Breathing New Life into Elderwood:
The Rebrand of a Senior Care Leader in WNY

Research and Planning
In July 2013, Post Acute Partners (PAP) acquired Elderwood, the largest network of senior care in Western New York. The company's goal was to become the premier provider along the entire post acute continuum, from pediatrics to seniors; from assisted living to skilled nursing and long-term acute care. But such a lofty vision called for complete brand overhaul to marry all the companies PAP currently owned and would purchase. And, it would all start with Elderwood. So PAP turned to Gelia for assistance with such large-scale effort.

Although Elderwood had been a leader in the community for quite some time, you wouldn't know it by looking at, or reading any of their materials. By reviewing Elderwood's existing content and comparing it their competitor's, Gelia found that Elderwood was blending in with other senior care facilities. There wasn't any visually differentiating feature, just typical stock photography of families holding their loved ones. Elderwood's colors were even more lackluster, just green and beige and a tagline of "care without compromise." The tone and overall messaging focused largely on the senior's caregiver, ignoring the potential patient or resident all together. Elderwood's website faced similar challenges, but it also lacked depth and meaningful content. The backend wasn't even set up to collect user-specific browsing data.

Then, Gelia completed an in-depth analysis of the audience, which included primary caregivers, females aged 45 to 65 years of age, in addition to potential residents, both males and females ranging from 60 to 80 years old with varying levels of health. Gelia learned that caregivers were involved in their parent's transition 73% of the time. This audience often became a co-decision maker and played a persuasive role to convince the resident that additional help was needed. Caregivers felt a range of emotions from fear to stress to guilt. But first and foremost, they were concerned with the health and safety of their parent, then followed by facility cost, location and appearance.

When analyzing the motivations and concerns of a potential resident, Gelia found this audience is often a co- or primary decision maker. Their main concerns center around the perceived loss of independence and control. They are also worried about costs, lack of community engagement, facility appearance, staff and personal wellbeing. These motivations, age ranges and roles in decision making vary depending if the person requires long-term care, subacute or rehabilitation services.

Gelia also toured several facilities to gain a better understanding of its services, programs and amenities. They spoke with current residents and patients to hear first hand what they liked most about living at Elderwood. Additionally, Gelia was invited to a sales meeting, where they discussed key differentiating features, how a lead is qualified, the process of a tour for each service area, and the contact strategy afterward. The discussion unveiled that most leads are based on referrals and word of mouth.

Such an in-depth analysis was crucial in order for Gelia to better understand who and how to direct the messaging for each service. But with complex audiences who all have various needs, motivations and roles, it was difficult to arrive at a sound solution. But eventually Gelia landed on a solid messaging strategy – to provide the best care in the appropriate setting to achieve the best outcomes. For a caregiver, the tone was much more straightforward, educational and aimed at problem solving. They adjusted the tone when speaking with a potential resident to focus more on benefits, while discussing how to keep their own lifestyle.

But regardless of audience, Gelia sought to emphasize Elderwood's position as the senior care leader and subject matter expert in the community, while communicating their services with confidence, charisma and sincerity. Gelia planned to speak directly to the patient or resident as much as possible, knowing that the caregiver's main concern will always be their loved one. However, when speaking about subacute services or memory care programs, this language would have to shift to address the caregiver.

Elderwood really pressured Gelia into launching their new position as fast as possible, so Gelia first planned to create fundamental branding elements that would be expressed throughout all materials. Then, they would execute a facility-based campaign to generate awareness around the services it provides locally. This would be followed by various other collateral material, promotional materials and a new website to bring it all together. Once the brand was out in the community, Gelia would craft an all-encompassing campaign to reach as many people from their target audiences as possible, once the more immediate need was met. All elements of both campaigns would direct traffic to www.elderwood.com.

The goal was to elevate Elderwood's reputation within the communities it serves, as evidenced by the following:
- o Increase awareness of Elderwood, as evidenced by a rise in overall web traffic to the website by 60% from the previous year.
- o Increase awareness of Elderwood in specific communities it has locations in, as evidenced by the increase of 100% of web visitors in those areas from the previous year.
- o Increase action of caregivers and potential residents to receive additional information as demonstrated by

generating at least 5,000 clicks on the website's main call to action buttons in the first year of launch.

Unfortunately, Elderwood had no lead measurement system that would allow Gelia to quantify the combined impact of their efforts and sales to determine the campaign's success beyond online traffic.

Execution

When PAP turned to Gelia for assistance with this large-scale rebrand, they came with a new logo already in hand. Although it may not have been what Gelia would recommend, it was at the very least a place to start. First, Gelia chose a series of bright colors to represent each service area. This would bring much needed vitality to the brand. A tagline was developed, "your circle of care," to communicate how Elderwood provides the full health care continuum – something their competitors could not offer. These elements would be supported by the font of Neutraface and an overall tone of confidence, leadership, and genuineness. Distinct portrait-style photography showed images of seniors with the representative service color overlay. Gelia decided to go with this style because it put focus on the potential patient or resident, something that was greatly lacking in the senior care market. Secondarily, Gelia wanted this audience to envision themselves as the person shown, exuding a sense of confidence and satisfaction with the decision they made in their health care. Gelia recognized that this decision is hard, and no one wants to do it, but if they could flip the perspective from the caregiver to the resident, maybe they could provide much needed security. This renewed, fresh style made Elderwood truly stand out from its competitors, who were stuck on sharing perspectives from the caregiver. A style sheet was established for Gelia and Elderwood's internal marketing team to work from, as business cards, letterhead, envelopes and a folder followed.

Now came the hard part – creating an entirely new website with improved functionality and navigation, a lot more content and revitalized imagery. This took some time to convince Elderwood that such drastic changes were necessary, but eventually Gelia received an approved site map that organized all content by service area. Gelia introduced the same colors and photo overlay treatment on the website, which would really clearly define each service area. Direct prompts to schedule a tour, get more information and contact us were prominently placed on every page as a way to help users get the answers they needed quickly.

Then it was time to launch the service-specific ad campaign. In 2014, Gelia focused on brand awareness to create familiarity around the new Elderwood look, while also promoting the categories of care. The media strategy focused on the specific communities served by purchasing weekly community placements, while also narrowing in on monthly publications that featured an older adult (65+) audience as well as the female caregiver audience. The ads featured one service category, defined by the same photography and color.

At the same time, Gelia created service cards again using the color scheme and photography treatment to make everything as cohesive and uniform as possible. A brochure was also created to deliver a brief overview of everything Elderwood. While planning began early 2014, the campaign launched Q2 of 2014 and ran through the end of that year.

Moving into early 2015, Gelia took a more integrated approach, looking beyond print advertising and balancing it with other media opportunities to increase audience reach. Efforts continued to focus around building awareness of Elderwood and its categories of care, but they would also be "pre-heating" the market for Elderwood Health Plan that was set to launch late 2015. Broad-based tactics included outdoor bus shelters and bus cards, online display ads and :15 and :30 second radio placements – all creating a greater reach and frequency level. Tactics in 2015 took on a much higher-level message of "Right Care. Right Place. Right Plan." integrating care coordination and access to services and doctors based on an individual's specific needs. Instead of using the same photography treatment, Gelia introduced iconography to represent Elderwood's service areas, which were shown together in all the established brand colors. This did not focus on locations, but provided all-encompassing view of Elderwood.

Results

From the initial campaign's launch in June through March 2015, the website had over 144,000 sessions, that's a 164% increase from the same period in the previous year – well over double the original goal of 60%. The main source of traffic to Elderwood.com was direct (41%), indicating a high level of awareness since the user is seeking out the site directly by typing www.elderwood.com in their browser, rather than using a search engine. Over this same time period, the site saw an increase in both new (126%) and returning (224%) visitors, indicating that not only have these efforts captured the attention of new prospects, but it has also kept Elderwood top-of-mind for those who have visited the site previously. These visitors are also more engaged with the site than they were last year, indicating that the target audience was reached and they're interested in reading more.

When looking at the site's traffic geographically, the following results were pulled for Elderwood's facility locations:
- o Williamsville: 1,409%↑ from last year
- o Cheektowaga: 645%↑ from last year.
- o North Syracuse: 1,744%↑ from last year.
- o The Waverly area: 2,552%↑ from last year.
- o Grand Island: 433%↑ from last year.
- o Lancaster: 200%↑ from last year.

These results indicate that advertising efforts across all 3 communities (WNY, Waverly and Liverpool) were extremely effective, well surpassing the projected goal of 100% in these communities. But driving awareness through these efforts can't force the audience to do more than visit the site, but it can increase leads, which may turn into qualified prospects. And the interest generated turned into more than 7,600 people clicking through on the contact us, request information and schedule a tour buttons, signifying a greater interest to learn more about Elderwood. All this activity clearly demonstrated that the desired effect of the campaign was not only met, but surpassed every expectation at the highest level.