

Taking Off by Letting Go: Weight Loss Surgery at Saint Mary's

— Client

Saint Mary's Health Care

— The Challenge

Medical technology has made modern weight loss surgeries more effective, less risky and less grueling in recovery. Saint Mary's had invested in the top-notch surgeons and comprehensive facilities needed to perform these modern operations. What they needed was enough patients to qualify for certification as a "Center of Excellence" in the specialty.

— Our Answer

When Alexander Marketing took a closer look at the candidates for weight loss surgery, we found our key insight: the distress of these patients was more than just physical. Most had tried everything they knew to lose their excess pounds, only to fail. At this point, the weight not only slowed them down physically, but it weighed on them mentally as well—with a burden of depression, helplessness and internal humiliation.

Against this backdrop of lost hope, typical ads that depicted smiling, trim people came across as merely a cruel tease. We decided, instead, to speak directly and honestly to their state of mind. Our chosen visuals were balloons, each with an amount of weight on them: "80 lb," "120 lb." Each floated aloft with a message of hope that these individuals now could "let go" of their excess weight—our metaphorical promise to, figuratively and literally, lighten their load. In copy, we likewise told them frankly that we understood they may have already failed in previous attempts at weight loss, and believed we could help where other approaches had not.

We made this concept the heart of a coordinated campaign for television, direct mail, newspaper, outdoor, email and web.

— The Outcome

- Attendance at the weight loss seminars, the most direct measurement of the campaign's performance, more than doubled.
- Back-end conversion—the actual number of patients who opted for surgery—likewise rose to 200% of '09 average monthly levels.
- And the original goal of the campaign, "Center of Excellence" certification? Saint Mary's achieved that prized designation in July 2010—well ahead of even their most ambitious projections.



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