

Brand management strategy 2014/19



“At its simplest and its best a brand is a promise delivered.”
The Foundation Trust Network (2009)

Excellent care at the heart of the community

Contents

Introduction	3
The meaning of 'brand' and 'brand management'	3
Consolidating and enhancing the SCT brand	4
Vision, values and goals	5
Reputation management	6
Leadership	8
Monitoring and reporting to the board	9
Conclusion	11

Introduction

This paper presents an outline of our brand management strategy. To do this it:

- Offers a definition of 'brand'.
- Considers the SCT brand in the light of our development as a trust since 2010.
- Shows what we do and plan to do to consolidate and enhance our brand.
- Shows how the board can be assured about our brand management activity.

The meaning of 'brand' and 'brand management'

A simple definition of brand

In its simplest sense, a brand is a trademark or distinctive name identifying a product or a manufacturer, indicating ownership of and responsibility for a service or product. This derives from Old English meaning 'a piece of burning or smouldering wood' and from the practice of using heat to mark the skin of an animal to indicate ownership.

In a marketing context the word brand carries complicated and nuanced meaning. There is a substantial literature on what this involves. The Foundation Trust Network (FTN) publication *Branding matters: A guide to branding for FTs* (2009) suggests that 'at its simplest and its best a brand is a promise delivered'. The Chartered Institute of Marketing defines branding as: 'the effect on the user of everything the company does and how it behaves.'

All of this leads us to offer the simple definition of brand:

- It is what consumers think of you and your efforts to meet their expectations.
- It is based primarily upon their direct experience of you, although influenced by other factors including what other people say, including the media.
- It carries your corporate 'personality', must be aligned with your values and objectives and must be integral to - perhaps inseparable from - your reputation.

Brand management

Brand management is the activity that helps you build awareness of your brand and protect it from damage. It includes analysis and planning on how that brand is positioned, the audience/market the brand targets, and your work to develop and protect the brand.

It includes activity to manage **tangible elements** (including logos, design, signs, physical environment); and **intangible elements** (including staff behaviour and service quality).

The communications and marketing team plays a key role in our brand management work. Their work will run alongside, support and complement other key drivers, including our people strategy, clinical care strategy, estates strategy and our leadership development programme. In addition, as we progress our FT bid, we will exploit new opportunities to boost our brand, including through our FT membership strategy.

Delivering these strategies will help develop and protect our brand. In this way:

- The board must embrace its key leadership role with regard to the brand.
- All staff must understand that what they can enhance or undermine the brand.

The NHS as a ‘superbrand’

NHS organisations operate within a wider NHS which marketing would describe as a ‘superbrand’. The NHS brand is readily associated with exceptionally high levels of recognition of the NHS and what it stands for, and trust in the NHS and its values.

Research by the market research company Ipsos MORI confirms that personal experience is the most influential factor in people’s perception of the NHS, followed by support for the Government, and then belief that the NHS is changing for the better. Key drivers that determine this personal experience include treating patients with dignity and respect; involving patients in decisions about their care, including good communication from the doctor; effective pain relief and being treated in a clean environment.

This insight reinforces the point that the quality of our work will underpin our reputation and determine the strength of our brand. But paradoxically, whilst the NHS can be described as a superbrand, the FTN suggests that branding in the NHS is relatively underdeveloped, reflecting:

- The lack of historical understanding, experience and necessity to market services.
- Lack of resource and recognition by leadership of the necessity of branding.
- Stakeholder opposition to spending money on NHS marketing activity.

Consolidating and enhancing the SCT brand

The nature and character of the SCT brand, and our brand management strategy should be understood in the context of the preceding discussion and of the following factors:

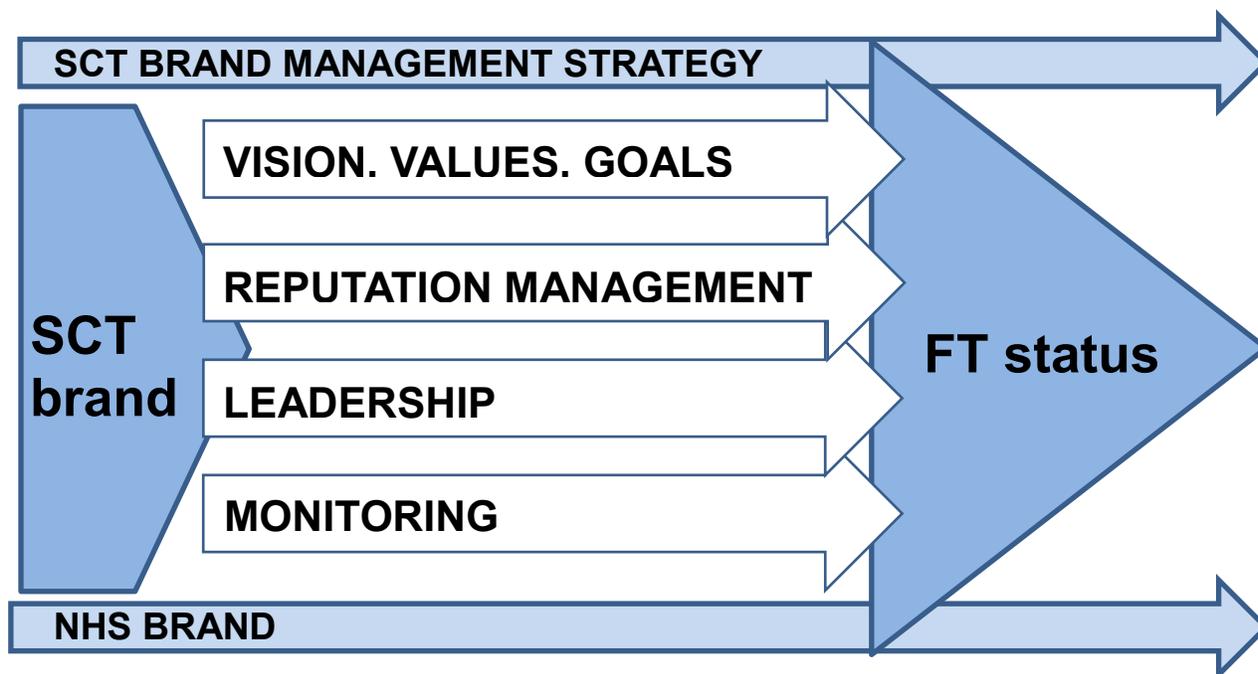
- SCT is a relatively new organisation that continues to develop and consolidate.
- Some staff have been destabilised by a history of change, and do not feel part of SCT as a single organisation for a range of reasons.
- Awareness of SCT as a distinct brand is less developed when compared with other NHS providers, especially acute providers operating from a well-known local base.
- Low understanding of the range and importance of community provision.
- The continued media and policy focus on acute care can skew how people think about healthcare – from our local health and care partners through to the public.

We must therefore accelerate our work to develop and define an engaging brand that will influence our key audiences – internal and external. But we should do so in ways that:

- Will be seen as appropriate by our stakeholders, including our staff and public.
- Are in keeping with our values.
- Are properly targeted, raising our profile in our community in appropriate ways.

Building a brand is complex, and multi-faceted. Brands are built for and maintained over the long term on the basis of strong, clear values and an organisation and culture that give stakeholders a good experience in ways that are consistent with those values.

The graphic below conveys how our work to consolidate and enhance the SCT brand will be delivered along four distinct brand channels, all of which are informed and underpinned by the NHS 'superbrand'.



The sections of the paper that follows outlines key actions we should take to progress our brand management strategy along the four key channels.

Vision, values and goals

Embedding our vision and objectives

Our work is driven by our vision of excellent care at the heart of the community. To realise our vision we need to raise awareness of the value and range of what we do and develop a reputation for excellence and innovation.

Our strategic goals as below describe how we will realise our vision:

- We will provide excellent care every time to reinforce wellbeing and independence.
- Working with our partners we will personalise services for the individual
- We will be a strong sustainable business grounded in our communities and led by excellent staff.

Our vision and goals have evolved since the trust was established but have recently been confirmed. In the light of this as part of our brand management strategy we will:

- Use our communication and engagement processes to advise staff and external stakeholders of our vision, values and goals.
- Ensure staff see how these apply to their work by encouraging discussion in their teams and ensuring they are covered in supervision and appraisals.
- Secure support of our key partners for vision, values and goals.
- Ensure our vision, values and goals are consistently articulated and applied across a range of corporate publications and platforms.

Embedding our values

In the same way, we will implement a communications campaign in the early months of 2014 to make our staff aware of our newly-defined values, as below:

- Compassionate care.
- Working together.
- Achieving ambitions.
- Delivering excellence.

This will focus on how our values must shape our behaviours and underpin all we do as part of our programme of organisational development. Again, we will ensure staff see how these apply to their work by encouraging discussion in their teams and ensuring that they are covered in team meetings, supervision and appraisals.

Reputation management

Within the marketing world reputation and brand are seen to have an inherent and integral connection: brand and reputation/reputation and brand. Echoing the definition of brand provided earlier, the NHS Confederation suggests that reputation is ‘the perception its stakeholders develop through their accumulated experience, based upon direct and indirect contact (*Reputation management: a guide for boards*, NHS Confederation 2009).

In this way, the work we do to define, develop and protect our reputation will support our brand management strategy. To drive this forward our work will prioritise as below:

Review and renew our communications stakeholder engagement strategy

The current three-year strategy was approved by the trust board in 2011. An independent review in December 2012 concluded that ‘the overall communications strategy and activity appears clear, soundly managed, and aligned to SCT’s strategic objectives’. However, the strategy itself requires review and refresh in 2014.

The tangible elements of the brand

We will bring new rigour to how we manage the tangible elements – visual and physical characteristics, including logos, publications, signs, physical environment etc. We will:

- Renew and relaunch the trust's corporate identity manual.
- Adopt a 'zero tolerance' response to its misuse.
- Adopt a design style guide to develop and apply a consistent feel that links our external publication and web outputs. This will cover design, colour palette, imagery etc and will help us differentiate SCT within a crowded marketplace.
- Develop easy-to-use corporate templates and written style guide for internal and external documents and publications.
- Work with NHS Property Company to ensure signage reflects the brand.
- Though our estates strategy improve the environment in which staff work.

Corporate narratives

We will deliver a clear narrative that explains what we do and stand for. We will consistently share our vision and goals and our underlying purpose in ways that help define and differentiate SCT from our provider competitors. This will include:

- Our focus on community serves to differentiate us from other NHS providers.
- People want to be cared in or as close to home as possible.
- We have articulated our vision and strategic priorities, including FT status.
- All of this confirms our central role in transforming the health and care system.

People's stories

We will develop compelling people's stories and use these to bring our work to life at our board meetings, on our website, in our publications and via our media work.

Service information

We will work with our operations directorate to develop a cost effective process for producing service information, and ensure a consistent and high quality output.

Online and social media

We will continue to develop our social media profiles, notably Twitter and Facebook, and build upon the success of our relaunched website. This will include engaging with users to review the effectiveness of our use of these media.

Media relations management /issues management/ emergency management

We will continue our media work to raise our media profile across our area. This will include proactive communications management with regard to serious incidents, and an issues management approach that 'scans the horizon' and identifies potential problems in advance, allowing mitigating steps to be taken.

We will review and develop our emergency management arrangements to ensure all appropriate steps can be taken in an emergency to protect our reputation.

Internal communications

We will continue to deliver our key messages and nurture our values along a range of internal communications channels, and regularly monitor effectiveness of these channels.

Staff wellbeing

Studies (*Towers Perrin- ISR Employee Engagement, 2006*) show that most important factor in promoting staff engagement is the extent to which staff think senior management has a sincere interest in their wellbeing. To foster this sense we will:

- Demonstrate clear actions to address the areas in the staff survey and other feedback referring to staff wellbeing, notably stress at work.
- Implement an integrated staff wellbeing strategy, so that a commitment to wellbeing is seen as ‘the way we do things here’.
- Ensure all staff know how to access staff support services.

Our healthier workforce group has been set up to encourage and build an ethos of health and wellbeing across the trust and to strengthen resilience of our workforce. It is therefore vital that staff are aware of its work and that it delivers benefits to the workforce.

FT membership

The implementation of an effective FT membership strategy, including the recruitment of a representative FT public membership and the implementation of an effective engagement programme will provide new opportunities to promote the SCT brand.

Leadership

Given the complex and multi-faceted nature of the brand and brand development, delivery of the brand management strategy must be embraced as a responsibility by leaders across the trust. This role will be exercised in two key areas: internal communications and stakeholder engagement.

Leadership in internal communication

Effective internal communication and engagement will be essential in ensuring staff understand their role in delivering quality, and how this influences our brand. So we must ensure that the critical role of line management at all levels in delivering internal communications and engagement is recognised, developed and delivered.

This will seek to ensure we embed the key findings of the landmark report *Engaging for success: enhancing performance through employee engagement* (2009) by MacLeod and Clarke. This showed that there are four clear drivers to employee engagement:

- **Leadership:** Leaders need to be visible and in touch with their front line staff – a desk is a dangerous place to run an organisation from!
- **Engaging line managers:** 80% of the variation in engagement levels is down to line management. Employees join organisations, but leave managers!
- **Employee voice:** An empowered employee will have a voice. Where employee views are sought out they should be listened to and visibly acted upon.
- **Integrity:** Behaviour is consistent with the values, leading to employee trust and a sense of integrity. The larger the gap between the two, the more distrust exists.

Our continued work to deliver our engagement and people strategies will support our work to build staff engagement. This will involve:

Raising the capability of leaders

We will make explicit the internal communication role and responsibilities of leaders across the trust in delivering communication and engagement. We will support managers to do this through our leadership development programme and 'how to' tools, and monitor performance through active line management.

Raising the visibility of leaders

We will ensure staff are aware of the identities of key leaders, including non-executive directors. We will maintain and develop a programme of key leader visits to localities and attendance at team meetings, inductions, celebrations, other key moments etc.

Facilitating two-way communication

We will maintain our internal communication activity and promote staff events to include roadshows, conferences, annual general meetings, lunchtime briefings, meet the boss sessions etc, to directly engage staff in developing and delivering our priorities.

We will consistently communicate the trust's vision, values and goals along with key priorities, successes and challenges, and invite staff feedback on them.

Leadership in stakeholder engagement

Our leaders will play the key role in our work to secure and maintain the support of key external stakeholders, from our commissioners through to opinion formers such as MPs, Healthwatch, scrutiny and the media. Through our stakeholder management activities, we are working to more effectively manage these relationships. To develop this work, we will:

- Assign clear responsibility for the management of key relationships to senior staff.
- Provide these staff with guidance and other support on how to manage these relationships, including through our leadership development programme.
- Develop processes to more systematically record the outcomes of our stakeholder engagement activity.
- Develop a programme through which locality managers and specialist leads engage more proactively with representative groups in their areas, including local community and voluntary sector bodies that can speak on behalf of service users.

Monitoring and reporting to the board

As we progress our brand management strategy, and in particular move towards our FT goal, it will become more important for us to:

- Use information and intelligence currently available to assess the strength of our brand amongst external and internal stakeholders.
- Consider additional ways of collecting such information and intelligence.

Information and intelligence in this context embraces robust data – both qualitative and quantitative – as well as anecdotal. We will develop new ways to analyse and use the insight this gives to refine and extend our brand management strategy, and to report on this to the board and key stakeholders.

The current situation

Information and intelligence with regard to our brand is currently provided by:

- The annual staff survey.
- Feedback from specific engagement activity, for example with regard to FT.
- Feedback from staff engagement with regard to change proposals.
- Our performance with regard to internal demands and requests, for example our appraisal and training rates and our staff flu immunisation.
- Feedback from staff on the effectiveness of our internal communication work.
- Patient feedback in the Family and Friends test, via compliments and complaints and through patient surveys.
- Independent feedback from stakeholders, for example in third-party assessment processes.
- Feedback from stakeholders recorded in minutes and reports from groups such as Healthwatch or scrutiny, letters, comments at meetings.

It must be emphasised that patient feedback and satisfaction measures gathered as part of our patient experience strategy give us crucial insight into our patient's experience of our work and our reputation.

Moving forward

We should continue the activities above, and in addition implement new ways to extend our understanding of the experience and views of the people that use our services, staff, corporate stakeholders and the people we serve.

The implementation of an effective FT membership strategy and engagement programme will provide new opportunities to promote the SCT brand.

We will consider how we can deploy low-cost quantitative and qualitative research methods to measure our reputation and examine stakeholder perceptions:

- Build upon our engagement with bodies that can speak on behalf of service users: Healthwatch, scrutiny committees and voluntary and community sector bodies.
- Develop processes to more systematically record the outcomes of this stakeholder engagement, with stakeholder 'account' managers describing activity.
- Conduct independent reputation audits amongst these and other key stakeholders where resources allow.
- Collect feedback from internal and external stakeholders via low cost qualitative and quantitative processes such as focus groups, surveys and questionnaires.

The additional reports listed below can give the board insight into our brand management work delivered by the marketing and communications team. These include:

- Quarterly media monitoring and evaluation reports.
- Quarterly social media monitoring and evaluation reports.
- Reports on engagement activity with key stakeholders, describing both activity and outcomes against specific objectives.
- Outcome of independent reputation audits (where resources allow).
- Feedback from qualitative and quantitative engagement with key internal and external stakeholders, for example focus groups and surveys.
- Reports on the outcome of engagement with our FT membership.

Conclusion

As set out at the beginning of this document, brand management is the activity that helps you build awareness of your brand and protect it from damage. It includes activity to manage **tangible elements** (including logos, design, signs, physical environment); and **intangible elements** (including staff behaviour and service quality).

It offers a clear definition of what a brand is and that underpins our brand management work - 'at its simplest and its best a brand is a promise delivered'.

This strategy outlines how the SCT communications and marketing team will play a key role in our brand management work. It refers as well to the other key drivers that help shape and manage our brand, including our clinical care strategy, our people strategy, our estates strategy and our leadership development programme.

Nick Fairclough

Head of marketing & communications, December 2013.