



A Case Study from The Marlin Company

Changing Perceptions

The MediLodge Group brings employee and patient recognition to the forefront with an innovative visual communications program

Ask the average person what comes to mind when they think of a nursing home and you'll probably hear words like "gloomy" and "foreboding." Then try asking the residents and employees of **Hillman MediLodge in Michigan** and you'll probably get a much different answer. Two years ago, the 100-bed skilled nursing facility sought to turn a dreary institutional atmosphere into a culture of contentment for both its employees and residents alike. Taking advantage of an innovative visual communications program, Hillman was able to significantly change its organizational culture. In one year, it jumped from Number Six in employee and patient satisfaction to Number One among all MediLodge facilities.

Founded in 1979, the MediLodge Group currently operates 14 nursing homes and five assisted living facilities throughout the state of Michigan, including the Hillman facility where Justin Moreau is Administrator. When he began at Hillman in 2005, Moreau put improving employee morale at the top of his to-do list. Fortunately he realized that he already had an effective tool right at his fingertips. Like all MediLodge facilities, Hillman used The Marlin Company's innovative visual communication program that is designed to help companies improve employee morale, performance and productivity.



MediLodge used its Communication Station to applaud a registered nurse, Norm Shultz, as Employee of the Month and a resident, Hazel McKenzie, as a Resident of the Month.

Utilizing Visual Communications to Improve Morale

"When I first realized I had The Marlin Company's Communication Stations™ for my use, I mainly thought they would be a good way to disseminate information among employees," said Moreau. "Over time, I realized that while the employees appreciated the motivational messages The Marlin Company provided, they are also an excellent vehicle to communicate to residents and their families."

Moreau immediately moved Marlin's largest Communication Station into the lobby so families and visitors see it right when they enter the facility. He also took advantage of the program's easy-to-use custom features that helped him portray the unique culture of Hillman.

"The Communication Station sets a positive mood as soon as someone sets foot in the facility," said Moreau. "Families right away see warm and touching pictures of their relatives participating in events like the Senior Prom and Senior Olympics. We also use the Communication Station to showcase our Resident of the Month.

"The Marlin Company made it easy to add these features, and they were as enthusiastic and excited as I was about the changes. "

"My whole idea behind the Resident of the Month was that each one of our residents have lived unique lives, and have so much to share," Moreau explained. "That's why in addition to posting a picture of the resident, we posted a short biography as well." The Resident of the Month is chosen by selecting the resident who is turning the oldest that month.

"Not only has the program been a hit with residents, but with visiting family members as well. We make sure that every time we pass by with the Resident of the Month, we point it out to them," Moreau explained. "The bio we include really takes a lot of them back to their pasts, and they really enjoy reliving the memories. After the month is up, that month's resident gets to keep The Marlin Company-provided poster which they often and display proudly in their rooms."

But Moreau did not stop there. In addition to the Communication Station in the front of the facility, Hillman has another Marlin DirectLine station in the employee break room and another in the employee time clock area. They encourage employee feedback and suggestions and, according to Moreau, give the staff a voice. "I pride myself on having an open-door policy, but I'm not always here when someone gets an idea or has a suggestion. The DirectLine station really helps make sure everyone has their voice heard."

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Seeing Results

Moreau also acknowledges that families often comment about the Communication Stations. "I think they appreciate seeing how we are making all the residents feel like this is a fun place to live. They enjoy seeing grandmom or granddad up as Resident of the Month or having fun at the Senior Olympics."

Beyond the day-to-day evidence of seeing the satisfaction of residents, families and employees, Moreau also points to results from the 2006 Employee Satisfaction Survey, which rates attributes on a scale from one (worst) to seven (excellent). Besides Hillman leaping from number one to number six, company pride has increased from 5.35 to a 6. "Communication satisfaction jumped from a 4.74 to 5.56 and employee satisfaction, in general, increased dramatically," Moreau added.

Moreau said he is so pleased with the results that he plans to create another Communication Station that will feature photos of all the department heads, "like a who's who at MediLodge."

"The Communication Stations have become a centerpiece for setting a

positive tone at our facility. In an institutional setting, it's all too easy to convey a drab, bureaucratic mood. Instead, people now enter our facilities and immediately feel good. The Communication Stations help set that mood," said Moreau.

Other MediLodge facilities are benefiting from The Marlin Company programs. The Richmond, Mich., MediLodge, a 126-bed skilled nursing home, has used Marlin's Communication Stations for five years. Recently the facility added an Electronic Communication Station™ (ECS), with a 42-inch flat panel display.

"We've added the ECS to our dining room, where both residents and families can appreciate it," explained Christine Binando, administrator at Richmond. The multi-frame ECS display shows real-time news, sports, local weather, and motivational workplace messages along with a scrolling text bar that Richmond employees change daily. "We change the bar to recognize birthdays or new staff. People really appreciate it. Residents' families always remind me to put Mom's picture up next week."

Richmond also continues to use the print-based Marlin Communication Stations in several locations as a way of communicating health and safety and other workplace news to employees. "I think the combination of print and electronic stations works very well at Richmond," said Binando. "Because we utilize two types of media, staff is more likely to get exposed to messages more than once, which leads to everyone knowing what is going on and feeling like they are in the loop," she said.

Looking to the Future

Employees have been so receptive to both the electronic and print Communication Stations that Binando plans to add another ECS for the break room. "We hope to use that ECS to highlight a different department each month. It helps make everyone know they are appreciated," Binando said.

Moreau couldn't agree more and summed up his own success by saying: "Hillman is a happy building, and The Marlin Company's Communication Stations are a part of that. It's a way we recognize performance and quality. It puts a happy, satisfied face right at the front door."

About The Marlin Company

For more than 90 years, The Marlin Company has been the Workplace Communication Experts, helping companies improve employee morale, productivity and performance through the innovative use of original, visually engaging content displayed in Communication Stations that can be managed through print or Internet-distribution. Its stations, which contain content customized by industry, are helping more than 8,000 companies of all sizes improve workplace attitudes and behavior. Through its many years of experience, The Marlin Company has developed a strong database of, and experience in, issues affecting the workplace. It routinely surveys thousands of clients to determine their current issues, work with industry experts across North America, and conducts national polling. Since 1995, it has conducted its annual "Attitudes in the American Workplace" poll. The North American business press relies on Marlin when seeking information and news about communication in the workplace. Recent articles incorporating Marlin research appear in Business Week, The Wall Street Journal, CNN, USA Today, ABC News, Associated Press and hundred of local publications and websites.

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