

Building Your Brand Around Your Population Health Strategy

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Introduction

Population health is no longer just a forward-thinking concept — it's becoming a strategic cornerstone for health systems across the United States. After decades of groundwork and years led by early adopters, the movement is gaining real momentum, powered by policy shifts and market demand.

Consider these facts:

- **90%** of health system executives say population health is critical to their strategy.¹
- **80%** are actively investing in screening and interventions around social determinants.²
- **70%** have already defined a population health strategy.³

1. Advisory Board, 2023
2. Deloitte, 2022
3. Kaufman Hall, 2023

We're seeing this shift up close. More and more, we're partnering with health system leaders to impactfully communicate and differentiate population health strategies and value-based care models with clarity, purpose and humanity.

This guide is our way of sharing what we've learned along the way. It's not a one-size-fits-all approach (because there isn't one). Instead, we're offering our experience to help you better connect your brand with your community.

To those of you doing the hard, essential work of transforming care: thank you. Your dedication is changing lives and improving the healthcare experience for everyone. So let us help you build a brand that reflects the full impact of that mission.

Population Health Success Starts with Culture

If your organization has transitioned to a value-based care model or population health strategy, you know firsthand how difficult the shift can be. Of course, success depends on adjusting both your financial and clinical models. But the most important transformation is commonly overlooked: your people.

Creating a culture where people are aligned, engaged and empowered is vital to deliver on your brand promise — and the promise of better healthcare.



Start With a Shared Vision

Advisory Board notes that change management is one of the biggest barriers for value-based care organizations. Leadership needs to align on a vision and articulate it.



This vision needs to be more than words on a slide. It should be something your teams can feel, see and act on every day. We've helped population health-focused systems achieve outstanding results in brand equity and attraction by starting with internal campaigns, leadership messaging and other day-to-day touchpoints. Reinforcing a shared purpose fosters alignment and builds the momentum needed for transformation.

When done well, this alignment creates unity across departments, inspires ownership at every level and fuels a culture that can carry your population health strategy forward in a way that everyone in — and around — your organization understands.

Use Culture to Drive Collaboration

Teamwork drives value-based care and population health success. From primary care to specialty care, finance to operations, teammates must communicate and collaborate to deliver the right care, at the right time, and at the right place. When organizations build a culture rooted in communication and trust, teams are more likely to prioritize patient-centered care that supports better health outcomes.

Data proves that a strong culture creates a better patient experience with engaged employees providing better care. Press Ganey’s [“2023: The State of Workforce Engagement Report”](#) shows:

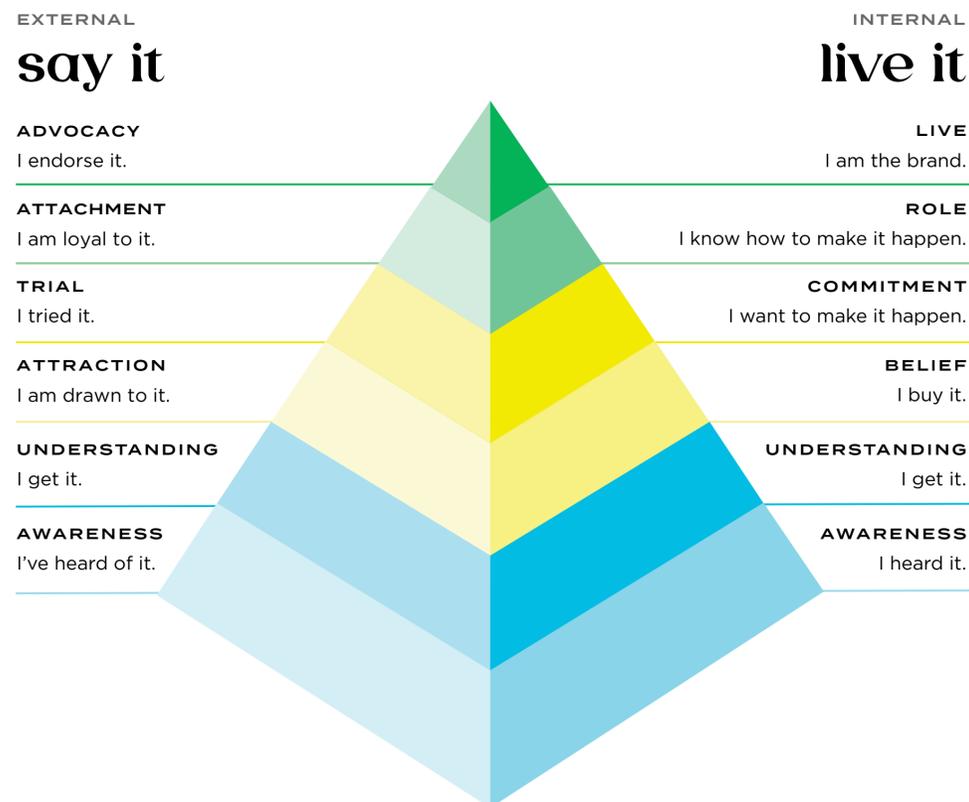
- **Organizations in the top 25% for engagement score 38 percentile points higher** on “Likelihood to Recommend” for inpatient care (compared to those in the bottom 25%)
- **Facilities with a top-tier safety culture score 68 percentile points higher** on engagement than low performers
- **Engaged employees are more involved** and take extra steps to ensure patients feel respected, cared for and treated with dignity



Make Culture Your Change Agent

A strong culture doesn't happen by accident. It's built with intention — and when done well, it becomes the engine behind your brand promise and care transformation.

At Core, our **say it. live it.**[®] philosophy is rooted in the belief that actions must match words. When people are empowered to live the brand internally, they create experiences that elevate patient care, improve outcomes and drive long-term performance.



TriHealth, a Cincinnati-based health system, is a standout example of this alignment. Under the leadership of CEO Mark Clement, they have built a unified culture that supports system-wide collaboration, embraces change and delivers on a bold vision for better care.

What began as a culture-building effort evolved into a brand that authentically reflects who they are and where they're headed. In 2023, we distilled the system's differentiators into the **Be seen. Be heard. Be healed.** brand campaign, which embodied the system's unique culture, furthered the system's population health strategy and led to a 13% increase in unaided brand awareness.

Their experience shows that when your team is aligned around a shared purpose and supported by a culture of trust and accountability, you can transform your entire organization and your patient experience — the foundations of a successful brand.

Population Health Champion: Mark Clement, CEO of TriHealth

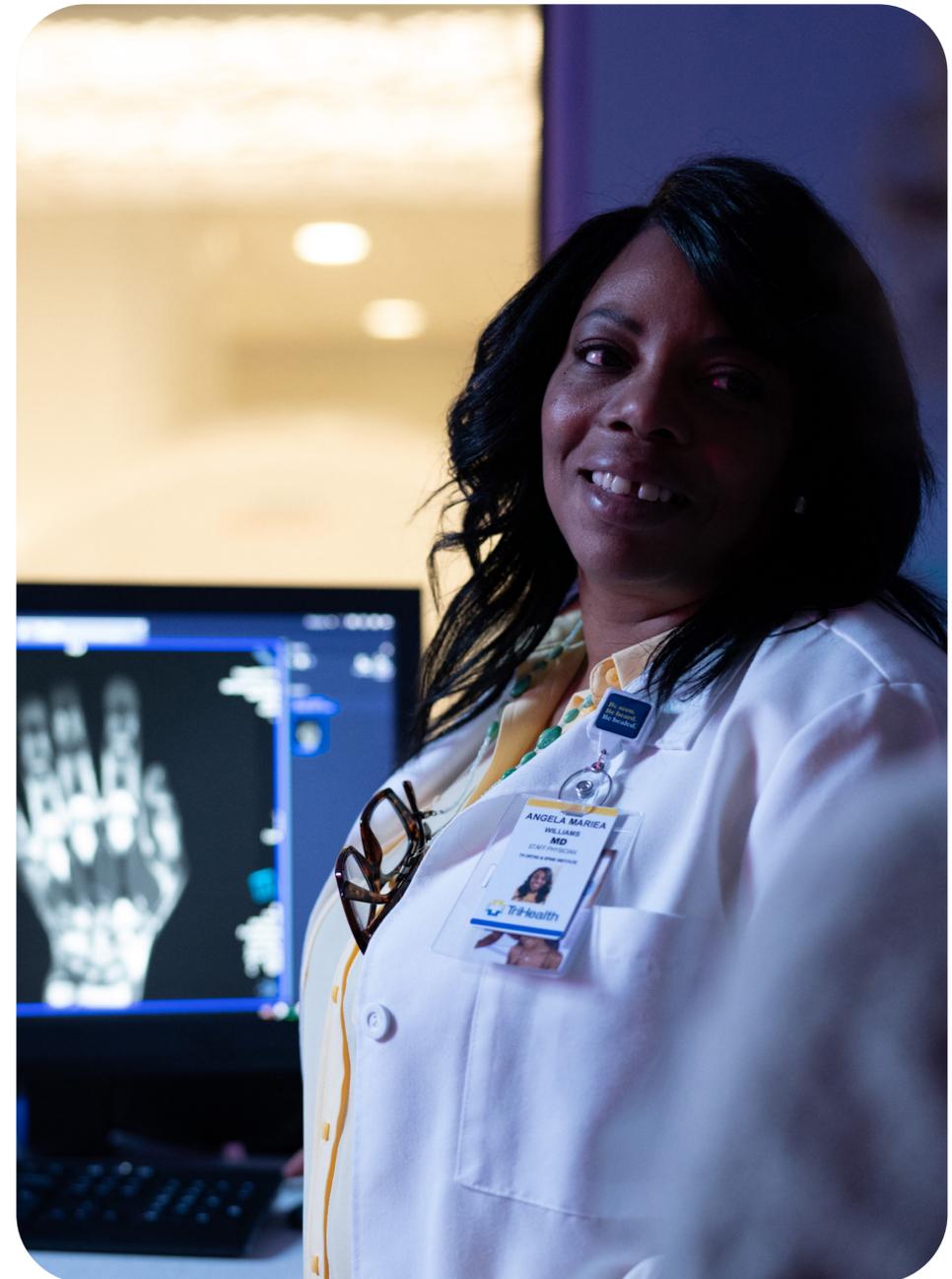


Mark Clement,
President and CEO
of TriHealth

When Mark Clement, President and CEO of TriHealth, joined the health system in 2015, it had multiple hospitals and other business units that operated semi-independently without a common culture, vision, values or overarching strategy. Under Mark's leadership, they did the hard work of building

that system culture and committed fully to value-based care and population health in their clinical and business models. By 2022, they were ready to tell their brand story and partnered with Core Creative to do so.

In a recent conversation with Mark, he shared his insights into “getting healthcare right,” successful change leadership, building system culture and more. He and Quint Studer also recently spoke about building a culture that drives and supports value-based care at the American College of Healthcare Executives Congress; supporting data in this article is derived from that presentation.



“TriHealth is one of the highest-performing ACOs in the U.S.”

TriHealth is a Cincinnati-based \$2.8 billion integrated healthcare delivery system, made up of 5 hospitals and over 140 ambulatory/outpatient sites of care. Named as the highest performing Accountable Care Organization (ACO) in the state of Ohio and one of the highest performing ACOs in the U.S. by Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, TriHealth cares for over 600,000 patients, or one third of the greater Cincinnati community, with half in value-based arrangements and 60,000 of them full risk. They are Cincinnati’s third-largest employer, with more than 13,000 team members. Their care has had a remarkable impact on the health of the people of Greater Cincinnati and is a true success story on the power of population health.

“Getting Healthcare Right” was an imperative and a rallying cry”

In his frequent public appearances, Mark speaks about “getting healthcare right,” addressing our nation’s broken health system in which we spend more and get less than any other western nation, focus on sick care, are fragmented, reactive and poorly coordinated, and are overly complex to access, resulting in glaring health disparities. His vision for getting healthcare right has been a rallying cry for the TriHealth team, creating a powerful sense of shared purpose throughout the organization.

We asked Mark why more systems are not transitioning to value-based care models, to get healthcare right. “It’s because it is hard, hard, hard and it is risky. It is a fundamental change in your clinical and business model. In traditional

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fee-for-service, it's all about volume. In value-based care, it's all about delivering value as opposed to volume, and that means delivering the right care in the right part of the continuum," he said. "We needed to build up an integrated system that was able to seamlessly provide whatever care a patient needed in the right part of our health system."

TriHealth has successfully accomplished that imperative, now driving 90% of its revenue from ambulatory care. And they've achieved so much more, including:

- 97% team member engagement (up from 26% in 2016)
- Top decile culture of safety favorability
- Total cost of care >12% lower than Ohio average resulting in \$400 million in healthcare savings to the community annually
- Strong and improving financial performance with year-over-year market share growth in every site of service and service line

SUPERIOR CHRONIC CONDITION MANAGEMENT

80%

diabetes control
(58% industry average)

91%

hypertension medication adherence
(84% industry average)

SUPERIOR HEALTH SCREENING RATES AND EARLY CANCER DETECTION

84%

breast cancer screening
(72% industry average)

79%

colorectal cancer screening
(64% industry average)

In short, TriHealth's highly engaged people and culture are driving industry-leading care and an exceptional, differentiated patient experience. **Their superior screening rates and chronic condition management saved more than 1,200 lives last year alone.**

Getting there required years of disciplined change and passionate culture-building.

How TriHealth systematically built a change-ready culture



Mark explained, “We went to work on building a system culture that didn’t exist before. We had a Good Samaritan [Hospital] culture and Bethesda North [Hospital] culture. We had a physician enterprise culture. But we didn’t have a system culture. That’s hard work to build a culture.”

That hard work was informed by Kotter’s framework, “The 8 Steps for Leading Change.”

“It starts with building support for a shared vision of the future”

“It starts with building support for a shared vision of the future,” he continued. “It’s confronting reality. What’s the current situation? Why is the current state not sustainable long term? And then articulating a compelling future state that people can get excited

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about. For us, it was really based upon a moral imperative. We could double down on a broken system, fee-for-service, or we could embrace a better way. And that better way would allow us to better carry out our mission and improve the lives of patients that might not have been improved under a traditional, fragmented, reactive system.”

“Then you build a guiding coalition,” he said.

“We built support with our board, with our physician leadership and our senior leadership. You don’t wait for everybody to get on board. You just go. And then that coalition will support the larger organization, the nay-sayers and the fence-sitters. They will get on board as they see the changes beginning to make things better.”

Clement noted that in TriHealth’s case, the change was met with little resistance. “I think people were ready for change and excited about operating as a system, excited about embracing the future.” A related step is to generate early wins.

“Harvest your early wins — which is celebrating successes — so people begin to see that the change really *is* making things better.”

Mark also shared insights into the importance of enfranchising physicians to help lead the organization, investing in leaders throughout the organization, and developing evidence-based leadership practices. “We knew that to build a world-class, patient-centered, high-performing culture, we needed to invest in our people. We went through a boot camp for three years, teaching leaders to lead based on evidence-based practices. We developed a TriHealth way of leading, a TriHealth way of serving, and a TriHealth way of delivering care. What we’ve learned is that when we’re consistent (in those practices), there’s no better hospital or health system anywhere.”

“We built support with our board, with our physician leadership and our senior leadership. You don’t wait for everybody to get on board. You just go. And then that coalition will support the larger organization, the nay-sayers and the fence-sitters.”

The brand both reflects and amplifies the culture

Mark believes that telling the value-based care story to consumers, employers and team members is essential. When Mark first met with Core in 2022, he recalls saying, “We’ve been working really hard to build a culture and we didn’t want to tell our story until we were ready and able to consistently deliver on the promises we make to the community and our people. And we think we’re ready to tell that story.” Together, TriHealth and Core redefined the brand promise, brought it to life in the market, and extended it to service lines and an updated employer brand promise. Now, three years later, he feels (and data validates) that the brand work we’ve done together has both reflected and amplified the culture.

“I think there is a pride that is palpable within the TriHealth team member community and

physician community. There is a growing feeling at TriHealth where people really feel like we’re good and the community is recognizing it. Our team members feel good about working here. The employer brand work that you helped us with really resonates with team members. I think that has played a big role. There’s a lot of pride in being part of this organization and they know we’re good.”

Mark’s advice to other population health champions

“One of the mistakes that a lot of leaders make when they set out to either change their culture or improve their culture is they think they can do it in a year or two. Jim Collins (author of “Good to Great” and other pivotal books) said it’s **five to ten years to fundamentally change and embed the changes in your new culture**. I think that’s right.”

How to Integrate Population Health into Your Brand Strategy



If your organization has made meaningful strides toward a population health-focused care delivery model and a value-based operational approach, you've likely built powerful differentiators. These should be front and center in your brand strategy.

This is especially relevant if you're among the one-third of health systems that have moved beyond the "Dabbler" stage of value-based care adoption, according to Advisory Board. As physician confidence in risk-based models grows, so does the urgency for aligning brand strategy with population health.

Determining the most effective approach for your system starts with understanding where you are on your journey, and then finding the clearest, most emotionally resonant way to express it.

Here are just a few ways we've made it work ...

Example 1:

Turning outcomes into emotional connection

Our strategic discovery with TriHealth uncovered a simple but powerful truth: people needed to feel seen and heard as individuals to feel reassured that they would realize the best health outcomes. As a result of its successful culture-building initiatives, TriHealth was more effectively meeting those often-neglected emotional needs for their patients. This became the foundation for the **Be Seen. Be Heard. Be Healed.** brand platform.

With the platform now established, we're helping TriHealth evolve their advertising and activate their brand in new ways — bringing population health stories to life and helping consumers understand how their model truly delivers better care.

Read more about the campaign-building process on [page 17](#)

Example 2:

Creating a movement for greater well-being

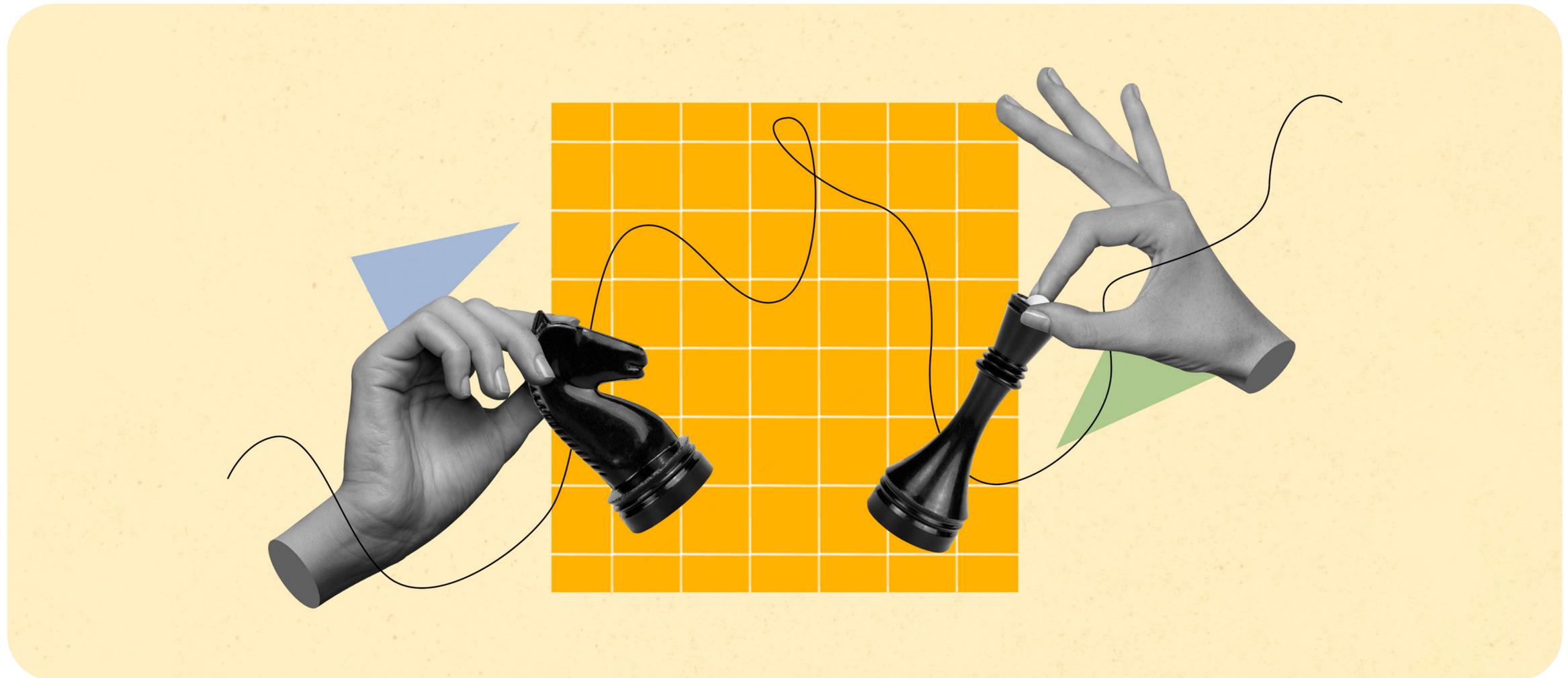
Another one of our client partners — a regional health system in the Midwest — understood that transforming care wasn't just about operations; it was about clarity of purpose and community engagement.

While the health system ranked among the top-performing ACOs in the nation, with strong results in value-based care, prevention and chronic condition management, they also needed to protect their market share from encroaching competitors.

We helped bring their mission and vision to life through a series of campaigns that reflected their legacy of providing high-quality care across their region. The result was a community-centered movement that captured the system's longstanding commitment to improving health across their wide service area.

So, how should your system approach branding population health?

We believe impactful brand expressions are “just aspirational enough” — bold enough to inspire, grounded enough to be real. Ultimately, a successful brand strategy must align with your organization’s mission and vision, your strengths — whether in outcomes, experience, access or affordability — and the unique needs of your community.



Advertising Showcase from Strategic Health Care Marketing: TriHealth Brand Campaign

Trihealth Aligns its Brand to Reflect a Culture Deeply Rooted in Humanity and Grounded in Population Health.

As published in Strategic Healthcare Marketing by Susan Dubuque

www.strategicHCmarketing.com

Each month, *Strategic Health Care Marketing's Advertising Showcase* features the challenges, tactics, and outcomes of a multi-media advertising campaign, offering strategic and creative insights from some of the nation's leading hospitals, health systems, and health-related organizations.

BACKGROUND

Cincinnati's healthcare market is highly competitive, with eight health systems, including an academic medical center and a renowned children's hospital.

When Rob Whitehouse joined TriHealth as vice president of marketing and community relations seven years ago, the health system struggled to differentiate itself in a crowded marketplace. The system was comprised of multiple hospitals and other business units that operated semi-independently, lacking a common culture, vision, values, or overarching strategy. "Under the leadership of CEO Mark Clement, our organization did the hard work of building a system culture and committing fully to population health," says Whitehouse. "By 2022, we were ready to tell our brand story and

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Rob Whitehouse,
Vice President of Marketing and
Community Relations, TriHealth

partnered with Core Creative to do so.” says Whitehouse.

Continue reading to discover how TriHealth embodies its brand every day, and see examples of creative messaging and executions.

DEFINING A UNIQUE IDENTITY

The first step in the process was to engage in deep listening and observation within TriHealth to discern what makes it unique. Meetings and interviews with team members across the system soon revealed a clear point of distinction: an unparalleled degree of warmth and humanity. Leaders and front-line team members expressed a heartfelt belief that patients should be treated as individuals rather than numbers.

Focus groups with consumers validated the internal findings. Patients appreciated the personalized care they received at TriHealth, and community members expressed a desire for a more human-centered health care experience.

“Our brand research led us to an important truth,” says Whitehouse, “To believe that they are getting the best health outcomes, people must feel seen, heard, and understood as a person.”

“When we observed TriHealth’s culture and heard consumers talk about their experiences with their care, we knew they could live up to the brand promise,” says Sue Spaight, vice president of insights and strategy at Core Creative.

“Sometimes our job is to hold a mirror up to an organization, confirm how remarkable they are, and help them express the difference.”



Sue Spaight,
Vice President, Insights & Strategy, Core

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Core's creative team distilled the brand promise into a concise tagline:

Be seen. Be heard. Be healed.

BRINGING THE BRAND TO LIFE

Whitehouse remarks, “Brand platforms are typically a reflection of what an organization is now, plus an added measure of aspiration. But our situation is different. This is truly who we are. We didn’t need to change a thing. We just needed to own it. From our CEO to the team member working in the cafeteria, our health system embraces a warm and welcoming culture. But in addition to recognizing patients’ desire to be treated like humans, this slogan pushed our brand promise even further — by affirming our commitment to population health.”

Cori Grandle, brand and strategy manager at TriHealth, emphasizes, “We focus on proactive health care driven by the patient’s relationship



Cori Grandle,
Manager, Brand and Strategy, TriHealth

with their primary care provider. We exceed industry benchmarks for preventive screenings, like mammograms and colonoscopies, and excel in managing chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension.”

WITHOUT HEALTH EQUITY, THERE IS NO POPULATION HEALTH

“Health equity is an essential component of population health,” notes Whitehouse. “We are deeply committed to creating an environment where everyone feels welcome, ensuring that our care is culturally sensitive and available to underserved communities.” TriHealth’s commitment to supporting the health of the entire community is evident through its Center for Health Equity.

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Kathryn Sturm,
Content and Social Strategy Manager,
TriHealth

“Our content activations support health equity,” says Kathryn Sturm, content and social strategy manager at TriHealth. “We make sure our content is accessible to everyone. Patient stories showcase the full spectrum

of our services and the wide range of patients we serve. Testimonials help build trust and break down barriers when people see that we care for patients who look like they do.”

MEDIA MIX

TriHealth’s brand campaign appeared across multiple channels, including:

- Digital advertising
- Television
- Print
- Social media
- Radio
- Out-of-home advertising

INTERNAL ROLLOUT

TriHealth’s new brand was introduced through a cascading rollout. “We started with the executive leadership team and the board, followed by the Leadership Development Institute Group, made up of more than 800 leaders from across the organization,” says Whitehouse. “This group also received training materials providing guidance on speaking about the new brand to their direct reports and clarifying their roles in supporting and delivering on the brand promise. Presentations were then given to all our team members — more than 12,000 — through virtual and in-person town hall meetings.”



The brand messaging and creative executions were presented to internal audiences through leadership meetings and town halls before the campaign appeared in the media.

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Team members expressed enormous pride in the messaging conveyed through the new brand campaign. Here are some of the comments they made:

“I absolutely love the new brand. This is exactly how I feel and why I do what I do.”

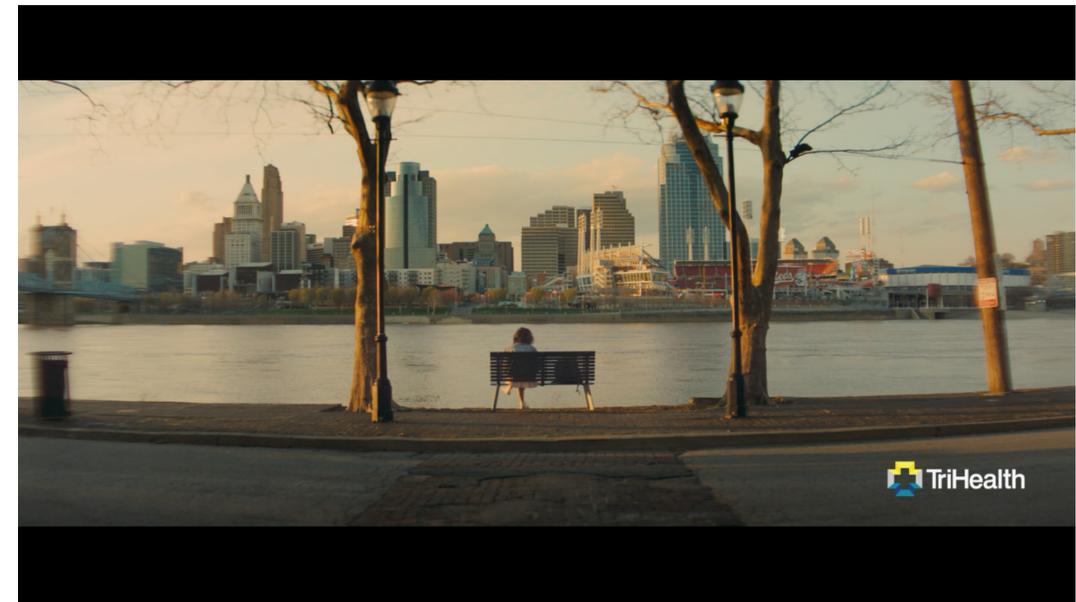
“Love the brand promise!
It’s who we are! Incredible!”

“It’s so great to have our branding truly match our culture of care.”

A powerful brand can make a huge difference in talent acquisition, especially in a highly competitive market. One prospective specialist considering joining the TriHealth team was so moved by the launch video that she affirmed, “This is the kind of care I want to deliver.”

MEASURING OUTCOMES

“In creative testing, the television spots produced a positive impact on the consumer’s ‘likelihood to visit TriHealth,’ says Whitehouse. “Brand tracking research revealed that brand awareness and preference exceeded all key competitors, and the TriHealth brand was rated more highly than competitors on providing warm and human care.”



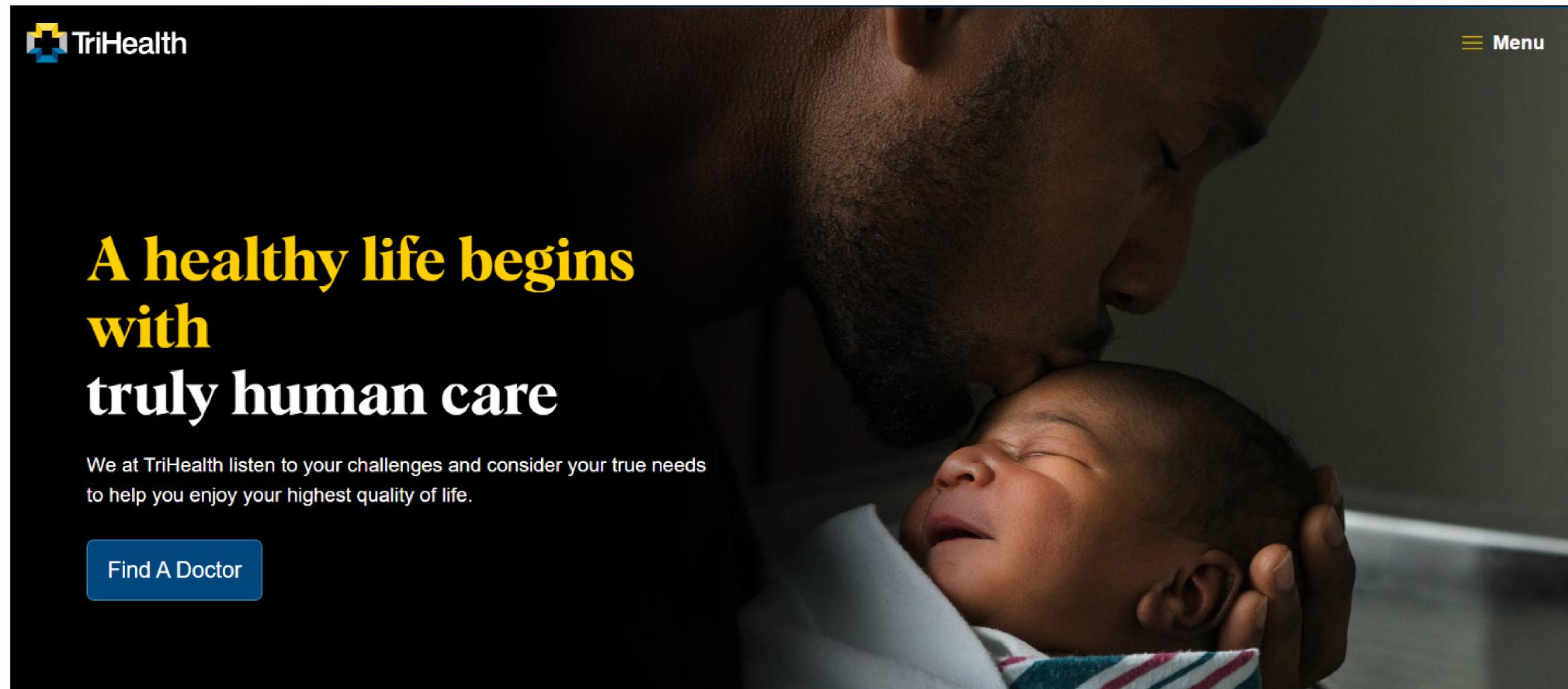
This beautifully shot 60-second video is the cornerstone of the campaign. It was used to introduce the brand to internal audiences and was edited to a 30-second version for TV placements.

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CREATIVE ELEMENTS

The campaign launch coincided with a complete redesign of the Trihealth website that reflects the new brand messaging.

WEBSITE HOMEPAGE



TriHealth positions itself at the forefront of human care with a bold statement and engaging imagery on its new homepage.

PRINT ADVERTISING



**Healing
begins with
a doctor
who hears you.**



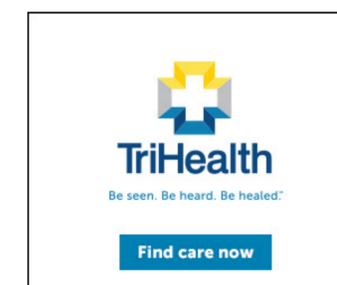
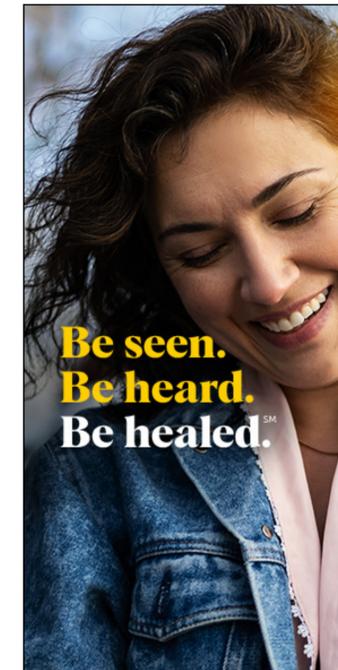
Those who care most for us are there for us in sickness and in health. That's why the team at TriHealth cares to hear your whole story, embracing your true needs and providing warm, personal support to help you stay on top of your health and life habits—so you can always feel and live your best.

Come be treated in a way that feels surprisingly human.

Be seen. Be heard. Be healed.™
TriHealth.com

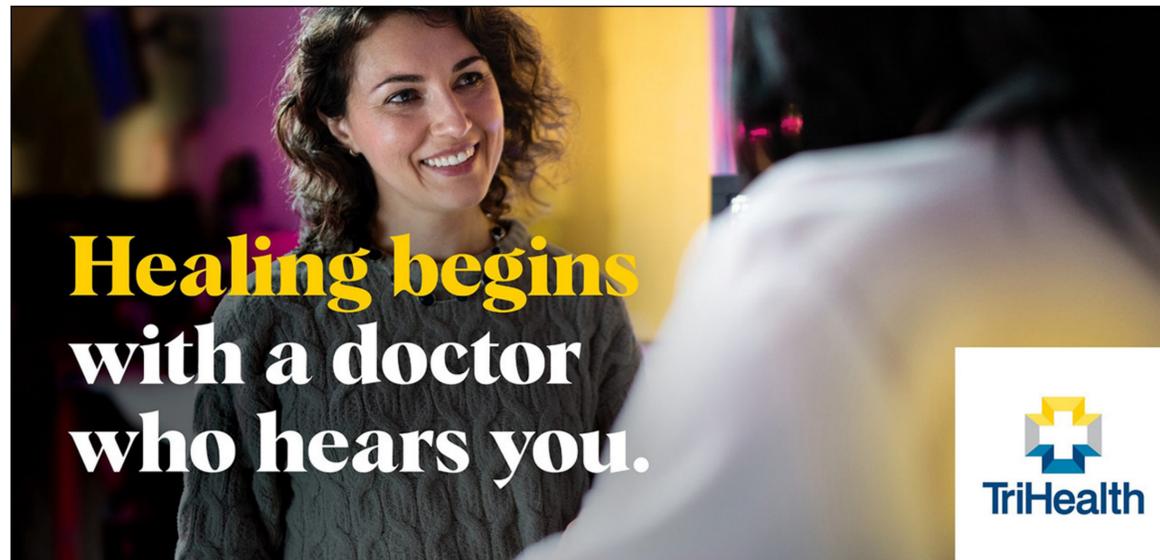
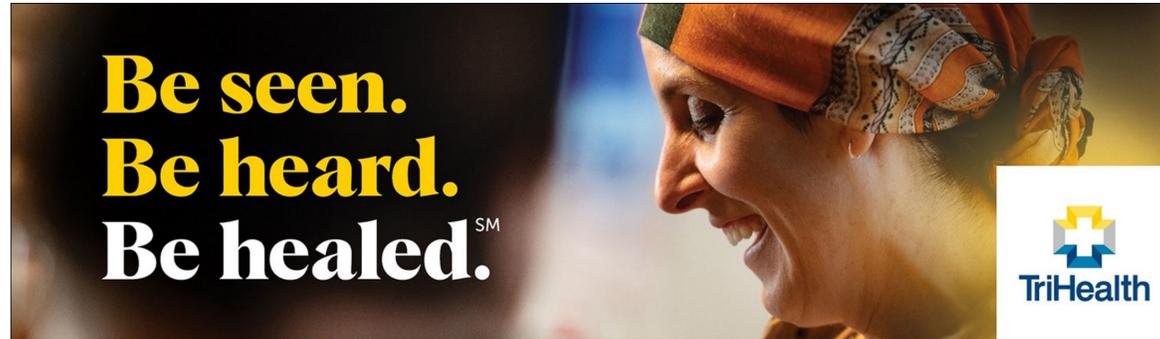
Special thanks to ArtWorks for permission to represent one of our community's iconic murals. Studio Checco, *Ice Cream Daydream*

DIGITAL ADS



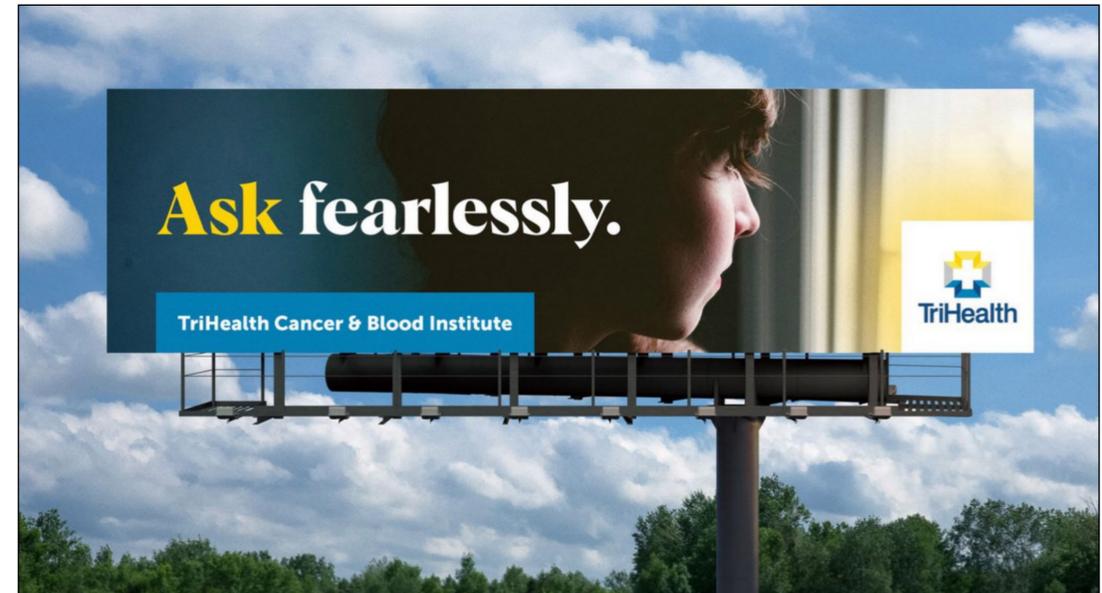
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OUT-OF-HOME ADVERTISING



Billboards extended the campaign's reach throughout the greater Cincinnati market.

SERVICE LINE EXTENSIONS



In 2024, the brand platform was extended to the cardiovascular and oncology service lines.

Conclusion

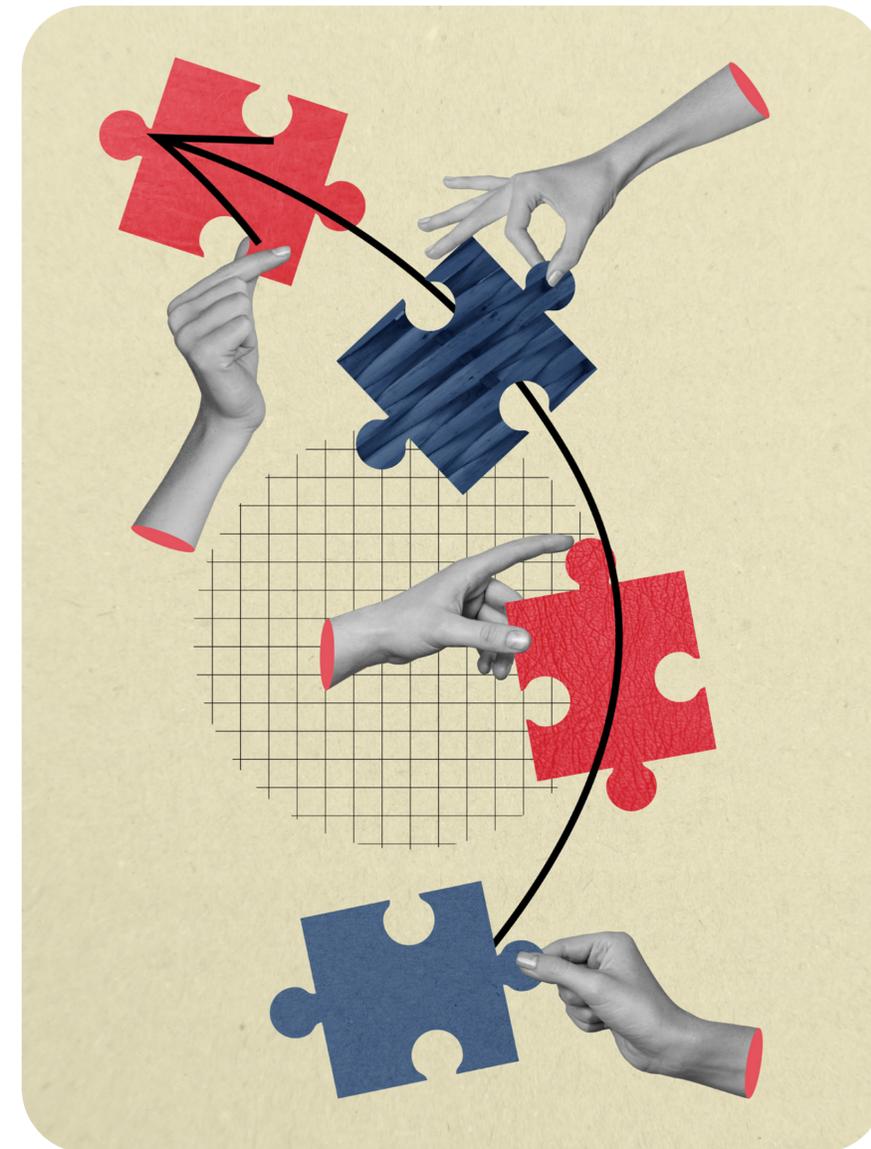
The shift to population health isn't just a change in care delivery — it's a transformation in how your organization shows up in the world. It requires a clear vision, a commitment to culture-building, and communications that are as coordinated as the care you provide.

As more systems make progress on their population health and value-based care journeys, those that clearly articulate their purpose and connect emotionally with the people they serve will stand apart.

At Core, we build enduring brands from the inside out. Aligning your brand strategy with your population health strategy will help you elevate organizational performance, inspire your team and build deeper community trust.

There's no single "right" way to brand population health. But there is a right way for you. We're here to help you find it.

Let's create something that reflects the full impact of your purpose — and bring it to life for the people who matter most.





Core Creative is a strategic creative agency that uses deep insights to craft brilliant brand ideas. Using our **say it. live it.**[®] philosophy, we help brands articulate their unique identity and purpose to connect meaningfully with internal and external audiences.