

# RBMA BULLETIN

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# Governance

**WHEN  
GOVERNANCE  
STRIKES:**  
Stay the Course

**PHYSICIAN  
LEADERSHIP  
Not For the  
Faint of Heart**

Should  
Radiologists Be  
**Employees or  
Shareholders?**

# ▶ When Governance Strikes: Stay the Course

BY KIM KELLEY, FRBMA

**W**hen I think of governance, I don't naturally think of marketing. I also tend to think that governance is oftentimes thought of strictly as "the Government" and we don't realize all of the places where some form of governance can be found, and the effect it can have on marketing. When you craft your marketing plan each year, your goal is to put into motion strategies that will be sustainable throughout the entire year. But when matters of governance crop up, how, when, and why you market your services is bound to change.

The most notable first experience I had with governance affecting marketing was the Deficit Reduction Act in 2005. The DRA had outpatient imaging centers scrambling to figure out how the cuts in Medicare reimbursement would affect their operations. As I recall, one of the biggest changes I faced as a marketer during this time, even though it took a number of years for those cuts to take effect, was reeducating the referring population about how the ever-popular CT of the abdomen/pelvis would need to be ordered differently. Referral forms, discussion points with referring offices, and how exams were to be scheduled, all changed. In the face of this change, and all changes resulting from governance going forward, the best course of action is to be flexible in your marketing plan and to make education a priority.

## Education

Fast forward to today's topics derived from governance that affect the marketing function and you have the new mammography screening guidelines bestowed upon us by the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) and the American Cancer Society (ACS).

"OIA centers across the board make educating the consumer a high priority," says Meagan Hirt, marketing coordinator with Outpatient Imaging Affiliates. "In most cases, we seek to educate the consumer on these criteria/recommendations so consumers are first-and-foremost, informed. We are marketing through education versus strictly promoting that we offer mammography."

Educating referring providers is equally important to ensure they don't abruptly change their referral patterns due to a lack of supporting information. Hirt explains that her centers did take this opportunity to educate on their recommendations.

"We have always positioned ourselves as an industry leader so to offer up our own opinion here wasn't a resistance to the change but just a logical step as an industry leader with a contradicting opinion," says Hirt.

## Flexibility

When marketing departments are faced with changes that are imposed upon us by the government, changing course mid-stream

with a marketing campaign and having the ability to be flexible within your annual plan so that you can change course when you need to is crucial, explains Jennifer Kammer, executive director with Vancouver Radiologists, PC.

Kammer continues to say, "I think the biggest challenge that a marketing department faces is having to change course mid-stream. This requires the ability to be flexible within your annual marketing plan. It has always been challenging to craft an annual plan and stay on course throughout the year. However, now more than ever, it is nearly impossible with all of the changes that occur within the year so you have to write a plan with contingencies built into it (money, resources, campaigns, etc.). This requires more finesse on the part of the marketing department. Your team must be agile and able to create a new strategy and sell it to the stakeholders on a very tight timeline."

## Internal governance

Just when you believed matters of external governance were the only factors to shake your marketing foundation, along come changes to internal governance. Yes, albeit cliché, change really is the only constant, and changes to leadership structure can result in certain chaos.

Marketing is a core part of the overall operations function. It requires support and funding to robustly market imaging services. If you have a strong board or executive committee that backs the marketing function, then you are in good hands. But when there is a turnover in leadership and cost-cutting is a constant, marketing can lose that support, and oftentimes the necessary funding to carry out best laid plans. In this situation, marketing may find itself under extra pressure to sell their continued worth to stakeholders.

And so what is a marketer to do? Plan on being agile. Write your marketing plan with those contingencies mentioned above and be prepared to shift priorities. Become a resource to your consumers, referring providers and stakeholders. Make information and education a core part of your strategy. When these characteristics are present in the marketing function, you are most likely to be successful at staying the course. ■



**KIM KELLEY, FRBMA,**

is the principal and creative director of Ali`i Marketing & Design and the director of marketing for ADVOCATE Radiology Billing. She has worked in marketing, advertising, graphic design, and social media for over 20 years. She is a Fellow of the RBMA and is the recipient of the Special Recognition Award for her work in rebranding the RBMA. Kim can be reached at (970) 800-3678 or kim@alidesign.com.