How to Write a Winning Narrative for the GIA Awards for Excellence Competition

Year after year, judges of the GIA Awards for Excellence Competition are impressed by the work their advancement colleagues are doing, but wish they had more information—the right information—about each entry. The narrative that accompanies your submission is just as important as the submission itself. This is your opportunity to communicate the strategy behind your publication or campaign, explain your results, and preemptively answer any questions the judges may have about the context or circumstances around your project.

A winning narrative will consist of four main sections: summary, problem, solution/strategy, and measurements.

Summary: A short account of the project, program, or publication. Provide a concise description of the overall idea.

Problem: Outline the need or opportunity that the project addresses. Where did the problem start? What are its effects? What opportunity were you seeking? Provide an account of your goals—what results did you hope to achieve?

Solution/Strategy: Explain how your solution was identified—what was your process? Explain and outline your strategy: take us through the steps you took, the options you had, and the decisions you made. Give us an account of the thought process that went into your decisions; how did you come to decide to pursue one solution over another? If you proposed solutions that were not adopted, briefly mention them and explain why they were not used. Finally, give us an account of your solution and how you put it into action.

Measurements: Describe the results of your solution, both within your organization and in your community. Provide an evaluation of how well the solution targeted the problem or need, using specific and measurable outcomes (if a survey tool was used, submit a copy).

Use clear, engaging language when writing! Write to explain your project to those who are encountering it for the first time.

The following deconstructed fictional narrative was inspired by a winning submission. We’ve highlighted key information that the narrative of a winning submission should include.
AAMC GIA Awards for Excellence Competition

CATEGORY: Single or Special Issue Publication

TITLE: The Birthing Center

SUBMITTED BY: The Health System

Summary

With 2,200 births each year, the labor and delivery departments at the two hospitals within The Health System are some of the areas busiest and most comprehensive maternity centers. That means many expectant mothers tour the hospitals when they are deciding where they want to deliver their babies. When a member of our own Marketing team took a tour and delivered her baby at one of the hospitals, she discovered the materials that were being handed out to prospective patients did not reflect our parent health system’s brand nor the professionalism of the care given at that hospital. We called together a work group of nurses and physicians from both hospitals to discuss branding the two maternity programs under one name and creating updated materials for both. The group embraced the ideas and focused this year on producing a first-ever comprehensive, educational, high-end brochure that would convey the professionalism and many services of the newly named “The Birthing Center.”

Problem

The Health System is nationally ranked, which is an attractive selling point for women when choosing a hospital to deliver their babies. Market research has shown us that our target consumers want to feel that they are a partner in their care – they are educated healthcare consumers who tend to research their options. We have maternity services at two of our hospitals, Hospital A and Hospital B. Both have comprehensive programs, but Hospital B has long branded their program “The Birthing Center” and has developed materials and advertising over the years, although their current materials are not reflective of the current health system brand. At Hospital A, the materials that were being given to potential patients and patients planning to deliver at the hospital were pages reproduced on copy machines that were dated or not The Health System -specific.

Our goals were to:

1. Clearly define the goals of your project. What were you looking to accomplish?
2. State the problem or need. Why did you take this project on?
3. Define your overall idea.
4. Set the scene. Why was this project important?
• Bring the nurses and physicians from both hospitals to agree on branding both the programs together, while also promoting their distinctions
• Write and design a comprehensive brochure for Hospital A that would showcase its programs in an attractive package that would truly reflect the professionalism of the service
• Create an English and Spanish version
• Provide brochures to be given out at OB/GYN offices, on maternity tours of the hospital, and sent to prospective patients
• Then to re-create Hospital B materials to complement those produced for Hospital A

Solution/Strategy

Marketing formed a work group consisting of nurses and physicians from the maternity services of both hospitals. We discussed bringing “The Birthing Center” brand name long used in Hospital B to Hospital A and promoting the services together to show the distinctions of each but showing the value of being part of a larger health system—The Health System—that offers women any choice they may be seeking. For example, Hospital A offers nurse midwives, while Hospital B does not. Hospital B offers a wider array of childbirth and parenting classes than Hospital A does. The two hospitals are only three miles apart. During the first meeting, the group embraced these concepts and agreed we should brand the services “The Birthing Center, A” and “The Birthing Center, B” to carry the same name while adding a location distinction at the end.

Since Hospital B had developed materials that they had been using for many years, it was decided that the first priority would be to create a comprehensive brochure for the newly named birthing center within Hospital A. Using categories from the Hospital B materials as a start, our writer worked with the nurses and physicians from Hospital A to create a new brochure for their program. Written in friendly, descriptive tones, the main brochure welcomes parents to the Hospital A program and highlights special services that set it apart, including high-risk pregnancy care, fetal diagnostics, 24-hour obstetrical anesthesia, nurse midwives program, a newborn care unit and a neonatal ICU. In addition, “extras” that many women seek are highlighted including golden hour/nesting time; alternative birthing
arrangements; breastfeeding support and prenatal and postpartum educational classes, as well as our new, modern suites, massage therapy and on-demand fine-dining room service. In addition, we created detailed inserts including: Planning for your Child’s Birth; Educational Program; Preparing for Your Hospital Stay; After Baby Arrives; Screenings and Vaccinations; Infant Security; Parking and Campus Directory; and Patient Rights and Responsibilities.

We then worked with our design firm to create a stunning English and Spanish brochure that reflects the overall The Health System brand that has been developing over the last several years. The design uses a combination of large, sepia-toned baby photos along with smaller color photos that promote the services promoted. The overall effect is a feeling of a comprehensive center that offers all you could want for your birthing experience, in a caring and professional environment. The writing and design reinforce our parent health system branding tagline.

We are currently using this template to update the brochure used by Hospital B so that we bring the two programs together visually, while at the same time informing consumers about the distinctions of each. This way, women know they need to look no further either of our health system’s two birthing centers for their maternity needs.

**Measurements**

The brochure has been enthusiastically received by nurses, physicians and patients; we’ve received comments that this really puts our best face forward. Even though the maternity services at The Health System have not changed, the new branding of The Birthing Center, A and The Birthing Center, B, as well as the elegant brochure showcase the maternity services in an impressive way that truly reflects what patients can expect from The Health System.

Production and distribution of marketing materials aimed at prospective patients has increased since the new materials were produced; the two hospitals combined are printing/distributing 60 percent more materials now, due to higher demand. Patient volume at Hospital A has increased by 10 percent when compared to one-year ago.
Enthusiasm for the branding of both locations has created a pride among the staff and physicians. As a matter of fact, the two programs had operated quite separately and as result of this initiative have worked more closely to promote both services. As a direct result, Marketing worked with them to create branded giveaways for our new mothers: a souvenir birth certificate, onesies and a cooler bag for breast-milk bottles.