

INVIGORATING  
HEALTHCARE + WELLNESS  
ORGANIZATIONS



CASE STUDY  
NO. 1: 2017

# How to Launch a Clinically Integrated Network

## THE COMMUNICATIONS FOUNDATION

## Executive Summary

Anne Arundel Medical Center (AAMC) recently took the initiative to develop a clinically integrated [provider] network (CIN). While the network was still in development, AAMC approached Strategic Design Studio requesting a foundation of key messages and marketing communications materials to drive awareness of the CIN, articulate its value and promote adoption.

Deeper discussions revealed an opportunity for a discovery process that would ultimately deliver far more than a messaging foundation. AAMC embraced the discovery process, and as a result they have a comprehensive package of resources, including a brand brief, messaging platform, and integrated marketing communications plan.

When AAMC evaluated the deliverables they knew they had what was needed to move forward with confidence. The creative assets developed by Strategic Design Studio ensure efficiency in crafting new communications, consistency in the presentation of those communications, and extensibility as new marketing needs arise.



“It was really important to find someone reputable with strong experience who we could trust. This was the inception—the brand, the value proposition. It was important foundational work.”

—Loren Farquhar, Director,  
Marketing Communications,  
AAMC

## Overview

Anne Arundel Medical Center (AAMC) is a regional health care system based in Annapolis, Maryland, with a service area encompassing more than one million people. The system includes a not-for-profit hospital (originally established in 1902), a medical group, imaging services, and a substance-abuse treatment center.

Recently, AAMC took the initiative to develop a clinically integrated network (CIN). CINs are a relatively new model of health care delivery that benefit hospitals, providers, and patients. **Development of the clinically integrated network was the impetus for AAMC to seek marketing assistance.**

To understand the ramifications of this project, it’s helpful to briefly identify the different groups within a CIN and how they benefit from affiliation with a network.

- **CIN hospitals** have an organized and coordinated means to recruit new providers to their care networks, are better equipped to retain their providers, and can extend a greater range and availability of services to patients within their respective systems.
- **CIN providers** are able to collect and share patient data more seamlessly, reducing the administrative burden on their individual practices. They’re able to make in-network referrals for their patients as specific needs arise. Further, the CIN provides dedicated staff for the purpose of helping providers stay current with ever-changing health care regulations. CIN staff also serve as a collective marketing service by informing and involving community and social services partners in ways that can complement or extend network services. All of these benefits allow providers to focus more of their time on the practice of medicine, which is something they’ve identified as important.
- **CIN patients** are able to stay within a single network of care for most if not all of their health care needs, and have access to specialists without leaving their local care delivery system.



“We are growing a care delivery system in a reimbursement system that doesn’t reward growth. We’re tightly managing costs and internal resources. For us, it was a resource crunch.”

—**Josh Jacobs, Vice President of Strategic Planning & Marketing/Communications, AAMC**

## What the Client Asked For

Before the CIN could be launched to patients, the provider network itself had to be built. This required communicating with and recruiting new providers—yet there were no print or digital materials to support the effort. **AAMC approached Strategic Design Studio requesting a foundation upon which a website and other marketing communications materials could be developed. Once created, the website and marketing materials would support further development of the CIN.**

## Special Considerations

As with most projects, there were special considerations to address. This influenced the scope, process, and deliverables for the project.

### THE PRODUCT DIDN’T EXIST YET!

AAMC needed marketing collateral in order to continue developing its product (the CIN), but acknowledged the challenge inherent in developing material for a product that is not yet complete. This alone made it difficult for AAMC, initially, to define the project scope.

**In cases like these, it’s not unusual for the scope to begin as one thing and evolve into something different.** Sometimes the facilitated discovery process reveals deeper needs, so flexibility and commitment to the right solution are key.

### WHICH PROJECTS SHOULD THEY OUTSOURCE?

AAMC’s internal marketing group had more on its plate than could reasonably be completed in the necessary time frame, given their capacity. They had to decide how best to apply outside resources—either to several small projects or to one large one. **Ultimately, AAMC decided it would be easier for them to manage external resources focused on one major project than multiple small projects.**



“It just wasn’t anticipated that the additional resources would be needed. Then the network was up and running, and we needed the marketing materials now.”

—**Reneé Kilroy, Executive Director, Collaborative Care Network (CCN)**

“It was important to me to find a partner that could be an extension of our team and that could fully support such a high priority effort.”

—**Josh Jacobs**

## THEY NEEDED A SPECIALIST WHO COULD BRING DEDICATED TIME AND AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE.

External resources are typically called in for one of two reasons—lack of time or lack of specialized expertise. In this case, both scenarios were in play to differing degrees.

AAMC has a strong internal marketing team, but the existing project load exceeded the staff time available. In such situations, **it’s typical for tactically-oriented projects to receive priority attention, while time for more strategic efforts is often considered a luxury.**

The specialized expertise required for certain projects does not always exist in-house, either. This is particularly true for projects that may be more strategic in nature and are not repeated often. Even when such expertise is available internally, **an outside perspective is sometimes preferred in order to introduce new ideas or validate existing ones.**

## The Work and Process

As mentioned previously, when AAMC first approached Strategic Design Studio for marketing assistance, **the organization needed a foundation for its messaging to help recruit new providers to the CIN.** As discussions continued, it became clear that an expanded scope of work could best support AAMC’s efforts long-term.

The scope of work ultimately included:

### BRAND BRIEF

This defines and documents the “who, what, how, and why” of the CIN. It includes statements of purpose and vision, key attributes, positioning and values—laying the foundation for messaging of all subsequent communications efforts.

### MESSAGING

This establishes a platform of consistent communication themes supporting the CIN. It provides a common starting point for all marketing messages—saving time, ensuring consistency, and maximizing effectiveness.

### INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

This outlines the many opportunities to carry the message of the CIN to different audiences and different personas, using the many vehicles and channels available.

### WEBSITE CONTENT

This includes a significant basis of marketing communications material to support continued provider recruitment efforts, which is the primary focus of the CIN over the next couple of years.



“You facilitated the session in a way that people were comfortable speaking openly and honestly. They were able to connect the dots, see the impact of one sequence on the next, and provide really meaningful, valuable input.”

—Carrie O’Meara, Marketing Strategist, AAMC

The process was tailored to best serve AAMC:

## DISCOVERY

- **Two information-gathering sessions** with members of the CIN’s leadership and internal marketing team.
- **A facilitated session**, consisting of an afternoon segment with community members, clinicians, the medical director, CIN leadership and internal marketing staff to cover brand attributes and personas, and an evening segment to review and validate personas with providers.



Stakeholder input, recorded during the Facilitated Discovery Session

## PRODUCTION OF DELIVERABLES

Production of deliverables, including drafts and revisions of the brand brief, messaging platform, integrated marketing communications plan, and website content.

## FINAL PRESENTATION

Final presentation, including demonstration of how various components can translate to finished goods.



“One of the interesting outcomes of a facilitated session is the chance for all the stakeholders to take the time to work together. It allows the transfer of knowledge from the client to us, and from us to the client’s customers. We take things apart, bit by bit, and then put them back together in an easy-to-understand value statement. It’s very powerful.”

—Stephanie Helline, Owner and Creative Director, Strategic Design Studio

## Treating Challenges as Opportunities

There were several aspects of the AAMC project that could have constituted challenges for the Strategic Design Studio team, but instead became opportunities for an even more successful outcome.

### GETTING IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME

While there was pressure from various stakeholders within AAMC to produce content quickly, the Strategic Design Studio team recognized the need to back up and take a 30,000-foot view—in other words, do the discovery work while there was still an opportunity to do so. **This would delay content creation initially, but would pay off in production efficiencies and consistent messaging for the short and long term.**

### GETTING THE TEAM ONBOARD

Because the scope evolved from early discussions, and AAMC was not necessarily familiar with the proposed discovery process, each step provided an opportunity to build **buy-in, ownership and confidence** in the process and its ultimate outcomes.

### MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

A project with far-reaching and lasting implications like this one requires a considerable amount of interaction between Strategic Design Studio and the client’s internal team, particularly during the discovery process. Tangible outcomes may not be recognized until a little further into the project, even though important groundwork is being laid. As the AAMC team began to see pieces coming together, **anxiety eased and excitement began to build.**



“To launch the CIN, we needed a forward-thinking partner to help us create a model that was relevant today and would carry us forward.”

—Loren Farquhar

## REMEMBERING THE MANY AUDIENCES

The CIN project will ultimately address multiple audiences:

1. The provider audience targeted by recruiting efforts;
2. The internal audience, including existing providers and staff;
3. The community and social services partners that can provide additional services; and
4. The patient audience.

Effective messaging and planning required constant awareness of the multiple audiences in play, and resulted in a more inclusive and cohesive effort.

“Branding projects like this don’t happen every day our operational and clinical teams. Much of [the championing] was explaining the value SDS would deliver from what seemed like endless information requests and a lengthy time line.”

—Carrie O’Meara

“Certainly, it’s much easier to work with people who understand some of the challenges, some of the restrictions, some of the regulations and some of the new answers.”

—Josh Jacobs

## What Made It a Success

### HAVING AN INSIDE CHAMPION

A key AAMC stakeholder quickly saw how Strategic Design Studio’s recommended scope and process would benefit their organization in a much bigger way than what the initial request could accomplish. **She became an internal champion of the project and was able to address the organization’s questions and help build confidence in the approach.**

### SECURING THE PARTICIPATION OF KEY CLIENT STAKEHOLDERS

Participation of key staff and physicians was crucial to the success of the project. **This ensured that the discovery process would be useful and serve as a valid foundation for branding, messaging, planning, and content.**

While the Strategic Design Studio team anticipated it could be difficult to secure the participation of physicians due to their intense scheduling demands, the doctors recognized it as an opportunity to ensure the marketing effort would support the investment they’d already made in the development of the CIN. They became actively engaged.

Still, the physicians and most of the participating staff are not marketing communications professionals. While the discovery process was unfamiliar to them, their participation in that process was pivotal.

### SPEAKING THE HEALTH CARE LANGUAGE

It also helped that Strategic Design Studio has deep experience in the health care sector and could speak the language, which paved the way to credibility with AAMC’s internal audiences, including participating providers.

“When people start to see it all coming together in the work sessions—that’s the fun part. It was nice to see the ideas come to life with our stakeholders.”

—Carrie O’Meara

“Bringing in SDS not only reduced the resource burden, but allowed the AAMC Marketing team to play an active role in the process, rather than just focus on the facilitation. The collaboration between SDS and AAMC ensured confidence in the results of the project”

—Josh Jacobs

## LIGHTBULB MOMENTS

Several times throughout the project’s progression, the AAMC team had “light bulb moments” during which they came to understand more clearly the validity of the steps in the process and the importance of their participation. This not only made for a better end product, but also facilitated buy-in and trust when the team was asked to enter often unfamiliar territory.

## OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

The AAMC team was admittedly too close to the project to feel they could be objective in carrying it out to completion. The outside perspective provided by Strategic Design Studio made it possible to gain additional insights while maintaining AAMC’s active participation and engagement. The result was a heightened sense of confidence in the direction of the project and the process outcomes than would have been achieved by keeping the project in-house.



Stephanie Helline and Vanessa Granville during the Facilitated Discovery Session (left to right)

“We’re very happy with the results. I’ve already used several sections of the information you’ve provided in different things that we’ve done. We also have a great on-boarding package that wouldn’t have been possible if we’d not completed this project.”

—Heather Matheu, Clinical Coordinator, Collaborative Care Network (CCN)

“When we got the materials back, I was very impressed. It was clear you did your homework and did a lot of research.”

—Reneé Kilroy

## Outcomes and Client Benefit

When the AAMC team saw the finished deliverables from the discovery process—the brand brief, messaging platform and integrated marketing communications plan—**they knew they had what they needed to move forward with confidence.** These resources provided a solid foundation for all written and visual communication—ensuring **efficiency** in deploying those communications and crafting new communications, **consistency** in their presentation, and **extensibility** of communications as new marketing needs arise.

In addition, **the website content that was part of the original scope of work was delivered, reviewed, and had only minor modifications.** This deliverable would have been virtually impossible to develop without the foundation laid by the branding, messaging and planning work recommended by Strategic Design Studio and completed at the outset. This process resulted in stronger, more effective website content grounded in strategy. It also resulted in a faster turnaround: the website content went through only one round of revisions, and had only minor modifications before it was approved as final.

Thanks to the participation of the AAMC internal team throughout the process, **the client has ownership of the project and the finished product.** This helps ensure that the recommendations and guidelines set forth in the branding, messaging and planning phases will be supported, and **the sustained marketing effort will be consistent, targeted and effective.**

**BRAND BRIEF**

At a-glance overview document that identifies customer groups and stakeholders; defines value statement, purpose and vision; and outlines brand attributes, key services and positioning.

**FACILITATED DISCOVERY SESSION REPORT**

Documentation of stakeholders input and alignment during the FDS, including brand attributes, customer profiles and priority exercise.

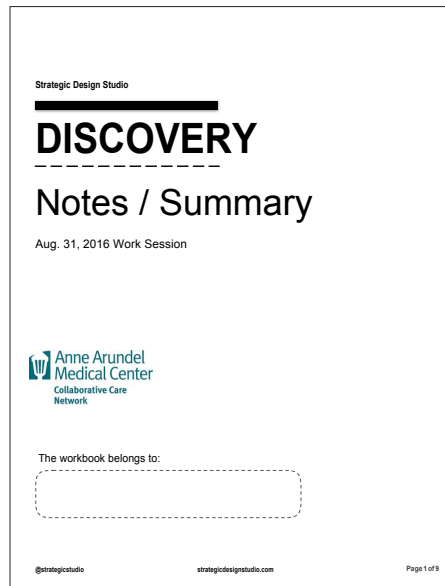
**INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

A comprehensive plan outlining key messages as well as marketing tactics and vehicles tailored to each customer and stakeholder group.

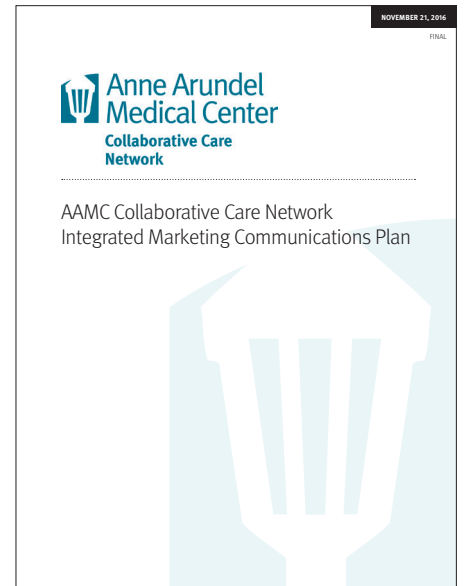
Here's What SDS Delivered



Brand Brief



Facilitated Discovery Session Report



Integrated Marketing Communications Plan

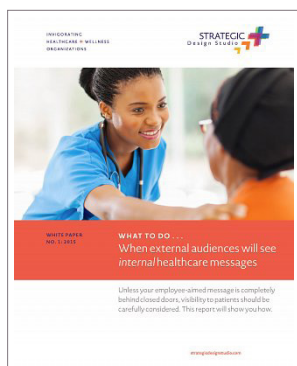


**Stephanie Helline**  
OWNER +  
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

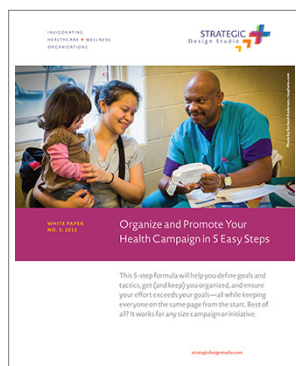
## Need help with key messaging or integrated marketing communications?

If your healthcare system is launching an initiative that needs the outside perspective of a firm with solid healthcare experience, let's talk. We will develop everything from key messaging to a full blown communications plan that ensures efficiency and consistency in communications, as well as extensibility as new marketing needs arise.

From internal communication to external messaging, our clients rely on us to take a thoughtful, creative approach to their needs. [Contact us](#) and let's talk about how Strategic Design Studio can help you with your communication plan.



**What To Do: When Your External Audience Will See Your Internal Healthcare Messages**



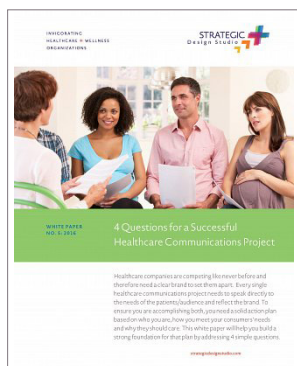
**Organize and Promote Your Health Campaign in 5 Easy Steps**



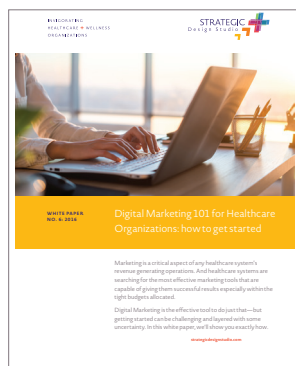
**Video: The Strategic Healthcare Solution**



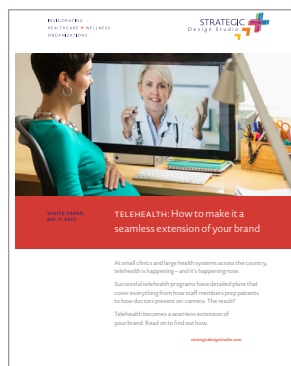
**Everyone Builds the Brand**



**4 Questions for a Successful Healthcare Communications Project**



**Digital Marketing 101 for Healthcare Organizations: How to Get Started**



**Telehealth: How to Make It a Seamless Extension of Your Brand**