



EXERCISE BOOSTS BRAINPOWER.

Exercise doesn't just make you feel better, offering a good defense against depression and anxiety. It helps you stay more alert and focused. Something you can think clearly about as you knock out just one last set. To learn more go to [kp.org/thrive](http://kp.org/thrive)

KAIS



RECIPE FOR A HEALTHY YOU.

- BEGIN with an early rise.
- MIX in a light two-mile walk.
- ADD a healthy breakfast.
- SPRINKLE in laughter, smiles, and good cheer.
- STIR well.

- CONTINUE on medium.
- Gradually MIX in hard work and a sense of accomplishment.
- COOL DOWN frequently.

Several servings of organic fruit, protein, and carbohydrates.  
 ? in brief meditation. (optional)  
 NKLE in friends and family.  
 L again.  
 • FLATTEN and let rest for eight hours.

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KAISER PERMANENTE thrive

Kaiser Permanente used colorful optimistic ads to grab attention for its Thrive campaign

# FIVE LESSONS FROM KAISER PERMANENTE'S THRIVE CAMPAIGN

8



Make today the day you take the stairs. Because while you're on your way up, you'll be helping bring your cholesterol and blood pressure down. And no matter where you're going, the stairs will always take you to a far healthier place. For more ways to fit safe and sensible exercise into your day, just visit [kp.org/thrive](http://kp.org/thrive)

KAISER PERMANENTE thrive



**STICK AROUND.**  
 THINGS GET INTERESTING.

Regular mammograms are just the ticket. We have one of the highest breast screening rates in the nation. That's how we know they really do help you live long and thrive. So you want to know how the story of your family unfolds? Book your mammogram today and stick around — things are going to get a whole lot more interesting. Learn more at [kp.org/thrive](http://kp.org/thrive)

KAISER PERMANENTE thrive

# THRIVE

BY DIANE GAGE LOFGREN AND DEBBIE CANTU

**Kaiser Permanente** is the nation's largest not-for-profit integrated health care delivery system. While our tagline embodies the company's commitment to its brand promise of Total Health, Thrive is far more than a tag line. It's about a brand strategy supported by a well-entrenched mission and a commitment to a model of care that is centered on members and patients.

Founded in 1945, Kaiser Permanente has more than 164,000 employees and 15,100 physicians serving more than 8.6 million members. We deliver high-quality, safe, affordable, prevention-focused care in 35 hospitals and 431 medical offices from the Mid-Atlantic states to Hawaii.

Our brand is the entire experience that our members, patients, customers and the public have with us. This includes what we present, what we influence and what our stakeholders experience with us—meaning the actual quality and services rendered. Our people work every day to ensure that our brand platform, known as Total Health, is extended beyond advertising to direct marketing, business marketing, Internet services, internal communications, public relations, social media and issues management. Here's how we do it:

## Lesson 1

### Use research to learn and connect with your audience

To be successful, a brand must make an emotional connection with its audience. Kaiser Permanente spent a lot of time researching and listening to what matters to people about their health. Our team conducted best practice research and held focus groups of employees, physicians and members. Our proprietary research is done on members as well as consumers of all ages across all Kaiser Permanente regions, and it is updated regularly.

It's crucial for organizations to have an outside perspective, which is why we worked with Scott Bedbury, author of *A New Brand World* (Penguin, 2003), who had helped Starbucks create an experience around drinking coffee and Nike create its "Just Do It" campaign. Another creative partner is advertising agency Campbell-Ewald, who helped us fuse the vision of Kaiser Permanente as health advocates completely dedicated to health and well-being with the fact that, no matter what their stages of life, people want to be as healthy as they can be. We saw those two beliefs connecting in this way:

"Kaiser Permanente empowers me to maximize my well being and live a happier, healthier life. In other words, to thrive."

Our strategic direction focused on benefits, not features. It's not about us; it's about the member or prospective member. Our research indicated that, while people had negative impressions of health care as being an impersonal bureaucracy, they had positive associations with their own doctors and being healthy. This led to some new brand positioning:

"We stand for Total Health. Kaiser Permanente's integrated health care delivery system and commitment to preventive care empower our members to maximize their Total Health—mind, body and spirit."

## Lesson 2

### Inspire people to say, "I want that"

Since 2004, each of our ads has focused on benefits to the member and our community, not the features of our care delivery system or health plan. Our kickoff Thrive ad, "We Stand for Broccoli," put a line in the sand. It said, "Here's what we believe and how we're different." We used an inspiring tone to say, "We want you to thrive right here, right now—and if you do simple activities like breathing, listening to music or going for a walk, you will feel better."

In the beginning, it wasn't easy to sell some of our doctors on the broccoli concept. We let them know that they would not be portrayed simply as people in white lab coats with

stethoscopes—and we would measure the message we shared to ensure it hit the mark. In fact, we conduct ongoing research numerous times a year to measure the success of our ads, gain insights and meet consumers where they are.

One subsequent Thrive ad celebrated being healthy and vital at any age. It showed an older gentleman bopping down the street to the Bee Gees' hit "Stayin' Alive," and it said, "We believe that by seeing you when you're healthy, we can help keep you that way."

Part of what makes people connect with our Thrive ads is humor. Actually, we didn't set out to be funny. We set out to find the lighthearted, optimistic tone that one would use to encourage people or cheer, "You go!" from the sidelines. That tone naturally manifests in a smile and the humor flowed from there. By the third year, we branched out to talk about sick care in an ad that featured a woman declaring, "I have cancer; it does not have me," and showed how we can thrive even in the midst of a serious medical issue. The video "Kid Wisdom" addressed childhood obesity by championing healthy, active kids and our Healthy Eating Active Living initiative. That ad has had more than 3 million views on YouTube.

The following year, we dimensionalized even more by talking about outcomes of focusing on prevention, highlighting our Southern California region's success in being No. 1 in the country in mammogram screening rates.

The video "When I Grow up, I Want to Be an Old Woman" showed vibrant, happy, mature women. The message was: "Kaiser Permanente women get mammograms. What about you?" That ad played in several regions and has received more than 125,000 views on YouTube. Countless women told us it made them feel good about getting older. This year, with health care reform in the national spotlight, the timing was right to talk about health IT and how we use advanced technology to digitally connect doctors, nurses, techs and pharmacists with each other—and with their patients. In the ad "Connected," the message is, "We believe that if knowledge is power, shared knowledge is even more powerful."

## Lesson 3

### Create enthusiasm and excitement

A key element of each advertising campaign is how employees experience our organization and reflect that to the outside world. Our internal launch of Thrive each year builds incredible excitement and pride among employees. The Thrive ads live on the employee Thrive Web site, a robust health and wellness experience with tools, information and daily posts to help viewers live healthier lives.

The first year, Thrive events were held in our facilities. The wildly successful internal launch helped employees



communicate who Kaiser Permanente is and what differentiates us from others. Ultimately, it helped them become brand advocates.

One year, we held a contest where the prize was a free gym membership, fruit-of-the-month club membership and a new workout wardrobe for a winner in each region who shared how “things are looking up” for them. This year, employees had the chance to win a tree planted in their name when they viewed “Emerald Cities.” That ad showed how putting an end to paper medical records has helped Kaiser Permanente usher health into the digital age—saving lives, managing chronic conditions, making amazing new discoveries and saving a lot of trees.

The traffic to the employee Thrive site increased a whopping eight-fold (661 percent) as employees visited the site to preview the new ads—from 4,991 views last July to 38,000 views in mid-September when the ads launched.

## Lesson 4

Support your ad campaign with public relations, including social media

As we all know, advertising alone can't carry a brand. Our strategy was to make consumers comfortable with our brand and our values through the Thrive campaign so they would be open to our intellectual messages on why Kaiser Permanente is the best choice for them. This strategy, delivered through other forms of marketing and communications, involves expanding our messaging about our integrated delivery system and why we believe we are the model for the future of health care.

With an organization as large, complex and focused on research and innovation as Kaiser Permanente, there is so much to say. That's why our public relations team zeroed in on focus areas—from our care, to our research, to our efforts in the community. In addition, we developed a message architecture to strategically hone our communications through all channels—media relations (traditional, online and social media), a speakers' bureau, sponsorships and our stakeholder database.

A major channel for our messages is our own Kaiser Permanente News Center, launched in 2007 as a place where journalists, members, employees, physicians and all stakeholders could quickly come for factual information about Kaiser Permanente. We tell our side of the story, provide our full media statements, correct facts that appear on other sites or publications and post responses to rumors. We also post positive news about Kaiser Permanente and provide an automated feed for formal news media outlets and blogs. Each day, the news center gets some 3,000 views.

We also use the power of social media to extend our message. For example, the News Center is active on Twitter, with more than 3,000 followers including top media

and leading health care organizations who share our information with thousands of others. We also launched the KP Facebook page last year, which now has more than 8,000 fans. We created KP's YouTube channel in August of 2008 primarily to showcase the Thrive commercials. We now have 90 videos and growing, including our ads, Kaiser Permanente HealthConnect vignettes that share the member benefits of our electronic health record (the largest nongovernmental health record in the world), and videos featuring both physicians and patients.

Kaiser Permanente has developed some strong relationships with prominent health care bloggers. In fact, we previewed the Thrive campaign to several bloggers a few weeks prior to the debut in hopes that they would blog about us, which they did.

Our Issues & Brand Management department carefully monitors online conversations about Kaiser Permanente, corrects facts as needed and changes the conversation when necessary. The goals are to surface emerging issues as early as possible, align and shape strategies, mitigate risk, and do what is needed to best serve our members and patients.

## Lesson 5

Live up to your brand promise

What makes the Thrive campaign and all of our marketing and advertising strong is that our organization works every day to live up to our brand promise on all levels—and that takes all of us. This includes delivering the best care and service to our members, including our work in wellness programs for our employees and employer group customers and our commitment to engaging our members in their care through technology.

We continually focus on performance improvement and new efficiencies with our labor and physician partners to make health care affordable. We also support the communities we serve through our community benefit—giving more than \$1 billion last year, including programs to promote healthy eating during difficult economic times. So yes, Thrive is important. But our success depends on hard work on so many fronts. In other words, living our brand.

In marketing and advertising, words have power. But as in life, it's the actions behind the words—the walk behind the talk—that gives any message legs and ensures a good, strong run. Because perhaps the biggest lesson we've learned in recent years is that Total Health is a journey, not a destination. And the quest to thrive is not a sprint—it's a healthy marathon. **MHS**

### About the Authors

**Diane Gage Lofgren** is senior vice president, brand strategy, communications and public relations, and **Debbie Cantu** is vice president, brand marketing and advertising for Kaiser Permanente, headquartered in Oakland, Calif.