

JacksonHealthcareReview



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By: Frank Luntz

Words that Work: Putting Patients First in American Healthcare

► It's been said that the strongest human relationship in society isn't between husband and wife or even mother and child. It's grandparent and grandchild. Why? Because they share a common enemy.

I write this because of the important lesson it holds for you, the leaders of American healthcare delivery. Your patients hate the "healthcare system" because it treats them "like a number." But they respect and cherish the "sacred doctor-patient relationship" and any healthcare system that treats them "like a human being."

Yes, words matter – and when it comes to healthcare delivery, words matter a lot. **It's time you started individualizing, personalizing and humanizing what you say and do. You can start by speaking the language of your patients.**

Researching and articulating the right language approach is what we do at The Word Doctors. And after a decade of patient research, many dozens of dial sessions, and literally hundreds of thousands of healthcare related interviews, we can tell you that

for the most part, most of you are getting it...wrong.

It doesn't have to be that way. **There is a way for you to connect with patients in a way that motivates them to put their faith – and their health – in your hands** (and, of course, their business in your portfolio). There is a way to set yourself apart from the rest of the people in your field who still get it wrong.

Start by sharing a common mission of "achieving a patient-centered approach to healthcare." That vision, more than anything else in all of our polling experience, captures the hearts and minds of patients across America.

Here are three additional communication rules you can use to better connect with your patients today:

1. Put people, and care, back in your message. Stop calling them "consumers," "customers," or "clients." From now on they are "people," "individuals," and "patients." In the same way, stop talking about "improving the healthcare system" when people know that a "system" screams getting lost in a maze of bureaucracy. Instead, focus simply on "improving care" or "improving health." After all, that's what medicine is supposed to be about, right?

2. There's no end to how much support there is for "wellness" and "prevention." The overwhelming majority of healthcare dollars are spent on treating illness after it sets in. You already know that. But what you may not know, and our research reveals, is Americans believe the best approach to

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Managing the Clinical Workforce

Source: *The McKinsey Quarterly*, December 2009

▶ According to McKinsey & Company authors Nina Bhatia, David Meredith and Farhad Riahi, MD, many health systems do a poor job matching clinician supply (doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other direct care professionals) to the long-term demand for health services. The resulting supply/demand imbalances, they report, include impaired patient care, demoralized clinicians and inefficient service delivery.

Their recent article titled, “Managing the Clinical Workforce,” offers “several steps that health systems can take to develop an effective workforce strategy.”

With nearly 60 percent of spending on the clinician workforce, it’s critical that health systems get

“If the health systems fail to make the necessary changes, patient care and clinician morale will suffer, and two-thirds of all health care costs will remain difficult to control.”

- from “Managing the Clinical Workforce”

the right number of the right clinicians in the right place in order to delivery on their service strategy. The authors outline radical steps required to gain control of the workforce:

- Improve our ability to predict clinician demand and match supply to it.
- Accept that we will never be able to forecast health care needs perfectly.
- Monitor the labor market on an ongoing basis and introduce greater flexibility into our workforces.
- Appropriately allocate risk associated with increased flexibility and establish clear accountability for workforce management.

The authors recommend health systems make specific leaders accountable for workforce strategies. They say it is crucial that some of these strategists be clinicians, especially doctors.

How far ahead should supply and demand be forecasted? Hospitals need to understand its near-term (defined as two- to three-year) workforce requirements.

That said, workforce planning is not a centralized or hospital-centric activity. It should take place at national, regional and local levels to ensure systemic trends are being addressed in ways that allow all parts of the health system to successfully adapt.

Read original article: <http://bit.ly/cOOPRN> (subscription required)

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Luntz: Words that Work

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healthcare includes a “balance between preventive and curative healthcare.” Americans want to stop health problems before they start, to prevent even higher costs down the road and preserve a higher quality of life for as long as they can. Does your language match their expectation?

3. Healthcare public enemies #1 and #2 are excessive “profits” and “bureaucracy.” Understand that in today’s anti-business, anti-Wall Street environment, “profit” is a four-letter word. And because of what Washington has done with the healthcare debate so far, “reform” has come to represent “a government takeover” of patient care with more bureaucracy and less quality. That’s why you need to talk about “*reinvesting in patient care*” and “*preventing ANYONE from getting between a physician and a patient.*”

There are other specific language recommendations to apply:

- **Focus on “cures,” not treatment.**
- **It’s “accountability” rather than “transparency.”**
- **Use “peace of mind” (particularly among women) rather than “security.”**

There is so much more – and all of it matters. We have worked with enough healthcare professionals to know that you didn’t enter the profession to make a dollar. You signed up to make a difference. You never set out to be a bureaucrat. You worked your whole life to be a healer.

The problem is... unless and until you start sharing your calling in a way that actually resonates with the people you serve, you’ll always be just another part of the dreaded “system.” If you don’t make an emotional connection, you won’t make a commercial impact. So today... right now... right NOW... find ways to tell patients that they are why you do what you do.

Frank Luntz is an author, pollster and communications specialist. His latest book is *What Americans Really Want...Really.*

Physicians Estimate \$650-850 Billion Spent Each Year on Defensive Medicine

► Between October 2009 and March 2010, Jackson Healthcare conducted a series of national online physician surveys. Defensive medicine emerged as a primary driver of healthcare costs. Jackson also retained Gallup to conduct an independent national physician poll. Here are highlights from these surveys:

- Physicians attribute 26 percent to 34 percent of overall U.S. healthcare costs to be due to defensive medicine practices
- In Gallup’s study, 73 percent of physicians agreed they had practiced some form of defensive medicine
- ED, primary care and OB/GYN physicians are most likely to practice defensive medicine
- Patient access, quality and innovation are affected by defensive medicine practices above and beyond costs

Read the full report at <http://www.jacksonhealthcare.com/research>

New Hospital CEO Survey

In the 2010 Industry Survey by HealthLeaders Media, CEOs rank the most effective strategies in dealing with the economic downturn. Here are their top 5:

1. Supply Chain Initiatives
2. Revenue Cycle Enhancements
3. Physician Alignment
4. Capital Expenditure Reductions
5. Emphasizing Higher Dollar Procedures

The full survey can be accessed at http://www.healthleadersmedia.com/industry_survey

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Book Spotlight: *The 100 Best Business Books of All Time*

► Ten thousand business books are published each year. Hundreds of thousands of business books are in print.

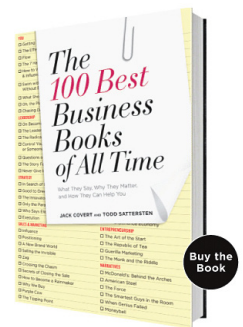
How do you discern which books are relevant to you? How can you know which ones offer ideas and solutions that will help you stay at the cutting edge of leadership and career thought leadership? How can you know whether the newest best-seller offers more punch than classic pieces by a Peter Drucker, Tom Peters or Jack Trout?

Enter the book, *The 100 Best Business Books of All Time: What They Say Why They Matter, and How They Can Help You*. It is written by Jack Covert and Todd Sattersten, both respected experts with extensive experience selling business books.

However, **this book is NOT what it appears to be: a numerical list of books, plus a Cliffs Notes/Soundview-like synopsis of each title.** Rather, this book puts each book in context, so you can find specific solutions to your problems.

We hope this resource gives you the edge you need to stay current on the best in business thought leadership. Here are the categories to whet your appetite:

- You (life improvement)
- Leadership
- Strategy
- Sales & Marketing
- Rules & Scorekeeping
- Management
- Biographies
- Entrepreneurship
- Narratives
- Innovation & Creativity
- Big Ideas
- Takeaways



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