

THE NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO AID NURSE RECRUITMENT

The organisation

The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (NUTH) has been providing patient-centred healthcare to communities in the North East of England and beyond, for over 250 years. It is one of the largest NHS trusts in the UK, and offers a wide range of specialist services. From newborn babies to the elderly and infirm, the trust aims to deliver modern healthcare with a personal touch.

Background

As one of the region's largest employers with a workforce of around 13,500, staff turnover is not insignificant. The trust's recruitment team deals with an average of 160 job vacancies each month.

Appropriate nurse staffing levels are key to the trust being able to deliver 'outstanding' patient care, as rated by the CQC in 2016. As vacancy levels for nursing are noted on the Shortage Occupation List and with two other 'outstanding' rated trusts in the region, this can be challenging.

The trust also recognises that the NHS is under significant financial pressures, and the need to continuously look to transform services and, as a by-product, reduce costs.

In order to attract people to NUTH as an employer of choice, the trust has developed a social media strategy to engage with a wider audience, improve the quality and quantity of candidates, and target passive job seekers.

How they did it

Until 2015 NUTH did not use social media due to concerns around capacity and risk. However, several departments identified social media being used by peer organisations to tackle issues such as engagement with medical students and the quality and quantity of candidates being recruited.

A working group was formed to develop a proposal to be submitted to board for consideration. Following this paper, a pilot was agreed around the

use of Facebook to support the trust to recruit, promote and maintain the trust's profile as an NHS employer of choice.

Following pilot approval, the page was created and staff were actively encouraged to like and share it. Within eight months of the launch, the trust had accumulated over 8000 likes and had an organic post reach of over 5000 unique users.

Recognising the success of the page and the amount of patients and members of the public who were engaging with the good news stories, it was agreed at board to convert it into a corporate page for the wider trust, rather than it being recruitment specific. This meant that other content could be shared such as public health messages and events.

This work around social media tied in with a HR project started in 2015 to widen engagement and improve the quality of candidates, while also achieving a significant return on investment and cost saving. The trust took a look back at previous advertisements outside of NHS Jobs, how much they cost and their efficiency. The team found that where traditional media, such as nursing journals, had been used, adverts had resulted in poor response rates and uncertain reach with a cost up to £2000 per quarter page. When compared to the social media campaigns, which have cost between £100 and £200 reaching an average of 20k people, it was clear that a change in direction had to be made.


Outcomes

By using Facebook the trust is able to recruit, promote and maintain its profile as an NHS employer of choice; it enables the recruitment team to target and connect with specific workforce groups and keep people informed of opportunities.

The organisation's strategy focuses on 'selling' working for NUTH as a lifestyle, incorporating unique staff benefit offerings as well as things to do around Newcastle. Posting an average of two updates per day, the trust now promotes its vacancies, alongside exciting news and attraction pieces.

The majority of posts are not paid for advertisements, and instead organically generate reach and engagement through the trust's page followers. Organically, over the past two years, the corporate Facebook page has grown to 23k followers, reaching an average of 52k people via posts each week. This has resulted in lower usage of paid for advertisements and post boosts, as NUTH already has a significant number of followers.

However, the trust occasionally does utilise post boosts to target specific groups, areas of the country and universities. This method is used to target people with certain interests aligned to vacant posts which have been



previously found to be challenging to fill. For example, a specific campaign was organised to target anyone with an interest in radiology who is also studying or has studied at one of the relevant universities. The organisation saw engagement on the advert increase with over 2000 views and 32 applicants which is around a 60 per cent increase on applicant numbers.

Just over two years on, the Facebook page is growing monthly and is the third biggest trust on Facebook in terms of page likes with only Great Ormond Street and Birmingham Children's Hospital surpassing NUTH's page.

Top tips

- Use one corporate social media suite – try to avoid different pages and accounts for different purposes. This dilutes your audience and makes information harder for people to find. Also, when using social media to aid recruitment, you want potential applicants to see the bigger picture about what is happening across the trust.
- Educate recruiting managers - one of the keys to success is telling recruiting managers about the alternative methods available to advertise their vacancies and changing the culture. As the experts in their area, departments are now able to take a more active role in their recruitment by identifying the unique selling point of the role or speciality, resulting in better quality adverts and a higher level of engagement with applicants.
- Sell the lifestyle – don't just tell people why the role or trust is a great, tell them what you can do for them. Everything from things to do in the surrounding areas to work place facilities and staff benefits. This information will encourage someone to want to work in your organisation over others.


Further information

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