CHAPTER 4

Marketing Communication
Marketing Communication:

It is not only significant that you perform well. It is equally important that your customers/patients realise your constructive and positive contributions and this realization will lead to promotion. You offer world class healthcare services to your patients; you are not only sympathetic, but also show them empathy; you not only offer time-honoured services but your services are affordable too; unless these positive contributions of your organization reach to the potential customers; your task of promoting services will become quite complicated. It is against this background that an organisation requires to adopt creative promotional measures to inform and sense; motivate and influence the public at large; the prospects of today are the customers of tomorrow. If you keep on winning and retaining the efforts; your market share will always move upward. Like other organisations, the hospitals and healthcare organisations also need to promote such endeavours and this makes it essential that they make sincere efforts, and show professional excellence in synchronising the different constituents of promotion.

With the passage of time, a number of promotional measures have been included in the list which has increased the promotional budget of all the organisations promoting in a right fashion. But in this context of healthcare organisations, you have to increase the effects and optimise the costs so that the services remain affordable to the public. This complicates the functional responsibility of a healthcare Manager. How to blend the different constituents of promotion so that the prospects are sensitised but the costs remain proportionate is a challenging task and this means that you need to perform efficiently and effectively. Unlike other organisations, the success rate of the promotional efforts of hospitals or healthcare organisations is considerably influenced by the fact that they have been successful in bringing down the number of prospects. You have to ensure that your promotional measures have been so much effective that prospects feel that their living conditions are healthy, food contains nutritional values, drinking water
is potable environment is eco-friendly, sanitation is neat and clean and in addition they have civic sense, aesthetic sense helping them in improving their health and increasing their resistance power to diseases. This makes it essential that your promotional measures are creative because creativity makes the way for sensitivity which leads to acceptability.

There are a number of components of promotion, such as advertising, publicity, sales promotion, personal selling, word-of-mouth promotion and telemarketing. Given below the different constituents of promotion are presented.

**Advertising:**
It is a paid form of persuasive communication. Like the goods manufacturing organisations even the service generating organisations also need to advertise and like other profit-making service generating organisations even the non-profit organisations like hospitals and educational institutions need to advertise. We find advertising a managerial process of informing and sensing the patients/prospects. In addition, we also find advertising a social process because the defined principles of social marketing make it essential that non-profit organisations assign an overriding priority to social advertising, though others too have the responsibility to contribute to the process of social transformation. Thus the hospitals and the healthcare organisations need to assign due weightage to social advertising by making their slogans and campaigns more creative. By doing that, they bring down the number of patients needing medical attention.

While promoting, the healthcare organisations need to instrumentalise the personal promotion measures but also to intensify the non-personal. For making available the right quality of services to the right users at the right time it is essential that we focus on personal promotion. In this context, we find hospital personnel in general playing a meaningful role.
To be more specific the front-line-personnel in general playing a meaningful role. To be more specific the front-line-personnel play a significant role in the very context. If the nurses start neglecting the patients, receptionists start mis-communicating with the patients and attendants, doctors do not show humanity; then the medical services even after the availability of world class personnel and sophisticated technologies, fail in delivering goods to the society. Almost all of us are well aware of the most depressing contributions of personal promotion, specially in the healthcare sectors. This makes it essential that we focus on advertising.

While advertising, it is important that we assign due weightage to creativity since this bears the efficacy of making the messages and campaigns effective. By creativity, our emphasis is on adjusting the advertisement programmes, campaigns, and slogans in tune with the receptivity of the prospects and in the face of changing conditions the measures are to be made proactive.
Fig: Constituents of Promotion.

(Blend optimally)
(Creativity is to be made possible)

(Make possible cost-effectiveness)
While advertising, a hospital manager or a healthcare manager is responsible for selecting the most the
most effective media out of print media, broadcast media and the telecast media as per their requirements
and budgetary limits. In the context of healthcare services, we need to take the support of print media and
telecast media and also to make a fair mix of the two. We prefer telecast media as it has the potentials to
sensitise even the insensitive rural and illiterate segments of the society.

With the help of audio-visual exposure, and TV channels, the healthcare organisations private or
government, can be successful in creating mass awareness. To be more specific in the context of health­
care education for the rural segment, we find telecast media more effective in educating and informing;
sensing and influencing the masses.

The health department, the hospitals, the healthcare organisations, and the social organisations are
responsible for educating and sensing the public. Almost all the profit making organisations have to
promote healthcare education in a creative fashion so that the illiterate and the poor segments of the
society also come to know about the sensitive problems instrumental in solving their health
problems. The main theme of social advertising focuses on health sector on a priority basis. The
municipal corporations and non-governmental social organisations are also required to take keen
interest in the process. Since we have a challenging task of sensing and influencing even the in­
sensitive segments of the society, we find justifications for taking the support of professional
advertising agencies who, with the help of creative messages, will boost the process of sensitising
the public. Thus the telecast media for the illiterate segment and print media for the literate segment
would play a positive role in creating mass awareness.
We cannot deny the fact that in the Indian perspective we find even the literate and educated segment of the society, if not all of them, at least a majority of them do not give any importance to the healthy living conditions. They develop a food habit inviting numerous health problems. In addition, the rural women too have been facing health problems on account of the number of children. They are not fully aware of the family welfare/planning measures. In a true sense, we find them creating two types of problems, viz., first due to more children, the health conditions of rural women are poor and second on account of increasing population, the pressure on hospitals and healthcare organisations is increasing rapidly. This makes it essential that the concept of social advertising is given due importance in the boardrooms and the corporate sector of the country accepts the responsibility of creating mass awareness.

Publicity:

We find publicity an unpaid form of persuasive communication because an organisation is not supposed to pay anything while publicising whereas the advertising is a paid form. It is in this context that we need to assign an overriding priority to this constituent of the promotion mix. The hospitals and healthcare organisations need to promote the same because they have been facing the problem of financial crunch. While going through this constituent of the promotion mix, it is essential to make it clear that the healthcare organisations/hospitals make use of the same in two ways, first by developing a rapport with the media people who would promote hospitals and second assigning due weightage to the public relations activities through a team of professionally sound Public Relations Officers.

So far as the first step is concerned, the hospitals / healthcare organisations are required to develop a rapport with the media personnel and in this context a public relations officer is more effective because he/she is expected to have an excellence of influencing and motivating the press correspondents for
write ups, news items related to the positive contributions of their hospitals. A tea party, get together, lunch/dinner is organised for them, so that the process of sensitising the media is effective of course, a public relations officer is required to have high communicative ability so that the media personnel understand the issue in the proper perspective.

The sensitivity of public relations activities in the hospitals makes it clear that a hospital manager should be well aware of the public requiring priority attention while publicising the services. viz., the patients and attendants, the government, the donors, the doctors, nurses, para-medical and managerial staff need to be influenced to activate the process. To enable hospitals to obtain a feedback on the present quality of services, it is essential that a hospital manager undertakes regular survey with the support of professionally sound researchers and research scientists. They need to accept the responsibility of designing questionnaires and selecting the respondents and further collect their opinions. The aim is to collect the opinions of selected respondents based on scientific sampling so that a hospital manager comes to know about the weaknesses and lapses and adopts corrective measures. It is quite natural that while selecting respondents, a hospital manager assigns due weightage to all the concerned segments as detailed earlier. Communication with the stakeholders occupies a place of outstanding significance, specially in the healthcare sector because all of them, partially or substantially, are influenced by the services of hospitals/healthcare organisations. After achieving your goal, it is essential that you get a feedback of the stake holders so that you are in a position to change your strategic decisions, if the feedback necessitates it. It is against this background that in the context of injecting new life to the publicity we need to communicate with the stakeholders. It is essential that we find communications comprehensive,
open and even repetitive if conditions warrant so. We do not find any risk in being redundant when you repeat the importance of the task and underscore the basic objective you have been trying to achieve with your positive efforts.

In view of the above, it is essential that you have an independent Public Relations Departments. If we find it significant that hospitals/healthcare organisations offer world class healthcare services to the society and bear the social costs, then it is also important that they publicise their positive contributions so that the public at large come to know about the same. We are well aware that a hospital manager gets an opportunity to develop contact with almost all the segments of the society. May be that negative developments happen in the hospitals, indecent behaviour of the hospital personnel do not come to the notice of a hospital manager, therefore the hospitals have been facing the image problem. So, a hospital manager with the support of a professionally sound Public Relations Officer comes to know about the feelings of stakeholders regarding the shortcomings of services and takes appropriate measures to resolve them. If you are interested in knowing about your positive or negative contributions, you need to develop proper rapport with the stakeholders. We do not find anything wrong if mistakes are committed, because it is quite natural that human beings working in an unfavourable condition fail to perform. We need to confess our mistakes to avoid repetition and their further transformation into blunders.

These facts make it clear that hospitals/healthcare organisations need to strengthen the public relations activities through the public relations departments and the other health personnel working there. Projection of a positive image is, of course impact generating and even hospitals or healthcare organisations cannot ignore. And the task of image projection is successfully done with the support of Public Relations Officer who is expected to be a star performer.
Dimensions of Public Relations:

An important and internationally acclaimed authority on marketing, Kotler has thrown light on the different components of public relations as presented in the figure given below:

Press Kits:
Whenever you organise a get together, table-talk, press conference please distribute the kits containing writing materials to the press reporters which would influence them to write about your hospitals in a positive fashion.

Speeches:
Since you have sophisticated information and communication technologies at the desk, please record them and make use of the same as and when the circumstances warrant it.

Seminars:
You are also required to organise seminars, workshops frequently and invite prospects, patients, attendants, industrial customers or large-sized customers, vocal persons, social activists, intellects and other to participate and deliberate upon the performance of hospitals.

Annual Reports:
It is quite natural that you publish an annual report of your hospitals, specially in case of the private hospitals and prepare the reports mentioning the financial position of your hospital.
Charitable Donations:
In tune with the defined principles of social or societal marketing, you are also supposed to make significant contributions, to the development and welfare of the society. While organising conferences, conventions and seminars you may develop contact with industrial organisations making donations to your hospitals.

Sponsorships:
To promote cause-related marketing, you are also required to develop rapport with the leading industrial organisations and business magnets showing interests in the promotion of social welfare and interested in sponsoring events for making available to you the financial support.

Community Relations:
You are also expected to develop community relations which would help you in projecting a positive image of your hospitals.

Lobbying:
This focuses on lobbying with important personalities. VIPs, Social Reformists, Philanthropists, Political Leaders with a clean usage and so on.

Identity Media:
You are required to take support of media helping you in the projection of a positive image.
Being a hospital manager, it is your responsibility to ensure maximum use of all the components of public relations according to your requirements and situational needs. This would help you not only in the projection of a positive image but also in getting an opportunity to serve and get the financial support.
FIG: DIMENSIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Dimensions

Sensitive Dimensions

Press Kits

Speeches

Seminars

Reports

Donations

Sponsorship

Community Relations

Lobbying

Identity

Public Relations
PUBLIC RELATIONS AND IMAGE PROJECTION:

When there is a progress in your users, it is not difficult for you to regain the image, provided the innovative marketing practices are put to use. But if you fail to stop the process of tarnishing your image, your task becomes complicated. It is against this background that almost all the organisations have to apportion due weightage to the process of image projection. Like other service generating organisations, the hospitals/healthcare organisations also need to project a clean image. To be more specific when we find a majority of the government hospitals facing a lead image problem, it is necessary that the Public Relations Officer/hospital manager makes best possible efforts to project a fair image. We cannot negate the fact that tarnishing of image of hospital in general and the government hospitals in particular is mainly due to the degeneration found in the quality of their services. The public relations activities, if promoted in a right fashion, can be successful in erasing their tarnished image. Thus we find image projection playing an important role specially in today’s situations when hospitals in general are facing a poor image.

At the outset, it is essential that both the terminologies, viz., Image Projection and Image Building are clarified. A majority of us believe that image can’t be built, but they are not correct in their observations. In a true sense, the term “image building” focuses on our positive efforts, deeds which change the perception of the receivers regarding the contributions of an individual or an institution. The purpose of image building is to project the proper image based on performance and contributions. The image building is a long-drawn result based on positive contributions, dedicated efforts, deeds and value-based services.

To put it another way, if we find hospital/healthcare organisations offering world class services, subserving the interests of weaker or poorer sections, bearing social costs, we create a condition for good image projection. This is one part of the process and therefore the hospitals/healthcare organisations are
required to make positive contributions and make a case for image projection by activating the process of image building. If you are honest to the first process, it is quite natural that another part would also be completed successfully and your responsibility of image projection would be made considerably easier.

The above facts make it clear that a Public Relations Officer/hospital manager while organising, strengthening and innovating the public relations activities needs to concentrate on both. They have to ensure that their services are of world class and therefore they have been trying to build a positive image.

Now the second task is to project your positive contributions specially with the help of sophisticated communication technologies so that you succeed in informing the public at large about your positive efforts to improve the quality and protect the interests of society. A hospital manager in the very context is required to go through the problems and if he/she feels the need for an efficient Public Relations Officer to handle the responsibility of image projection they can do so. It is necessary to mention that in the entire process of image projection, you need to solicit the cooperation of media personnel and that depends upon your professional excellence in influencing and motivating them in the right fashion. Thus the public relations activities can be helpful in projecting a positive image.
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO IMAGE BUILDING:

Since your efforts for projection of a fair image are substantially influenced by your contributions to the process of image building, it is necessary that you are well aware of the following:

1) Behavioural Profile of the hospital personnel:

   At the outset, you are responsible for studying and understanding the behavioural profile of different categories of personnel. This needs an in-depth study of their past records, reports from the users, grievances cell or so. The hospital personnel in addition to the offering of quality services, are also required to behave decently. The cases of misbehaviour with the patients or attendants are to be gathered and based on the same, a report is to be prepared. In this context, you need to give due weightage to the behavioural profile of front-line staff such as receptionists, cashier, para-medical staff and the centre for the collection of investigation reports, nursing staff or so on. This will make you aware of the behaviour profile of doctors attending on the patients. Unless the hospital personnel are decent in behaviour, it is difficult for you to project a positive image.

2) Quality of healthcare services offered:

   In the healthcare services, the quality of core services occupy a place of outstanding significance. So, it is essential that you ensure that the different categories of hospital personnel are performing as per the defined norms. This focuses your attention on the quality of services to the patients. There are cases where due to the negative attitude of front-line staff, the assured quality of services is distorted and a gap is created between the quality of services promised and the quality of services offered. Hence, you are required to ensure that your hospital offers quality services, assigning an overriding priority to the quality of core services, and in addition, diverting due attention on the quality of peripheral services meant for the perception and attendants visiting the hospitals. Since we
talk about quality in totality, it is essential that your professional excellence gives due weightage to the blending of core and peripheral services optimally so that the services are distinct. This helps you in creating product uniqueness simplifying your task of image building. We find a number of developments taking place everyday in the medical sciences, and you have to ensure that your services are in tune with the evolving technologies and recent developments in the field of medical sciences.

3) Performance of hospital personnel:

It is also significant for you to ensure that the hospital personnel in general are performing excellently. On the one hand, they are offering world class services based on their expertise, while on the other, they are also showing personal-touch in service. They are promoting ethical values, assigning due weightage to humanity and human values and thus have been successful in proving their excellence as a top performer. If your personnel are found making sincere and honest efforts to show personal commitments in addition to the professional excellence, your task of image building is easier. It is against this background that the hospitals and healthcare organisations need to assign due weightage to the level of performance of their employees working in different capacities at different points in different departments.

4) Fulfilling the expectations of public at large:

We find healthcare services considerably influenced by their contributions to the process of social transformation. If they offer concessional or subsidised services and free services to the weaker sections of the society; and even keep keen interest in promoting social advertising, it is quite natural that the public at large would remain satisfied. Of late, we find the expectations of almost all categories of
users of the services increasing fast, sizeably influenced by the sophistication in the process of deve-
lopment of communication technologies and the information superhighway. Being a healthcare
manager, you need to identify the changing levels of expectations of prospects and to ensure that any
gap between the expectations and potentials are bridged. Of course, you are required to subserve
social interest by offering quality services to almost all the segments without making any discrimi-
nation.

5) You contribute substantially to social advertising:

For propagating your positive contributions, in the aforesaid areas, you also need to make significant
contributions to promote social advertising. In social marketing, we find social advertising getting an
important place, which is to promote advertisements directly or indirectly contributing to the process of
creating mass awareness, such as nutritional awareness, regulating foods habits, realising the importance
of potable water and sanitation, inculcating civic sense, promoting family planning measures, awareness
related to immunisation programme and vaccination, communicable diseases, irresponsible sexual
behaviour and so on. We are well aware of the fact that hospitals/health care organisations also bear the
responsibility of creating mass awareness and the social advertising would help them in the process.
The signposts, slogans, the wall paintings, related to healthcare would be successful in creating mass
awareness.

These facts are related to your positive contributions in promoting the healthcare services and therefore
your deeds, contributions and mission lead to image building. On the basis of your services you are in
a position to project a positive image. Of course, the government hospitals have been facing image
problem and it is difficult for them to project a positive image. But we also find a few of the
government hospitals and a majority of the private hospitals offering world class services and they would not find it difficult to project a fair image before the stakeholders or the public a large. With the sophisticated communication technologies, you will be in a position to project a positive image.

In a true sense, our deeds and misdeeds, positive and negative contributions, organisational and social considerations, decent and indecent behaviour, generation and diffusion of tension are the areas which make the task of image building difficult or easier. Where hospitals are offering quality services to the patients, subserving the interests of weaker sections, innovating the peripheral services frequently and assigning due weightage to social advertising, it is not difficult for them to project a positive image even if we fail in publicising, since our satisfied groups of users act like a hidden sales force and through word-of-mouth recommendations, they complete the incomplete task which remained incomplete even with the support of sophisticated promotional measures.

**PROJECTION OF IMAGE:**

Since you have made positive contributions and achieved the mission by justifying your existence in the society, your right of promoting the same cannot be denied. Our emphasis is on adopting those measures which help us in bringing an attitudinal change in the stakeholders. Of course, hospitals subserving the social interests bearing the social costs need to project a fair image. The following measures may be helpful to you in activating the process of image projection.

1) **Organising and participating in the exhibitions and seminars:**

   It is essential that your public relations officers or your representatives or you yourself participate in the conference, seminars, workshops related to the health associations, medical council. In addition,
you also organise seminars and workshops and inform the participants about the positive contributions of your hospitals. Since you have been making sincere efforts by subserving the social interests, the projection process would be proactive.

2) Organising patients relations programme:

Being a manager, you are responsible for organising Patients Relations Programme where you get-together face-to-face communicating with the patients will help you in detailing and exposing the positive contributions of your hospitals, in addition, to the feedback that you get from them regarding the constraints and difficulties they feel. This would help you in understanding opinion survey.

3) Get-together with the opinion leaders:

For projecting the image of your hospitals, it is essential that you develop rapport with the opinion leaders, social activists, and academics, writing on health problems found almost in all the areas. Opinion leaders are those who have a say in the society and therefore whatever they feel about your hospitals will help you in the projection process. The main thing you have to remember is to influence them and on the basis of your professional excellence, you can do it effectively.

4) Contacting philanthropists:

For the projection of a positive image, you need to influence the philanthropists who have love for Mankind. To be more specific in the healthcare services, we find their feelings and comments more impact generating. Since the philanthropists are engaged all the time in the social welfare activities, it is quite natural that the people have trust on them.
5) Contact with local population:
For the projection of a positive image, it is also essential that you develop personal and close contact with important personalities in your command area. You explain to them the positive contributions of your hospitals and they recommend prospects as and when they get an opportunity.

6) Due weightage to social advertising:
Since you contribute significantly to the process of social transformation by changing the nature and character of your advertisement, it is natural that you get the cooperation of stakeholders in general. You have to promote social advertising by creating mass awareness and narrating positive contributions of your hospitals. Advertisements related to child care, rural women, family welfare, sanitation, healthcare in general, nutritional awareness etc. would help you in many ways.

7) Rapport with educational institutions:
For projection of a positive image, it is also essential that you develop rapport with local universities, Institutes, colleges, schools and other institutions to inform the public about the positive contributions of your hospitals.

Sales Promotion:
Since we talk about marketing the healthcare services, it is quite natural that we also discuss the sales promotion considered to be an important constituent of the promotion mix. In the hospitals/healthcare organisations by way of sales promotion, we should gift or offer other incentives to both the parties, viz., providers and the users. Hospital personnel play the role of providers and the stakeholders are the users. Of course, the hospitals or the healthcare organisations need to use this component of promotion with a fresh
approach. If we advocate strongly in favour of professional and personal commitments, it is natural that we also talk about incentives to be offered to them for their positive contributions to the development of organisations and subserving of the interests of users. Here we discuss the sales promotion tools even in the hospitals and healthcare organisations. The promotion incentives to the hospital personnel for their outstanding contributions will induce others also to contribute substantially. The low echelon of hospital personnel deserve due attention as their contribution to the process of development is found impact generating.

In addition to the hospital personnel, there is need for promotional incentives even for the users specially belonging to the low income group or poor segments of the society. When we talk about sales promotion, it is quite natural that limited incentives effective for limited period are offered when the pressure on hospitals or influx of patients in the hospitals is found low. Offering of small gifts and concessions during that period would help hospitals even in serving those segments who failed in availing of the services because of fee or other considerations.

Personal Selling:

We find personal selling an important constituent of the promotion mix where the instrumentality of an individual plays a vital role in promoting services. We are well aware of the difference between the personal selling and salesmanship. By salesmanship, our focus is on the skill and excellence of sales personnel but in the context of personal selling we find involvement or participation of not only the sales people but even a hospital staff of high echelon is supposed to be involved in the process.
In the context of personal selling, it is important that the promoters communicate with prospective buyers or potential customers/patients/stakeholders in general regarding the outstanding services, salient features of hospitals or healthcare organisations which would, of course, be based on a comparative analysis of the contributions of other competitive hospitals. Essentially, you are not supposed to speak anything against your competitors but you have a right of making a comparative analysis of the features of your own services. Since we go through the problem of hospitals, it is quite natural that your communications, deliberations are based on specialities or the extraordinary facilities to the patients or attendants which are not made available by other institutions. The front-line personnel of the hospitals, the receptionists, the nursing staff, the para-medical personnel and even the doctors and managers need to communicate effectively because there is nothing wrong in communicating the correct status. In the context of personal selling, the managerial staff are expected to play a contributory role because they are supposed to be excellent and creative in communicating and influencing the prospects or the potential patients. A hospital manager needs to accept the responsibility of communicating with the industrial or organisational customers.

In the group of customers, they belong to the large-sized customers not directly but using the services indirectly. They provide an opportunity to their employees to avail of the services of hospitals and the medical bills are reimbursed to the hospitals or healthcare organisations. In this case, we find prospects for a big business and a hospital manager requires to motivate them so that they continue to make use of their services. We find personal selling very much instrumental in the process of getting large number of customers provided a hospital manager and his/her team evince interest in the process.

These facts make it clear that personal selling may be effective if the front-line staff, such as the receptionists, staff at the payment counters, nursing staff, para-medical staff and even the doctors and
managerial staff give due weightage to influence and motivate the patients and attendants. The personal selling is based on personal relations in which the behavioural profile of employees play an effective role. It is against this background that we need to use this component of the promotion mix on a priority basis.

**Word-of-mouth-promotion:**

This component of promotion-mix is based on the positive or negative contributions of hospitals/healthcare organisations. If we find hospital personnel offering quality services, showing sympathy and empathy, decency in behaviour, charging reasonably; the word-of-mouth-communications act positively. Conversely, if we find hospitals offering substandard services, misbehaving with the patients and attendants, generating tension in them, it is quite natural that this tool of the promotion-mix acts in negatively. This makes it clear that the instrumentality of word-of-mouth promotion is considerably influenced by the quality of product profile of hospitals, and in addition, the behavioural profile adds additional attractions and you win the heart of patients and attendants who in exchange promote your services.

The advertising may be ineffective, the publicity may be insensitive, the sales promotion may be unproductive and even the personal selling may nor may not be proactive but without exception, word-of-mouth promotion is extraordinarily effective if you serve satisfactorily; it is positive asset and if you serve half-heartedly; it is negative. This makes it essential that a hospital manager tries his best to improve the quality of product profile because this provides him an opportunity to show the excellence of hospitals.

Word-of-mouth promotion is an exercise of communicating favourably and therefore being a manager you are supposed to make use of this component of the promotion mix. We also call this mix of the promotion mix.
word-of-mouth communication. The satisfied group of patients or attendants promote your business indirectly and you know nothing about it. In the hospital/healthcare organisations, we find this component of promotion very helpful in the promotion of business if the hospital personnel in general evince personal interests in offering quality services, showing decency in behaviour and making all possible efforts to fulfil the expectations of patients and attendants. But this component of the promotion mix also damages or harms your interest if you are not particular about the quality of product profile and no one would like to compromise with the quality. How to increase the number of word-of-mouth promoters is your important functional responsibility necessitating the cooperation of all the personnel engaged in generating and processing the services.

Telemarketing:

Of late, telemarketing is contributing substantially to the process of promoting and selling. Scientific inventions and innovations open up new avenues for the development of information technology. Globally, telemarketing blossomed in the later part of 1960s. With the introduction of inbound and outbound Wide Area Telephone Services (WATS), the avenues could be broadened for the use of telephonic services for the marketing of goods and services. Gradually, we find development of television and this could inject new life and strength to telemarketing. Automated dialing and Recorded Message Players (ADRMPs) can dial numbers, play a voice-activated advertising message and take orders from the interested customers or users on an answering machine device or by forwarding the call to an operator. Thus we find telephone an important instrument playing a leading role in promoting the business. The sensitivity of telemarketing increased further with the advent of TV which is now a growing medium for direct marketing both through network and cable channels. TV is used in two ways for marketing goods or services, first through direct
response advertising and the second through home shopping channels where an entire TV programme or
even the whole channel is dedicated to selling goods or services.

Like other goods, manufacturing or service generating organisations even hospitals/healthcare organisations
can use telemarketing for promoting or even for business purposes. The big or large-sized hospitals can
have an independent channel dedicated to the working of hospitals, fees for different types of services,
accommodation available, arrangements for attendants etc. The significant developments in the field of
satellite communications have sharpened the instrumentality of telemarketing even in the Indian
perspective. It is against this background that, of late, we find e-commerce or e-business gaining popularity.
The Health Department of State Governments or the Union Government can promote leading hospitals
efficacious enough in taking the support of telemarketing. If the big hospitals so desire a separate network
can be developed which would benefit even the smaller hospitals.

In the context of telemarketing, we find telemarketing playing an important role. The hospitals/healthcare
organisations telecasting their messages on the screen of TV are benefited in two ways; firstly the patients
or attendants come to know about the information, services, fee structure, amenities and facilities and
secondly, the prospects can be persuaded effectively. If perceived in the right directions and persuaded with
creative dialogues of telemarketers they can transform the potential customers into actual customers.
The instrumentality of telemarketing is substantially influenced by creativity. To be more specific in respect
of healthcare services, we expect a lot from the telemarketers who are expected to stimulate the impulse of
the patients or attendants interested in using the services of hospitals. We cannot deny the fact that the
instrumentality of this new component of promotion substantially depends upon the quality of telephonic as
well as the telecasting services. In the Indian context, the telemarketing may be useful to educate and
influence the rural customers if we develop the network. It is prime responsibility of a government is to ensure quality health care services, the government hospitals promote telemarketing because this would not only be with regard to the government hospitals but the leading hospitals would also be included. To promote the health services, the telemarketing needs to be encouraged in government as well as the private hospitals.

**Strategic areas in promotion :**

Your task of informing, sensitising, influencing, winning and retaining the customers/patients needs a professional excellence of world class. Since the users of the services in a majority of the cases have been educationally and financially weak, you need to promote creativity. You live in a age of technological sophistication where the pioneers and innovators are always promoted. By innovating the product profile, you have enriched the potentials of your hospitals to offer world class healthcare services. Now it is pertinent that you create mass awareness so that on the one hand you succeed in attracting their attention while on the other hand also minimise the possibilities of generating multi-dimensional diseases. It is essential that you promote with a sense. There are some thrust areas gravitating your priority attention and requiring due treatment. Being a professionally sound manager, you are expected to formulate such a strategy that makes the promotional measures effective.

The following strategic decisions would sharpen the instrumentality of promotion :

**Inculcating mass awareness :**

You are well aware that the society for which you promote the healthcare services has been facing the problem of high level of illiteracy which has made your task of creating mass awareness more difficult. Many health problems are due to ignorance or unawareness. We cannot deny that water-borne, food-borne,
pollution-borne health problems can be substantially regulated if the masses develop awareness or consciousness. Contaminated water aggravates health problems and proves to be an important source for the water-borne disease. Like this, a number of diseases are caused by the consumption of unhealthy food items. What to talk of the illiterate segment of the society when we find even the educated and literate segments unaware of the nutritional value for maintaining a sound health. Of course, we find eating/food habits play an incremental role in the generation or regulation of diseases. With the passage of time and increasing impact of corporate culture on our food habits, we find a craze for fast food specially among the rich and the young.

The latest in the area is “FAST FOOD” which has resulted in nutritional deficiency and causing poor health conditions leading to the different types of diseases. Of course, we need variety in food since no single food item provides us with all the nutrients we need. Cereals like rice or wheat which form the staple food give us only a fraction of nutritional requirements. We need to supplement it with a number of vitamins and minerals to make our diet balanced or proportionate. We need to remember, “larger our diet-sheet, the better our health will be.” Carbohydrates, fats, water, minerals, vitamins are the different nutrients found in food stuff and we need to make them proportionate to our requirements.

The most important thing in the process of promotion is to generate mass awareness and our promotional messages need creativity in the process so that we find the public well aware of healthy living conditions. In addition to food, water, sanitation, environmental pollution, our messages also need to focus on the population problem. To be more specific communicable diseases need a priority attention while creating mass awareness.
**Instrumentalising personal promotion:**

In this process, it is necessary that we assign due weightage to personal promotion measures. The personal promoters like doctors, para-medical staff, nursing staff and even managerial staff have professional and situational responsibilities of activating the promotional measures. We need the constitution of a team of efficient, dedicated and committed hospital personnel related to almost all the echelons. If we find hospital personnel in general and the doctors in particular interested in promotion, the effectiveness of our promotional measures would be considerably increased. The secondary, tertiary hospitals and even the big private hospitals and institutes are required to promote healthcare services. The preventive services of hospitals/healthcare institutions should make it essential that the hospital personnel with the help of creative promotional messages and appeals, make sincere and honest efforts to promote the services so that the pressure on hospitals is sizeably minimised. Your professional excellence would help in the stimulation process and the prospects would come to know about the measures to maintain a sound health.

**Technology-driven promotion:**

In this information revolution age, it is quite natural that we utilise the information and communication technologies for activating promotional efforts. Of late, we find the print and telecast media in an advanced state. The hospitals/healthcare organisations need to advertise and publicise with the support of communications technologies. We find audio-visual exposure more effective in sensitising the prospects. The rural segment, and specially the child and women segment, need due care of healthcare manager. We appreciate the positive contributions of modern print technology as a tool of promotion. The latest developments in the area are e-commerce and internet services found more effective in the process of informing and sensing the masses. In addition, the concept of telemarketing would help hospitals in promoting the services in a right fashion. The concept of cable-marketing would be instrumental in the
process. Thus, it is necessary that the hospitals/healthcare organisations take the support of advanced and sophisticated technologies not only for medicare but even for creative promotion for developing mass awareness and adding a new chapter in health care communications.

**Innovations in promotion:**

Unless the hospitals and healthcare organisations further the process of promotional efforts to be innovative, the results are not likely to be satisfactory. Promotional efforts in a true sense should be a fair mix of curative and preventive measures. Of course you have to innovate the product profile of the hospitals but at the same time it will be effective if you make the processes of informing and sensing the patients/prospects creative. Creativity bears the efficacy of sensitising the prospects. Out of the available measures for promotion, such as advertising, publicity, sales promotion, personal selling, word-of-mouth promotion and telemarketing, you need to select the most effective constituents in tune with your changing requirements.

It is quite natural that the promotional strategy varies according to the changing segment and the disease profile. You have to make your promotional budget result oriented because the services should be affordable. Maintaining cost-effectiveness in the process of promoting the healthcare services is your prime responsibility and being a manager you bear the responsibility of ensuring that a non-optimal budget does not jeopardise your positive efforts. You need a fresh look, innovative measures and creative efforts. How to increase the sensitivity of your promotional efforts is an important functional responsibility before you which requires satisfactory performance.

**An overriding priority to the organisational customers:**

While promoting, you have to be aware that the large-sized customers are sensitised effectively. We are well aware that some of the industries and institutions make provisions for treatment of their employees in
a particular hospital. They reimburse the medical bills of their employees; and this is an important source for generating revenues for hospitals, specially under the private sector. Of course you need to educate the rural masses at the same time you have also the responsibility of exploring new avenues for revenues and to enrich your hospitals to bear the social costs on account of free medical treatment facilities to the weaker segment of the society.

These facts make it clear that as a manager you need to have to take strategic decisions to be result-oriented. Of late, this has become possible because we have professionally sound advertising personnel in addition to sophisticated communication technologies.

The ultimate task before a hospital manager is to provide an effective promotional strategy that informs people successfully and plays a dominating role in projecting a positive image of hospitals.

In hospitals/Health care organisations, the word-of-mouth promotion or communication plays an outstanding role which is the result of a team-work, team-spirit and team-culture. The satisfied group of patients/users act like a hidden sales force. If quality healthcare services are made available to them and they communicate their experiences to the friends, relatives, spouse who if motivated, prefer to use the services of that hospital as and when the circumstances warrant. Thus hospital or healthcare services depend on the instrumentality of a team.

These facts make it clear that almost all the constituents of promotion are instrumental but the word-of-mouth recommendations become more impact generating depending on the quality of services available to the users. The advertisement budget, public relations activities, tools of sales promotion instrumentality of personal promoters and services of telemarketers will hardly motivate the users if they feel that quality healthcare services are not made available to them. It is against this background that while formulating a strategy for promotion, a healthcare manager is not required to formulate a non-optimal budget for
promotion. In a true sense, the quality of services of hospitals or healthcare organisations proves to be a base and if you find the base weak even if the promotional efforts are innovative and technologically-supported, the results or the sensitising process will not be effective. However, a hospital manager is required to think about promotion and to formulate a strategy for the same so that the patients come to know about the changing services and behavioural profile. In the sphere of healthcare education for generating mass awareness personal promotion occupies a place of outstanding significance and a hospital manager needs to show his/her professional excellence to sensitise the masses in the right direction.
Fig: PROMOTION PROGRAMMES IN HOSPITALS

Create Mass Awareness Instrumentalising Personal Promotion

WORD OF MOUTH PUBLICITY

Advertising and Publicity

Rural Illiterate Prospects

Urban Prospects

Personal Promotion