



Lafayette General Health Uses an Email Newsletter to Create Community with a Mission-Focused Workforce

Lafayette General Health (LGH) is Acadiana's largest non-profit, community-owned regional health system. The system spans multiple hospitals, networks, and clinics and has more than 4,500 employees who serve patients in this south-central French- and English-speaking region of Louisiana. With such a broad reach, the organization's central communications department must communicate organizational news and updates to staff who operate in many different roles.

Overcoming Email Fatigue with a Centralized Newsletter

When **Patricia Parks Thompson** joined LGH as Director of Communications, she saw a great opportunity to empower the communications department and help LGH communicate more effectively. "There was a lot happening when I joined LGH," says Patricia. "We lacked an overarching communications strategy and governance, which meant that everyone was communicating with everyone. We had individuals sending emails to our entire organization, and others answering with the reply-all function. We also had internal communications newsletters at a few of our facilities, but none at others. As a consequence, there was abundant communications, but it lacked user targeting and consistency, and our staff were experiencing email fatigue."

Patricia quickly developed a communications strategy and aligned her team to key roles, so that staff could develop new skills, rather than serving as generalists. She also decided to find a new internal communications tool to provide consistent messaging, increase engagement, and support LGH's social strategy. "We have a great opportunity to reach our staff and share successes and best practices across our facilities," says Patricia. "However, we needed a better way to do it."

Fortunately, Patricia knew just which email marketing platform she wanted to use. In a previous role at Cox Communications, Patricia had worked with a team that leveraged



EmailOpen, a SaaS platform, to create high-impact internal newsletters. So Patricia contacted the staff at EmailOpen to develop an internal communications newsletter for LGH.

Setting High Goals – and Achieving Them

EmailOpen worked with the LGH team to quickly create an email newsletter, Generally Speaking, and help set up audience segmentation. While one hospital CEO said it was “ambitious” to target a weekly email newsletter, Patricia did just that. She and her team also set up a communications plan to develop content three weeks out, ensuring they would never be without story ideas for each email newsletter.

The communications team decided to create ambitious targets. Despite the fact that the healthcare industry averages just 10 percent click-to-open rates for email newsletters, Patricia set a goal of obtaining a 15 percent click-to-open rate in the first year of sending Generally Speaking to staff. The team ended the year at 18 percent, a win that was recognized by senior management.

In the second year, the communications team targeted a click-to-open rate of 20 percent and has soared past that number to achieve an average 26 percent click-to-open rate for each Generally Speaking email newsletter.

“We set pillar goals every year for our health system and our communications department,” says Patricia. “Our click-to-open rate is one of our goals, and we are exceeding our targets every month. We use EmailOpen reporting tools to share metrics with our senior leaders so that they know what our employees are interested in and engaging with.”

Creating Community Across a Regional Network

Patricia and her communications team have worked hard to create community across all LGH facilities. “We have a large health system geographically which means that many of our staff don’t know each other,” says Patricia. “We feature different departments at our

hospitals, so that our staff know we care. We have done features like “Meet the Team” to clarify people’s roles in departments like HR. People love seeing themselves so this quickly became a regular feature in our newsletter.”

Other regular features include “Leaders are Readers,” which highlights books leaders are reading now and why staff should also read them; weather, emergency preparedness, and safety features; employee engagement surveys; and community-building activities. “We have done features like Hospitals Against Violence, to let employees know their rights in case they experience an issue with patients and their families, or another staff member,” states Patricia. “We have also featured Black and Gold Days, so that all of our New Orleans Saints fans can wear their gear. When the Saints were in the playoffs, we told employees that they could wear their colors on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and engagement went through the roof. We’d have more than 50 comments on these stories.”

EmailOpen also supports LGH’s social strategy by providing the social team with content that can be repurposed for an external audience. “We partner with the Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency, a nonprofit that harvests organs for organ transplants,” says Patricia. “We shared an Instagram post that says that whenever an organ donor dies at our main campus and the decision is made to donate his or her organs, we play the song Amazing Grace, similar to the way we play lullabies when babies are born. That post got huge visibility and was shared 473 times and reached over 70,000 people. I’d like to think that it also could inspire community members to become organ donors themselves.”

Using Digital Communications to Connect with a Busy Workforce

EmailOpen has helped Patricia and her team communicate with a high-octane workforce that consumes internal communications on the go. “We have to be mindful of who we’re communicating with,” says Patricia. “A nurse who has a 15-minute break needs to be able to read Generally Speaking on her phone or computer in just seven or eight minutes.” The newsletter format – with stories that have short marketing teasers and “Read More” call to action buttons allows staff to quickly zero in on the content that interests them, while enabling Patricia and her team to measure readership on a story-by-story basis.



Using EmailOpen has helped LGH eliminate an expensive print newsletter which was sent quarterly and outdated by the time it arrived at employees' homes. It also gives LGH a digital tool for blasting out late-breaking updates, such as the twice-daily updates the team did during Tropical Storm Barry, which helped keep employees safe as they traveled to and from work.

With EmailOpen's keyword-searchable archive, it's also easy to keep a pulse on what has been communicated--and what hasn't. "Recently, we received a request from another department, wanting to know what we had covered on employee safety issues. We went to the archives and typed in the word "safety." It told a great story for our risk management and compliance team," says Patricia.

Patricia says that Generally Speaking has been so well-received that she is using EmailOpen to create two new email newsletters – Physician News, a newsletter that will be distributed to around 1,000 providers; and Socially Speaking, a newsletter that will share LGH's top posts and engagement metrics with the health system's 300+ leaders.