

ANNE KLEIN COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

Keeping Business on Track One in a Series of Award-Winning Solutions

The Challenge:

Preserve the Presbyterian Medical Center's reputation and reaffirm its commitment to delivering quality healthcare to the community following a decision to reduce expenses by outsourcing nonmedical functions and transferring 330 staff to new employers.

Results:

- By the end of "announcement day," everyone internally and externally appeared to understand that management's decision was to preserve jobs and avoid needless layoffs, while maintaining the hospital's viability and effectiveness.
- No incidents, disruptions or work stoppages occurred; patient care was not compromised.
- Media coverage was minimal; the *Philadelphia Inquirer* chose not to cover the story.
- Later, because of the hospital's credibility, news media elected to pull negative union advertising when advised the ads were incorrect and potentially libelous.
- The program received a PR Professionals of Southern N.J. Berny award in Crisis Communications.

Background:

Decreasing reimbursements from government and private insurers compel hospitals to find new cost cutting strategies. Such measures can be misunderstood if not communicated clearly. This major Philadelphia medical center decided to focus on its core business – delivery of medical care – and reduce costs by turning non-medical functions (food service, housekeeping and security) over to outside experts. Management needed to be sensitive to employee reactions and community perceptions.

The Campaign:

Responding to a call for help, Anne Klein Communications Group developed a crisis communications campaign addressing internal and external audiences. A strategy was designed to gain acceptance among employees and forestall or minimize potential disruption of hospital operations. Externally, the plan sought to retain the loyalty and support of the community, assure media coverage was fair and accurate, and prevent rumors.

AKCG quickly conducted research that showed the hospital's outsourcing approach was unique. Interviews with community leaders and the senior leadership led the agency to develop a communications strategy keying on the hospital CEO's credibility and the employees' deep sense of loyalty. The CEO (with the VP for human resources) made the announcements personally in a single day. They met first with affected managers and then with the employees in groups, encouraging their questions and comments. The hospital made psychologists and a chaplain available for counseling, and had management staff on call 24 hours a day to answer questions. The gaining employers set up an on-site information center and provided detailed informational materials. Although a news release announced the action publicly, the media were not interested because most employees kept their jobs.

To learn more about how Anne Klein Communications Group can help you respond effectively to crises and maintain positive relationships with all audiences, please call and ask for Anne Klein or John Moscatelli.