

SHSMD26 CONNECTIONS

Health Care Marketing, Strategy & Communications

American Hospital Association Conference
September 27-29 ⚓ Baltimore

Elevating Your Healthcare Brand: Building a Thought Leadership PR Program That Works

- **Samantha Williams**, VP of External Communications, Novant Health
- **Stacie Saunders**, Director of Content Strategy, Novant Health





Session Overview

Thought Leadership Strategy

Position internal experts as credible thought leaders to build trust and stand out in healthcare.

Four Ps Framework

The program centers on People, Positioning, Platforms, and Promotion for effective PR.

- Novant Health Case Study
 - Investing in experts increases brand authority, media coverage, and influences key decision-makers.
- Sustaining Engagement
 - Techniques for securing executive buy-in and maintaining leader participation ensure lasting success.

Defining Thought Leadership

*“It’s about being **authentic and empowering**. It’s about **influence**—getting other people to **think differently** about something specific. It’s much more than just generating content and commenting on world events and trends. Thought leaders **bring alternate views and insightful points to the table**.”*

– Forbes Magazine

Thought Leadership Is...

- Fresh perspective
- Authentic and empowering
- Data-supported
- Newsworthy
- Long-term and consistent
- Accessible and focused
- A campaign



Thought Leadership Is Not...

- Internal messaging
- A sales pitch
- A press release
- An event
- Episodic
- An afterthought
- Without risk



Foundations of Successful Thought Leadership

Key Attributes

- Individual and organizational Thought Leadership are mutually supportive
- Exceptionally experienced and authoritative in subject
- Prominently engaged and active in the industry
- Shares insights and opinions authentically and regularly



Programmatic Elements

- Leader buy-in and accountability – Executive champion(s)
- Translates internal initiatives for external stakeholders
- Tools and resources to support Thought Leadership
- Strategically targeted and consistent
- Robust tracking and analysis to measure progress and drive adaptation



Four Ps Framework



Positioning



People



Platforms



Promotion



Positioning

Crafting Narrative Themes

Positioning focuses on creating authentic stories aligned with organizational goals to engage target audiences effectively.

Developing Key Messages

Key messages highlight the organization's unique value, expertise, and align with mission and industry trends.

Consistent Communication

Ensuring consistency across communication channels strengthens brand positioning and stakeholder engagement.

Differentiation in Marketplace

Clear positioning helps healthcare brands stand out and attract media and stakeholder interest.



People



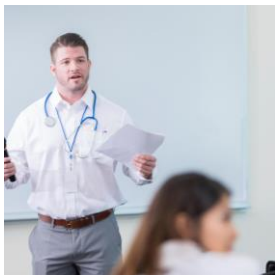
Identifying Internal Experts

Recruit internal experts like clinicians, researchers, and executives with deep knowledge and communication skills.



Media Training and Engagement

Provide media training and create opportunities for experts to engage effectively with external audiences.



Building Trust and Authority

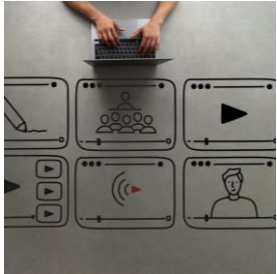
Invest in the right people to establish trust and authority that resonates with healthcare stakeholders.

Platforms



Diverse Communication Channels

Platforms include traditional media, social media, blogs, podcasts, webinars, and speaking engagements for content dissemination.



Audience and Spokesperson Alignment

Choosing platforms involves considering audience preferences and strengths of spokespeople to amplify expert voices effectively.



Content Optimization

Tailoring content to each platform's format and audience expectations is key to maximizing reach and impact.



Promotion

Amplification Tactics

Promotion uses PR, media outreach, and content syndication to boost visibility and engagement effectively.

Strategic Planning

Develop promotional plans that align with communication strategy and utilize platform strengths and spokespeople.

Measurement and Analytics

Use measurement and analytics to track promotional performance and refine tactics over time for better outcomes.

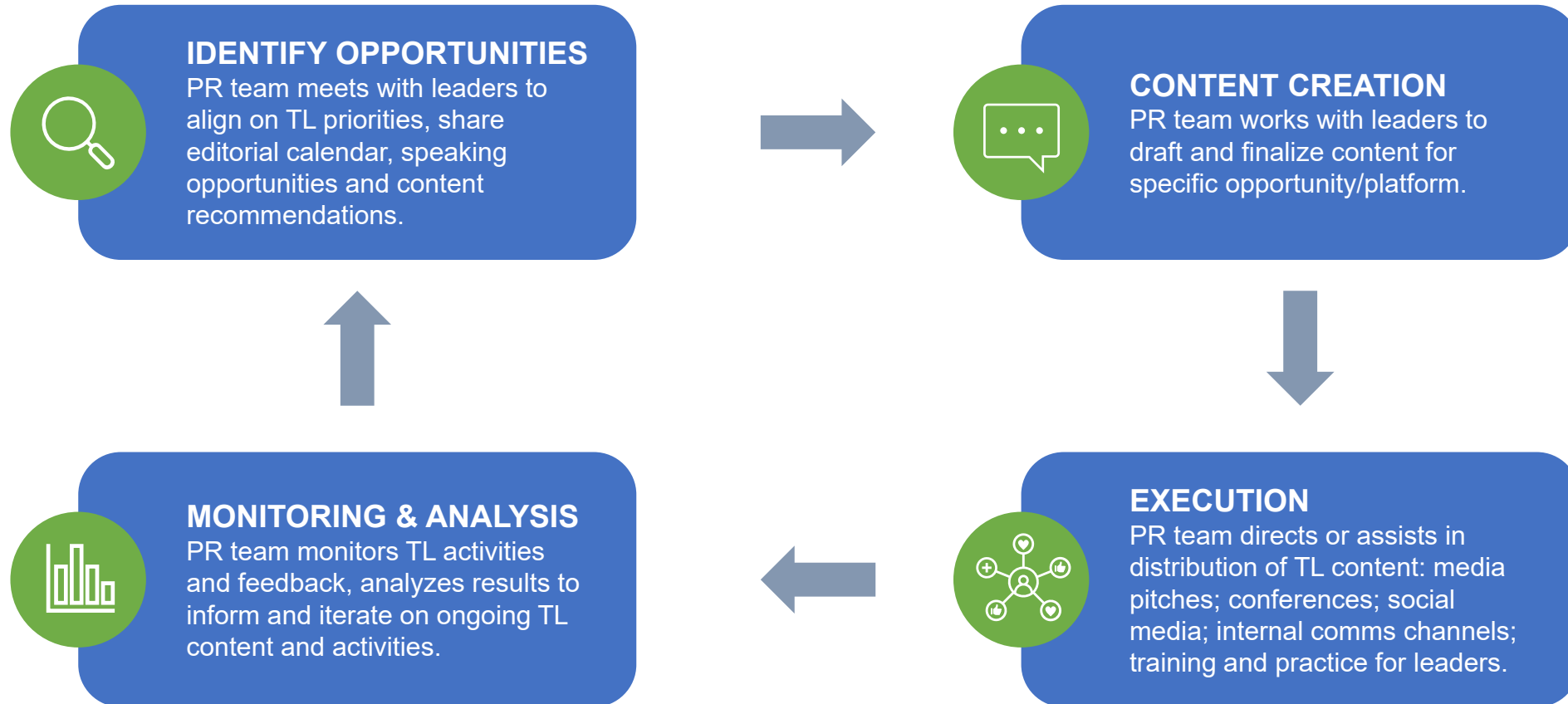
Impact on Healthcare Brands

Effective promotion increases media coverage, enhances brand reputation, and strengthens stakeholder relationships.

Case Study

Novant Health Executive Thought Leadership Program

Thought Leadership Cycle



Positioning: Pillar + Tier Integration



Tier	1 Reputation Driver: Most important business drivers	2 Core Growth: Key growth drivers with operational capacity	3 Selective Support: Mid-tier opportunities & sub-market priorities	4 Baseline Support: Low-tier opportunities & hyper-local priorities
Focus	▪ Clinician-Led & Team Member-Driven ▪ NHCPPS ▪ Care Transformation	▪ Health Equity ▪ Care Partnerships	▪ Specialty Pharmacy ▪ Employer solutions	▪ Employee Well-being ▪ Culture of Belonging ▪ ASCs
Pillar	▪ Safety & Quality ▪ Team Well-being ▪ Patient Experience ▪ Operational Experience ▪ Expand Access (Growth)	▪ Safety & Quality ▪ Patient Experience ▪ Operational Experience ▪ Expand Access (Growth)	▪ Safety & Quality ▪ Team Well-being ▪ Patient Experience ▪ Expand Access (Growth)	▪ Safety & Quality ▪ Team Well-being ▪ Operational Experience

TIER 1: Reputation Driver

Focus	Thought Leader	Audience	Channels
▪ Clinician-Led and Team Member-Driven • Workforce development • Dyad leadership model	▪ Pam Oliver, MD ▪ Seb Girard ▪ Kim Henderson ▪ Denise Mihal	▪ Clinical candidates ▪ Trade associations ▪ Secondary: NH workforce, Board members, Donors	▪ Professional conferences ▪ Speaking Opportunities ▪ Awards ▪ Media – local/national/trade ▪ Social Media ▪ Owned Media ▪ Internal
▪ NHCPPS • Prior authorization barriers • Reimbursement challenges	▪ Sid Fletcher, MD ▪ David Tyson	▪ Policy-makers (local/state/fed) ▪ Trade associations ▪ Other Providers/Payers ▪ Secondary: Board members, Donors	▪ Media – local/national/trade ▪ Professional conferences ▪ Speaking Opportunities ▪ Awards ▪ Social Media ▪ Owned Media ▪ Internal
▪ Care Transformation • ED bypass program • Ochsner partnership	▪ Carl Armato ▪ John Mann, MD ▪ Sanjay Gupta	▪ Policy-makers (local/state/fed) ▪ Other Providers/Payers ▪ Partner Prospects ▪ General public ▪ Secondary: Donors	▪ Speaking Opportunities ▪ HR-focused media ▪ Healthcare trades ▪ Social Media ▪ Owned Media ▪ Internal

TIER 1: Deep Dive

Timing	Channel Details	Focus	Thought Leader	Messages/Themes
1/13-1/16	JPM 2025	Care Transformation	Carl Armato	- Putting patients first in everything we do - Collaboration with physicians - Innovation as a catalyst for healthcare transformation
Feb Edition (Jan. Pitch)	Modern Healthcare: Insurance/ Payers Politics/Policy	NHCPPS: Reimbursement challenges	Sidney Fletcher, MD David Tyson	- Safeguard the patient-clinician relationship - Promote care quality, patient satisfaction and affordability - Eliminate burdensome regulatory requirements - Ensure equitable reimbursement
Feb. 9-15	Sepsis Survivor Week	NHCPPS: Sepsis Prior Auth White Paper	David Tyson	- Promote care quality - Collaboration with physicians - Eliminate burdensome regulatory requirements - The importance of public policy to support quality care
March Edition (Jan. Pitch)	Becker's: The Great Hospitals Issue	Clinician-Led and Team Member-Driven	Pam Oliver, MD Seb Girard	- Clinician Morale and Engagement - Talent Development and Retention - Collaboration with physicians - Valuing our team
April Edition (Feb. Pitch)	Becker's: Where Hospitals are Investing in Care Technology	Care Transformation	John Mann, MD Sanjay Gupta	- Collaboration with physicians - Innovation as a catalyst for healthcare transformation - ED bypass program
April 14 Edition (Feb. Pitch)	Modern Healthcare: Insurance/ Payers Post-acute/Hospital-at-home	NHCPPS: Reimbursement challenges	Sidney Fletcher, MD David Tyson	- Eliminate burdensome regulatory requirements - Ensure equitable reimbursement
June Edition (April Pitch)	Becker's: TL - CEOs and CFOs on the Payer-Provider Relationship Today	NHCPPS: Reimbursement challenges	Carl Armato Sidney Fletcher, MD David Tyson	- Safeguard the patient-clinician relationship - Promote care quality, patient satisfaction and affordability - Eliminate burdensome regulatory requirements - Ensure equitable reimbursement

More of a daily grind than a magic bullet...

The Before:

Comments and coverage focused on financial growth, industry weaknesses

Traditional Hospital Walls Keep Tumbling Down

JPM 2025: Health systems eye \$30 billion revenue target

Hospital competition heats up as capacity wanes

The After:

Coverage is solutions-oriented, highlights innovation

How Novant Health is redefining hospitals' place in the care ecosystem

HOW NOVANT HEALTH IS TACKLING RISING COSTS WITHOUT COMPROMISING MISSION

Novant boldly presents plan to become leading Southeast healthcare system

How Novant cut sepsis mortality in half — and why it's calling for policy change

Using Data And AI To Improve Outcomes At Novant Health

Also the After:

Not every headline is a win

Novant aims to more than double ASC presence

HL SHORTS: HOW NOVANT HEALTH IS USING TECHNOLOGY TO DRIVE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

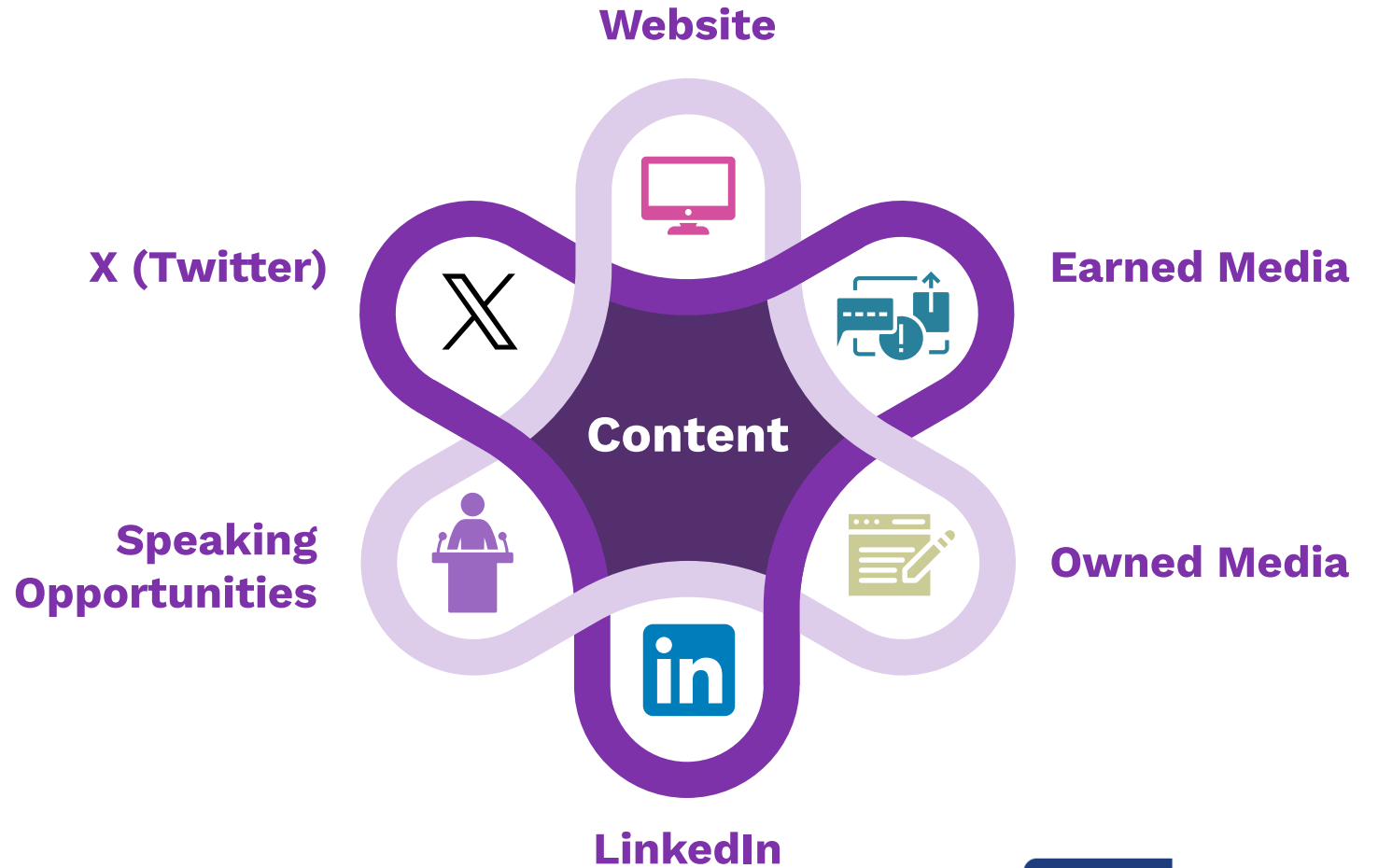
ANALYSIS | BY [JAY ASSER](#) | JULY 28, 2025

Health systems wrestle with the 'true cost of care'

Platforms

The COPE strategy (Create Once Publish Everywhere) will be deployed to further support consistency and alignment, while streamlining overall content development efforts.

This approach helps take full advantage of all messaging and creative (messaging, video, images, etc.) to generate awareness and credibility for the Center and your initiatives.



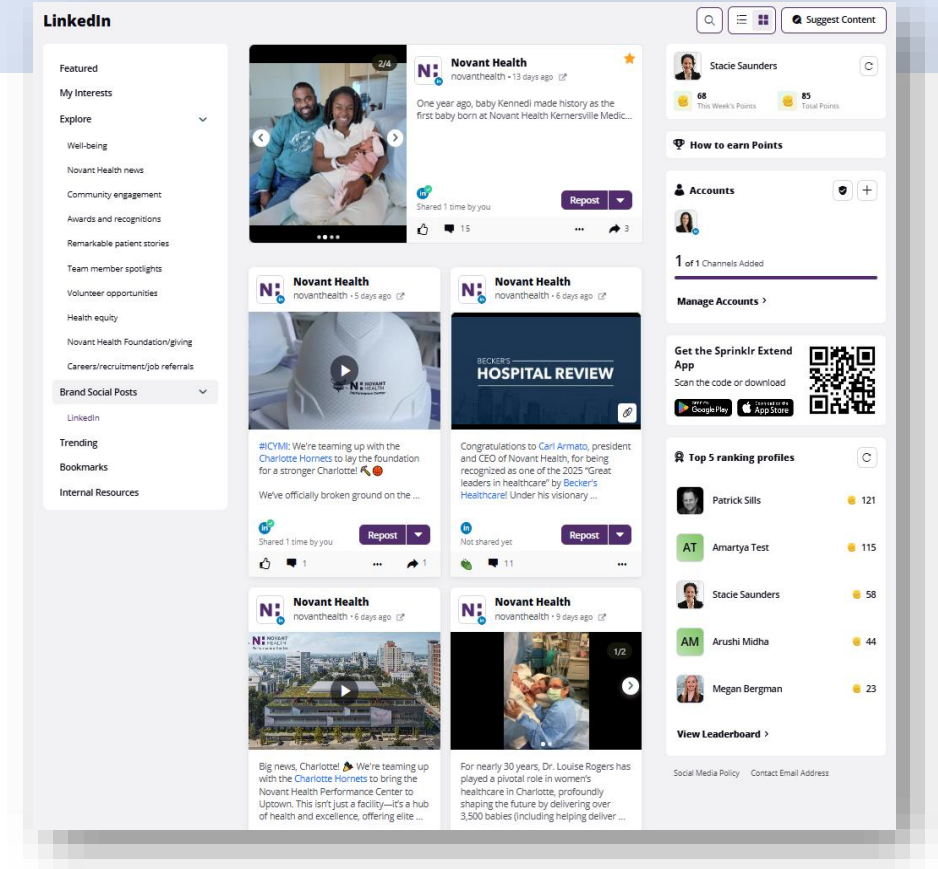
Platforms: Enabling leaders to amplify messaging

Leveraging Novant Health's authentic ambassadors to carry our brand message beyond our owned channels.

Curated content library of pre-approved posts allows thought leaders to seamlessly share Novant Health messaging with their LinkedIn networks.

What we learned

- **Consistent presence:** Over **1,100 posts** in 2025 show steady engagement and visibility for Novant Health across LinkedIn.
- **High-impact engagement:** **1.15K comments** and **6.28K link clicks** indicate meaningful conversations, not just passive reactions.
- **Cross-leader amplification:** Leaders liking, commenting or resharing each other's posts has expanded reach and credibility.
- **Momentum-building themes:** Posts spotlighting team members, leadership reflections, innovation updates and community impact consistently perform well.
- **Recognition and authority:** Highlighting awards, honors and achievements has elevated the profile of Novant Health leadership nationally.
- **Collective brand lift:** Combined **reach of 2.94M** demonstrates the power of a coordinated leadership voice across the organization.
- **Thoughtful content mix:** Leaders are successfully sharing stories, insights, and expertise that resonate with audiences.



Sample social content



Sebastien Girard, MBA • 1st
Chief People Officer | Novant Health
1w • 🌐

Halloween may be over, but this Ted Lasso quote is still haunting me:

"Do you believe in ghosts, Ted?"
"I do, but more importantly, I think they need to believe in themselves."

Leave it to Ted Lasso to drop some Halloween wisdom that hits deeper than expected.

We all have moments when doubt sneaks up on us, like "ghosts" that whisper we're not enough. The best thing we can do as leaders is help others believe in themselves again.

For me, the catalyst to my career's successes happened the day I started believing in myself. Always bet on yourself!

Here's to lifting each other up and chasing away a few ghosts along the way.





Sebastien Girard
14.37k
+3

 You and 137 others

11 comments



Pamela Oliver, MD • Following
EVP Novant Health & Chief Medical Officer | Community Health Adv...
1w • 🌐

What an incredible day at the **Novant Health** Leadership Summit in Charlotte! It was energizing to connect with team members, celebrate our shared commitment to well-being and reflect on the impact we make together every day.

Throughout the day, we heard countless examples of how our care teams anticipate the needs of our patients and go above and beyond. Stories like these make me proud to be part of this organization.



 You and 96 others



Sanjay Gupta • 1st
Board Member, Chief Transformation Officer, Business Leader, Chief ...
2w • 🌐

When someone you love is in the hospital, you want to be part of the conversations about their care. But work, childcare, distance and other responsibilities don't always make that possible since you have no idea when the physician will be there. That's why I'm especially proud of what we're doing at **Novant Health** with Q-rounds.

Q-rounds gives family members an estimated rounding time, lets them know when the care team is on the way, and allows them to join physician rounds remotely. Instead of hearing about the care plan later, they can participate in the conversation, ask questions, and hear it firsthand alongside their loved one and the care team.

We've already launched Q-rounds across several pediatric units and recently became the first health system to bring it into adult inpatient care. While I'm proud of that milestone, what matters most is what it means for the people we serve. Our very first family to use Q-rounds at Novant Health was the father of a two-month-old infant. He wanted to participate in rounds but was home caring for his other young children and couldn't be at the hospital that morning. Instead of wondering what he had missed, he received a notification when the care team was ready, joined remotely, asked questions and participated in the discussion about his baby's care.

Moments like this remind us that healthcare is built on human connection. Technology shouldn't replace that connection, it should make it possible, even when families are separated by work, distance or oceans. Since its launch, nearly 350 families have used Q-rounds remotely to join their loved one's care conversations.

I'm grateful to the physicians, nurses, operational leaders and technology teams making this possible, and I look forward to expanding Q-rounds so more patients and families can stay connected during one of the most important conversations of the day.

<https://nh.team/4xoarkC>

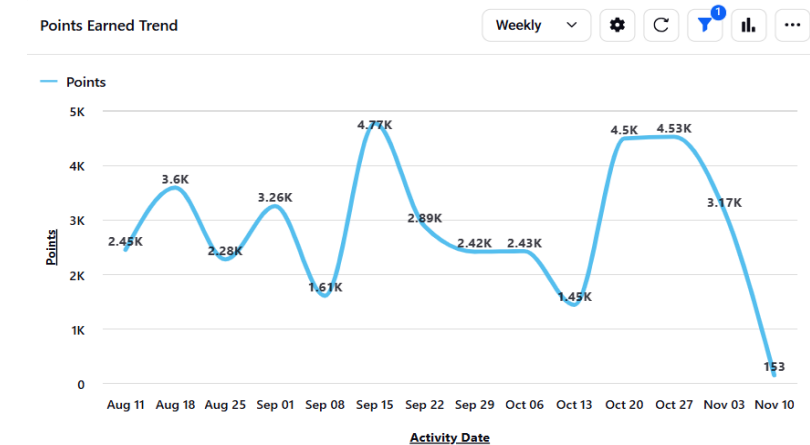
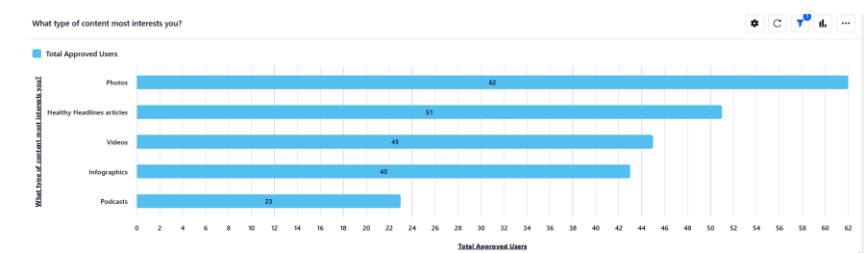


Reimagining patient rounds: Novant Health first in the U.S. to use real-time rounds technology...
novanthealth.org

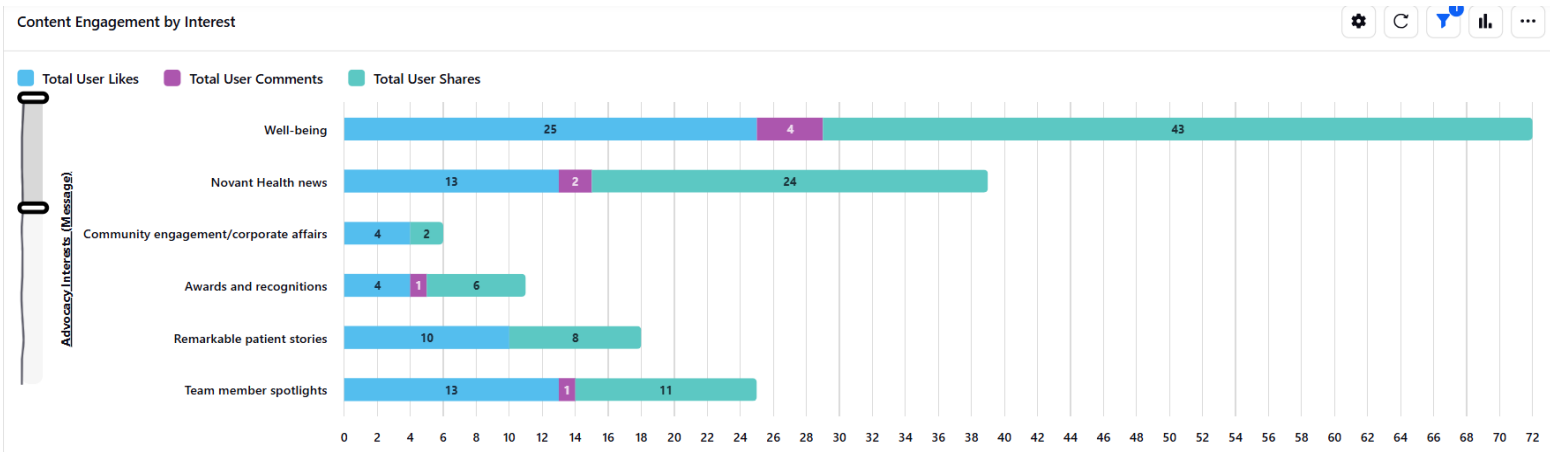
 You and 49 others

5 comments · 7 reposts

Data-informed content strategy



Actual Post	Volume of Shared Messages on Channel	Total Likes on Channel	Total Comments on Channel	Total Shares on Channel	Total Engagements on Channel	Reach on Channel (Estimated)
	117	2.1K	203	0	2.3K	538.27K
 A... Am... 2:13 PM Sep 17, 2025 Post for Frank Emory: Vernon Jordan Award This past weekend, I was	1	313	79	0	392	4.65K
 A... Am... 9:04 AM Aug 8, 2025 National Book Lovers Day post for Frank Emory Saturday was National Book	2	225	29	0	254	9.13K



Sustaining Participation

Executive Buy-In

Keeping executive support by highlighting ROI and alignment with organizational goals is essential for program success.

Pilot Cohort Engagement

Building a pilot group of active contributors demonstrates early success and generates momentum.

Incentives and Recognition

Providing recognition encourages sustained participation.

Ongoing Training and Feedback

Regular feedback, training, and onboarding keep contributors motivated and aligned with program goals.



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Questions?

- Please be sure to complete the session evaluation on the mobile app!

Samantha Williams

VP of External Communications at Novant Health

Samantha Williams leads enterprise communications, content strategy, reputation and issues management for Novant Health. Translating the complexity of healthcare into compelling narratives that build trust and foster human connection has been a decades-long passion first discovered during her time with the U.S. Peace Corps. Samantha holds degrees in Political Science and Spanish from the University of Florida. She also holds an MBA with a concentration in digital marketing from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.



[Connect with me!](#)

Stacie Saunders

Director of Content at Novant Health

Stacie Saunders is a seasoned marketing and communications leader with over 25 years of experience driving strategic PR, content, and brand initiatives that elevate organizational impact and engagement. At Novant Health, she currently serves as Director of Content, where she oversees brand journalism, social media, multimedia production and digital amplification programs. Her data-driven, customer-centric approach ensures every campaign not only reaches target audiences but also builds lasting trust and credibility in a complex healthcare landscape.



[Connect with me!](#)