

WILLINGWAY HOSPITAL: A NEW MARKET?

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Willingway Hospital, located in Statesboro, Georgia, is an Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Center that has felt the effects of the weakened economy and a bit of bad press recently. Although the facility is a hospital and therefore, primarily exists to treat those struggling with addiction, Willingway is still a private business and relies on profits in order to maintain the standard of service that patients have come to expect from this nationally renowned hospital. Willingway is known for the intriguing history of its founders, its unusual culture, and the devoted alumni who stay involved at Willingway even after their treatment has been completed. In order to attract more patients, Willingway C.E.O. Jimmy Mooney has become curious about the marketing potential within the local college student populations. Located in relatively close proximity to dozens of educational institutions, looking into these institutions as potential new target markets is adequately justified.

INTRODUCTION

When the morning newspaper hit his desk, Jimmy Mooney, C.E.O. of Willingway Hospital, knew that this day was going to be a tough one. There it was plastered in bold print across the top of the front page: “Man Steals Ice Cream Truck, Flees Hospital.” As much as he’d hoped that he wouldn’t have this public relations flare-up, here it was for the whole community to see. What happened the previous day was that a recently admitted patient had walked out of his alcohol and drug addiction hospital and taken an ice cream truck that was making a delivery. The newspaper went on to state that the patient was apparently headed back to his home in Texas. The local police issued lookouts for the stolen truck and later that same day the “alleged” thief was apprehended in S.C. heading in the wrong direction from Texas!

This was just another problem facing Jimmy that day. He had just finished reading a strategic marketing plan that had been developed for him by a local university. An M.B.A. marketing class had recently taken on his hospital as a class project. Jimmy had been willing to have several students interview him and his marketing

director. He was interested to see what the students had come up with. In meeting with the students, he remembered telling them that the hospital's patient census was down from last year this time of year. In fact, he told them that the trend had been downward for over a year (i.e. the average number of patients in treatment had been declining). In essence Jimmy had asked the student group for ideas and suggestions for improving his marketing efforts and thereby increasing his census. His hospital (privately owned and operated) just couldn't afford to keep losing money as it had for over two years. A deep concern facing Jimmy was that the hospital took a great deal of pride in the "family atmosphere" it had created for over forty five years. A major part of his hospital's treatment program was conveying to patients and their families the family atmosphere and support that they could expect from their treatment.

Within the alcohol and drug addiction treatment community nationwide, Willingway Hospital is renowned for its unusual history and approach to rehabilitation and treatment. The hospital started with a very simple philosophy which was to create a treatment center to help alcoholics and drug addicts find sobriety.

Founded by Dr. John Mooney and his wife Dot (a registered nurse) the hospital has been licensed to operate since 1971. In fact, it's one of the oldest alcohol and drug addiction treatment centers in the U.S.A. accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). Dr. Mooney and his wife's "story" is well known and served to build the basis of Willingway's strong family oriented culture. Willingway's history is freely shared with patients and family and is an integral part of the treatment program. In fact, the story is described in detail on the hospitals' website. It was during the 1950's that Dr. Mooney was a well-regarded "small town" doctor with a growing practice. He and his wife, by all outward appearances, were a devoted couple to their three children and to their patients. They were active in the community, a little southern town with a small but growing college nearby. Their kids and Dr. and Mrs. Mooney were involved in their church, the P.T.A., and numerous organizations and causes. However, unbeknownst to everyone but themselves was the fact that both Dr. Mooney and his wife were addicted to alcohol, sedatives, tranquilizers, and narcotics. Both tried repeatedly to beat back their addictions. Each had been admitted to treatment programs that utilized standard psychiatric therapy and chemical support. Nothing worked.

"The bottom fell out of their lives" when Dr. Mooney was charged with writing illegal prescriptions. In 1959, a hometown judge sentenced him to serve six months in the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. The doctor came home a changed and sober man and shortly thereafter, his wife gained

sobriety as well. It was this series of events that led the Mooneys to start a new life. They began traveling and meeting other people who were trying to recover from addictions. Dr. Mooney and his wife knew first-hand the difficulties and challenges facing a person trying to recover. They used their knowledge and medical training to help others throughout their town and community. Word began to spread throughout the region that a small town doctor knew how to help people gain sobriety. It didn't take long before people from all over the country began sending their loved ones to the doctor for advice, evaluation, and treatment. The hallmarks of the Mooneys' approach to recovery were to use a warm and compassionate environment in which the recovering addict could get sober and stay sober.

THE CULTURE

Scholars often suggest that organizational culture is mostly formed by the values of the founder of the organization. These "values" and work practices tend to attract certain kinds of people to the organization. The organization tends to select people who buy into the values of the founder. Some people leave the organization because they don't buy into the founder's values or simply don't "fit" the culture. Furthermore, over time a strong culture often develops as a result of a shared set of beliefs, expectations, norms, and work routines that are widespread within the organization. Such factors are taught or emphasized during orientation, training, and "socialization" processes in which newcomers participate. Also, factors that help maintain and transmit the culture can be seen in the stories and history of an organization that are told and re-told to newcomers and patients. Even the "language" used among members of the culture helps to reinforce, maintain, and transmit the culture. The attraction-selection-attrition model (i.e. the ASA Model) accurately describes how Willingway's culture evolved.

So many people came to the Mooneys' practice that the local hospital simply couldn't provide enough beds for detoxification. Rather than turn away people who were desperate for treatment, the Mooneys (Dr. John and Mrs. Dot as they became known) began to take patients into their own home. The Mooneys would admit only the most critically ill patients into the local hospital. Eventually Dr. John's and Mrs. Dot's home became a boarding house and alcohol-drug treatment center all rolled into one. Their home became so crowded that their dining room was turned into the detoxification unit. As more and more patients went through detox, they would awaken "under the glowing lights of the Willingway chandelier overhead". As time went by, that Willingway chandelier took on a significance all its own. It became a part of the culture of the treatment program. It became a symbol of hope, inspiration and healing. Even the name of the hospital signifies hope and healing. Today the original, old Willingway chandelier still hangs in Willingway Hospital's detox unit.

As more and more patients came to the Mooneys for help, they outgrew their home. At one time they had 26 people under their roof, including their own family! When they decided to build a wing onto their home for more residential patients, their local neighborhood expressed resistance. The neighbors, while in support of what the Mooneys were doing, simply didn't want to see their quiet little residential community turned into a commercial area. So, Dr. John and Mrs. Dot sought advice from their financial advisor who recommended building a new facility designed as a residential treatment center. In time, they were able to line up local investors willing to support the new facility. Even the Small Business Administration offered support with a loan to help build and equip the new center. As the operation became ever more effective, the Mooneys recognized the need for specialization. They successfully applied for a license to operate as a hospital in August, 1971 and were soon accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). This accreditation by JCAHO recognized Willingway as one of the earliest alcohol and drug treatment centers in the U.S.A. JACHO is recognized worldwide as the top accrediting agency in the U.S.A. for assessing the quality of healthcare providers. It is a difficult and prestigious accreditation to acquire and maintain.

The Mooneys' approach to rehabilitation emphasized family support. They treated patients as members of their extended family. Dr. John would counsel the men while Mrs. Dot would counsel the women. Dignity, genuine love, understanding, and concern for each patient became central values underlying Willingway's treatment philosophy. As the hospital evolved, new treatment professionals were brought on to help with the growing patient demand. Today, over fifty years later, nearly all of the direct treatment staff are themselves recovering alcoholics or drug addicts. Everyone goes by first names, including the physicians who are referred to as "Dr. Chuck" or "Dr. Henry". A novel feature of Willingway's day to day communication patterns is the "in-group" language that evolved over the course of many years. For example, patients are known as "the sky people" and even most of the treatment staff who are sober (but recovering) are known as sky people. Employees working at Willingway not in recovery are known as "the ground people".

A special note about Willingway is that the Mooneys' four children grew up and joined the hospital in treatment roles or in administration. All four currently serve on the Board of Directors. In fact, two sons became physicians specializing in alcohol and drug addiction treatment. "Dr. Henry" even published a very well regarded book on alcoholism.

Every year Willingway sponsors a big "family reunion" at the hospital to celebrate their patients' sobriety. People come in from across the U.S.A. and even from other

countries to take part in the celebration. Dr. John and Mrs. Dot retired from an active role in Willingway's work in 1982.

APPROACH TO TREATMENT

Willingway Hospital accepts and treats all types of addictions, from alcohol dependence to illegal drug addiction to prescription drug abuse. People from all walks of life are treated; the young, the old, women, men, teens, and seniors. One very distinctive factor that truly sets Willingway apart from many treatment programs is that no drugs are used after the initial detoxification phase. Prescription drugs must be heavily relied on during detox to ensure the health of the patient. However, after the initial detox phase, patients are taken off all drugs. Willingway doesn't believe in bringing in patients, getting them off legal (or illegal) drugs, just to have them leave the facility taking more drugs than before they came in. Many other facilities use transference drugs to take addicted patients off drugs and have them transfer over to a legal substitute that will allow them to operate in daily life. However, Willingway believes their patients should be off drugs completely and not leave their treatment plan taking more drugs than when they started.

Willingway focuses on a full continuum of care. Most patients stay an average of five weeks, but there are patients who take advantage of longer term care that extends for a year or longer. Extended care for men is centered around rented, offsite apartments. The men then come a short way to attend outpatient services on Willingway's campus. For women, extended care takes place at an offsite facility that is set up much like a regular house with roommates. There is also outpatient care that requires individuals maintain their own residence. However, these patients must attend group sessions Monday through Thursday. Many patients also participate in family counseling. Willingway strives to treat addiction at or before onset by providing education programs to those who may be beginning a self-destructive cycle of drugs or alcohol.

REFERRALS, INTERVENTIONISTS, AND OTHER TREATMENT PROGRAMS

Patients come to Willingway through many different routes. The primary way that Willingway gets patients is word of mouth from past patients who are called "alumni". Alumni refer friends, family members, and colleagues to the facility based on their positive experiences and success within the program. Another very important source of Willingway's patient base is the patient who is referred by interventionists. Professional interventionists are individuals who conduct interventions at the request of family members or friends. Since insurance has limited benefits for someone staying in a hospital, Interventionists generally work with people who have the ability to privately pay for rehabilitation services. Due to this, Willingway gets many patients through interventionist referrals. Willingway

also markets its services through conferences for interventionists. For example, Willingway recently hosted a conference for the largest interventionist association in the world, the Association of Intervention Specialists, with over 70 interventionists from all over the U.S.A. in attendance. During these conferences Willingway brings in many specialists in the field and also gives virtual tours of Willingway's facilities. Next January, Willingway is hosting interventionist training for the Arise Model. The Arise Model of intervention is based on a new approach to intervention. Instead of the common Johnson Model (which bombards individuals by surprising them with an intervention), the Arise Model invites the individual in question to attend his own intervention, thus allowing time to ask questions and to mentally prepare for the intervention before the event. The Arise Model's approach focuses on a loving, supportive intervention. Willingway also receives patients from other treatment centers. For example, some treatment/rehab facilities do not offer detox programs and will therefore send patients to Willingway to complete detox. After detox, the patient is sent back to the original facility. Other facilities may also refer patients to Willingway due to issues involved in treating a couple. Many programs believe that when a couple comes in as a couple, treatment can be more effective when each member in the couple goes to a separate facility to regain their health. These referrals are a common occurrence within the treatment community and illustrate that most treatment programs are not focused on generating more income than their competitors. On the contrary, most treatment facilities are primarily focused on assisting individuals in their recovery and abstinence from drugs and alcohol. In a very real sense most treatment centers all help one another and thereby help the recovering alcoholic or drug addict.

MARKETING

On average, twelve percent of Willingway's budget is devoted to marketing and advertising services. The main marketing procedure for Willingway is face-to-face visits by the three marketing reps working for Willingway. There is one marketing rep who does national marketing for the facility out of Utah, one representative who handles South Carolina and Georgia, and one representative who handles Florida. The majority of the marketing budget goes for the salaries, travel, and activities associated with the work of the marketing representatives. Jimmy Mooney also does marketing for the facility but this isn't taken out of the marketing budget. The facility has a website and a FaceBook page informs potential clients about Willingway's services. There are limited advertising efforts made by Willingway because the majority of their business comes directly from referrals by alumni, interventionists, and physicians. On occasion, Willingway will utilize print advertising in newspapers and magazines.

A POTENTIAL NEW MARKET?

As Jimmy Mooney read over the marketing report produced by the student group, one section stood out from the rest. Here's what the students reported:

“One possibility for developing a new marketing niche is to look more closely at the demographics of today's college age population. Willingway has a long history of ‘doing the right thing’ and the ‘right thing’ just might be to emphasize more effort in reaching out to troubled college students. Numerous research studies on typical college-age students suggest that many are at risk of becoming dependent upon drugs and alcohol.”

Willingway is located in close proximity to many colleges, universities, and technical institutes in Georgia and South Carolina. There are 19 colleges and universities that are a 3 hour or less drive from Willingway. Although many of these organizations provide some sort of Substance Abuse Counseling, none offer detox services or the full range of treatment for which Willingway Hospital is so well known. The target market of college students could serve as a very likely group on which to focus. Total enrollment data for these 19 schools is 210,657 (Table 1). Also shown in Table 1 is the distance to that school from Willingway Hospital. The closest school, Georgia Southern University, is only 6 miles away and within the same city limits as Willingway. The most distant school, Dalton State College, is 297 miles away, with the average distance being 143.4 miles. Just these colleges alone could serve as quite a large target market for Willingway's services, not to mention the schools that were not listed in this table. Of the schools with the lowest total enrollment, Atlanta Metropolitan College has 2,765 students while the institution with the most enrolled, The University of Georgia boasts 33,367 students. East Georgia College is also located in close proximity to Willingway Hospital with one campus being only 8 miles from the hospital and another campus 37 miles from the hospital. Wechsler and Nelson (2008) found that those students who live off campus and away from their parents and students who live in fraternity or sorority houses have the highest rates of binge drinking. Taking this into consideration, Willingway can focus some effort into advertising towards those students who live off campus and/or are part of Greek organizations.

Although more research is needed to determine which factors lead college students who drink heavily to become dependent upon alcohol and continue to abuse alcohol past college, there is substantial evidence to support the notion that many college students binge drink throughout their college careers. This binge drinking can then lead to alcohol dependence. Research also suggests that individuals who become dependent upon alcohol before the age of 25 are less likely than others, who become dependent later in life, to seek treatment and more likely to relapse. Young adulthood is a particularly risky time for individuals to become dependent upon

alcohol and nearly half of individuals who become alcohol dependent become dependent before the age of 21 (Hingson, Heeran, & Winter, 2006).

Further research indicating a need for Willingway's treatment is found in a major study by Knight, Wechsler, Kuo, Seibring, Weitzman, and Schuckit (2002). Over 14,000 students from 119 four year universities were surveyed. Students were asked about alcohol consumption and patterns. Over a 12 month period many college students report symptoms and behaviors that are classified as alcohol abuse and dependence. It was found that 31% of college students abused alcohol and 6% qualified for a dependence diagnosis. They also found those students who are heavy episodic drinkers are more likely to have an alcohol disorder and frequent heavy episodic drinkers have 19 times greater odds for dependence and 13 times greater odds for abuse. Because of these staggering statistics, this research suggests that colleges implement new strategies for early detection and screening for high risk student drinkers and also that colleges ensure those with alcohol disorders have information and treatment readily available.

A total college enrollment of nearly 211,000 in close proximity to Willingway is worth considering as a new market. By using percentages reported in Knight et. al. (2002), it can be estimated that as many as 65,410 of this population of college students could be alcohol abusers and as many as 12,660 could possibly be diagnosed as alcohol dependent.

WHAT TO DO?

Jimmy Mooney read over what the students suggested in their marketing report. He wasn't sure if he should attempt any more than what he's already done for college students. He wasn't sure how to really market to students. How do you reach college students? Would university authorities and administrators be receptive to such marketing attempts? Would counseling centers on those campuses be willing to work with Willingway? How do those students afford Willingway's treatment program? Is it ethical? Is it legal? A lot of questions bounced around in his head as he thought about how to respond to the day's headlines in the local newspaper: "Man Steals Ice Cream Truck, Flees Hospital."

TABLE 1
Universities Located Near Willingway

Institution	Total Enrollment	Distance in Miles
Georgia Institute of Technology	1,9431	225

Georgia State University	30,606	208
University of Georgia	33,367	165
Georgia Southern University	19,150	6
Valdosta State University	12,277	163
Armstrong Atlantic State University	7,013	58
Augusta State University	6,381	80
Georgia College & State University	6,266	108
Kennesaw State University	23,103	235
Savannah State University	4,134	59
Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College	3,002	143
Atlanta Metropolitan College	2,765	206
College of Coastal Georgia	3,063	113
Dalton State College	4,978	297
East Georgia College	3,130	37
Gainesville State College	7,919	258
SCAD	9,217	55
College of Charleston	11,649	155
The Citadel	3,206	155

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