

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1945, Kaiser Permanente (KP), one of the nation's largest integrated healthcare systems, was known for offering dependable, low-cost healthcare. The KP Promise (1997) was the first deliberate brand positioning effort: *Kaiser Permanente is a coordinated system of medical care that integrates best practices in medical science with an understanding of your health needs to provide you with the healthcare that's right and best for you.* By late 2002, the brand positioning had evolved to *in partnership with you, the people of Kaiser Permanente commit to understanding your health needs with expertise and compassion.* The internal mantra was *People. Understanding. Health.*

THE CHALLENGE

2002 data showed that 75% of people who were offered KP would probably or definitely not consider them for their healthcare coverage. KP then invested significant resources to understand what it would take to change brand perceptions among members, non-members and employees.

CONSUMER INSIGHTS

KP commissioned the Big Dig consumer insight study, which revealed a new paradigm of health.

- Words that consumers used to describe traditional healthcare included: Bureaucracy, Red Tape, A Business/profit, Insurance, Paperwork, Uncompassionate.
- While traditional health was about preventing illness ("fixing people") and medical expertise, New Health (Wellness) was about physical/emotional/spiritual health, common sense, balance, optimism, happiness, lifestyle choices and personal empowerment.

Recognizing that not all consumers would be open to changing perceptions of the brand, a marketing best prospect was defined for the first time. Segmentation research indicated that there was an opportunity to change perceptions among 65% of consumers, with 35% defined as Health Seekers and 25% defined as Cost Driven. Health Seekers are those who value health, lead a healthy lifestyle and take responsibility for their health. Cost Driven are younger, and healthcare is a lower priority for them. Media research helped profile these segments attitudinally and behaviorally and was made actionable by translating the profiles into media behavior.

THE STRATEGY

The Big Dig insight study helped identify a leadership void in the healthcare space. The price of entry was fulfilling rational needs: being competent and delivering care you can count on. Beyond that, the opportunity was in positioning KP as a health advocate with a proactive vision, committed to a personal partnership with patients. Fortunately, health advocacy was already in the KP DNA, so the repositioning did not require the brand to reinvent itself.

- Since its inception, KP had been committed to prevention, ensuring greater health, not just treating illness.
- Putting the patient first via KP's unique delivery system which combines physicians, hospitals and a health plan in a single organization dedicated to integrated care.

The research was the foundation for the new Kaiser Permanente brand positioning: *Kaiser Permanente empowers me to maximize my well-being and live a happier, healthier life.* And the brand theme line *Thrive*. To ensure that all communications connected with consumers and differentiated the brand, 3 communication tenets were developed: 1.) Reinvent the Language: talk to people in a completely new way about their health. 2.) Champion a Cause: Stand for something bigger than copays and benefits and 3.) Leverage the System: Celebrate KP's integrated delivery system as being uniquely qualified to deliver what people wanted from a healthcare provider – not as an impediment but as a conduit.

The KP brand promise needed to do much more than just drive the messaging strategy, it also needed to be an inspirational and aspirational rallying cry for Kaiser Permanente itself. A robust internal communication campaign complemented the external marketing push.

RESULTS

KP used the KP/Bruzzone advertising tracking study to track changes in awareness and perception. This online survey was conducted among at least 1,000 non-KP members across all 8 KP regions. The baseline was fielded prior to the launch of the Thrive campaign in July, 2004. The expectation was to see little to no movement. However, after less than a year, tracking study results showed significant improvement in measures related to advertising and brand perception for the first time in years.

	July 2004(%)	July 2005 (%)
<i>Unaided awareness of KP advertising</i>	33	39*
<i>Somewhat/Much better opinion of KP</i>	16	22*
Brand Attribute Ratings		
<i>Serious about proactively keeping people healthy</i>	24	30*

*Statistically significant increase at the 90% confidence level

KP's Brand Strength Monitor Study baseline was conducted prior to the launch of the Thrive campaign in May – July 2004. The continuous wave phone survey was conducted among non-KP members across all 8 KP regions tracking changes in attitudes and opinions of the KP brand. Campaign measures also showed significant improvement.

	May 2004(%)	Feb 2005(%)
<i>Proactive about health</i>	42	51*
<i>Compassion</i>	30	35*

*Statistically significant increase

A KP employee talking about the launch of the Thrive campaign said: "Thrive helped me understand why I come to work every day."