to reevaluate it and determine whether specific campaigns or tactics need refreshing or the entire strategy needs reworking.

Do you have clear and specific goals?

Goals are quantified at the top, strategies support goals, and tactics are implemented. Is everyone clear about the marching order of these terms? How have your goals changed? What are the new goals, and how did you set them? What strategies and tactics are needed to achieve them? Did you realign your budget to account for these changes?

How did you set your budget, and does it achieve your goals?

Do you have enough resources – time, dollars, people – in the right places? There are multiple methods for setting a marketing budget. Remember, marketing is a revenue center – not a cost center.



Update Your Marketing Plan Continued

Does your branding message clearly differentiate your organization?

Increased competition in the healthcare industry means you have to differentiate your business to stay competitive. Patients and the community need to understand exactly how you are different, why you are better, and why they should choose you over your competitors.

Are your internal, external and professional referral programs working together or independently?

Some components of a well-tuned marketing plan run all the time, while others may be seasonal. Still others are targeting specific audience segments or needs. Does your plan include each of these elements in a cohesive way?

How do you measure response and ROI?

Tracking is crucial to managing the marketing plan and calculating ROI. Many hospitals, practices, and other organizations don't have a reliable tracking system to identify the source of new patients or measure the effectiveness of their marketing, advertising, promotion, or referral efforts. If you're not tracking, you won't know what's working. Do you have a tracking system? Is it reliable and accurate?



Don't let the treatment plan get ahead of the diagnosis.

A Timely Tip

In our consulting work with hospitals, multilocation medical practices, and other healthcare organizations around the country, we've received inquiry calls that "need to refresh their website content," are "interested in social marketing or whatever else they think is right," and/or "want an immediate marketing tool for their business."

Imagine if a patient presented himself with a request for a specific medication before your medical team had received a history, conducted a comprehensive exam, or ran diagnostic tests.

The same principle applies in successful marketing programs regardless of profession, marketplace, audience, etc. Don't jump ahead. Instead, invest the time to ask yourself these questions and get a clear and unbiased perspective on where you are and what you need to do to achieve your business development goals.

We often say that developing an effective healthcare marketing plan involves five steps:

- Patient History
- Examination
- Diagnosis
- Treatment
- Follow-up

Be sure to have a clear idea of what you need before moving forward.

The right marketing team can help examine and diagnose your hospital or multilocation medical practice while providing the right treatments and follow-up care needed to keep your marketing on track.



We Deliver Patients

Nothing is more important than your reputation.

Healthcare Success is a full-service, digital-first healthcare marketing agency that can effectively guide your marketing with evidence-based strategies that deliver results. We provide ethical, creative, and evidence-based marketing strategies for healthcare clients across the nation. Our principals have successfully marketed over 1,000 clients over the past 20 years. When you work with Healthcare Success, our singular mission is delivering new patients to your business.

Our team of healthcare marketing specialists will build your brand, generate inquiries, and help you convert those inquiries into new patients.

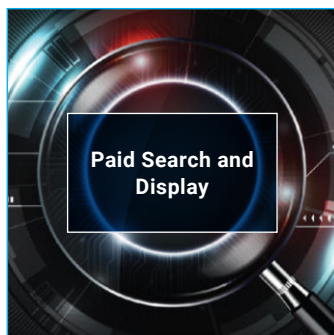
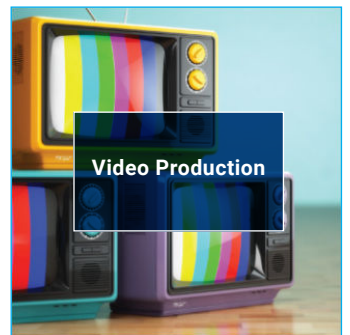
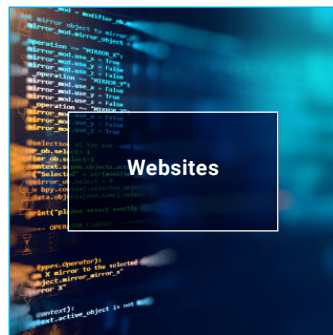
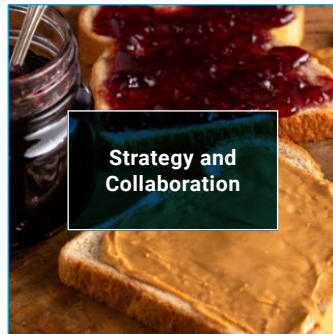
And you can monitor your performance using our real-time analytics dashboard and 24-hour reporting.

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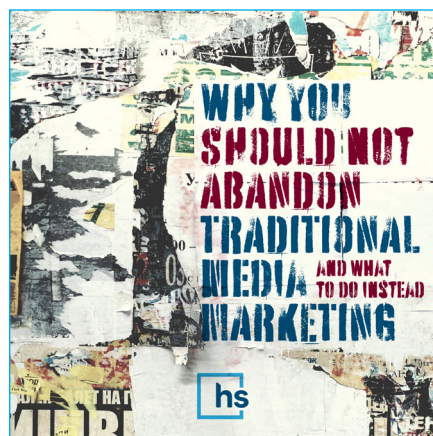
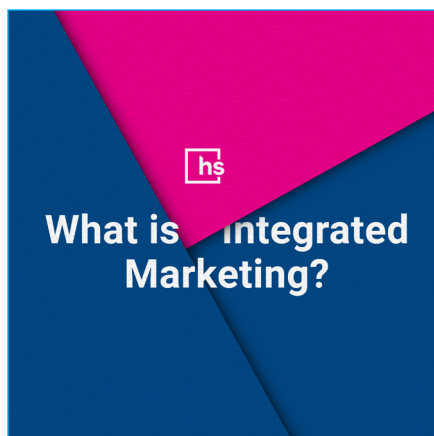
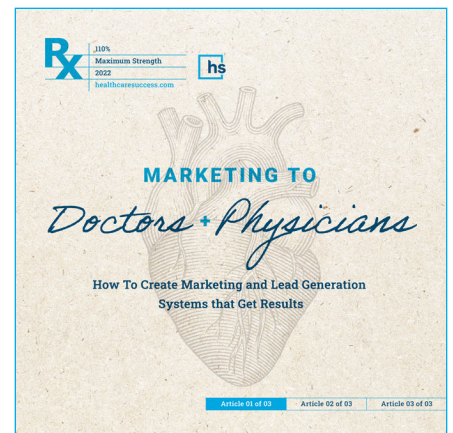
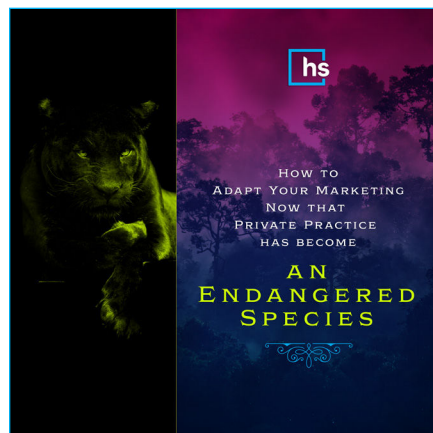
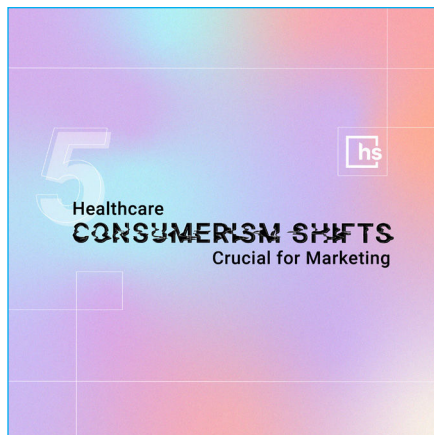
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Our Services

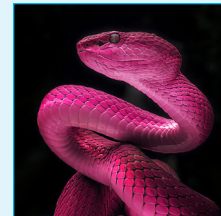


Call 800-656-0907
for a free marketing assessment.

More Reading



Visit the [HS Blog](#) for more marketing insights



We speak the language of hospitals and practices – unlike any other agency out there.

You won't find another marketing agency with our level of experience in healthcare. Our principals have marketed thousands of hospitals and practices in every medical specialty over the last 20 years.

We live and breathe healthcare every day. We understand industry jargon like HIPAA, Stark, MCO, PPO, MSO, EMR, ACO, and ASC.



Call 800-656-0907 for your free consultation.