



BMT InfoNet Partners With Market Research Firm Magnolia Innovation to Better Understand Their Community's Needs

Magnolia Innovation volunteers its market research expertise to uncover user experience issues to support BMT InfoNet website

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The [Blood & Marrow Transplant Information Network \(BMT InfoNet\)](#) is a leading patient advocacy organization for transplant and CAR T-cell therapy recipients before, during, and after treatment. Akin to many patient advocacy groups, the idea of conducting market research with their members had not been at the top of their mind. But when word got out that they needed to upgrade their website, Magnolia Innovation, a healthcare market research consultancy with a long history of working with top-tier pharmaceutical clients, volunteered their help.

“Our site is super important to what we do,” explains Cindy Kessler, BMT InfoNet’s Director of Patient Support Services. Executive Director Sue Stewart concurs. “We help patients with the emotional end of it, the physical end, the financial end,” she explains. “We have online patient support groups with people from Europe, Australia, and Central America joining. For a group that meets at 7:00 PM Eastern Time, people overseas get up at 3:00 in the morning because they so desperately want to be connected.”

Two years ago, that website hit a wall. The platform it was built on was changing—and BMT InfoNet, with its ever-expanding programs, patient stories, and library of videos, had no choice but to change with it.

Enter Magnolia. Founding partner Ken Howie had long admired the patient advocacy group's work. "We had built a strong connection with BMT InfoNet over the years, collaborating with them on market research projects with our pharmaceutical clients. We came to rely on BMT InfoNet when we needed to look at the needs of patients and caregivers in the transplant space. With the website, they were at a critical inflection point. Applying all of our talents and critical thinking to making their website the best it could be was a way of giving back."

As Magnolia continually strives to be mindful of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) to the communities it operates in, this was a great opportunity to leverage the team's skillset to support a group that does so much for a broad patient community. Ken offered the full armamentarium of Magnolia's market research services to Stewart and Kessler, who were surprised and grateful at the company's generosity.

Magnolia and BMT InfoNet worked together to align on the research objectives and approach. Ultimately, the team landed on capturing feedback in the form of qualitative interviews with a variety of site visitors, including patients, family members and others serving as caregivers, and healthcare professionals.

A Deep Dive Into the User Experience

From the very beginning the results were eye-opening.

"For me, the insight that was the most interesting was that the way we organized data did not necessarily align with the way people looked for data."

-Stewart

Partially this was a function of the way the site was set up. And partially it had to do with the state of mind of the people using it. Undergoing a transplant can be a very overwhelming experience—before, during, and after, often for years. "Some people come to us with trepidation," Stewart explains. "Some people want the good, the bad, the ugly, and other people want to be told that everything's going to be okay. And so we need to strike the balance of being honest, of framing the information in such a way that it's realistic but not overwhelming." As the interviews uncovered, the mindset of many of these visitors meant they were looking for:

1. Credibility—knowing this was a source they could trust
2. Simplicity—less information and clear topics up front to easily navigate to the details most relevant to them

These two insights were the basis for many of the recommendations to follow out of this research. For instance, as Stewart reflects, they were surprised to find that "there was concern that people didn't know who we were, what we did, or the identity of our mission." While Stewart and the BMT team understand their organization's mission and fulfill it every day, on the web this was not immediately clear to first-time visitors who were looking for reassurance that this was a source they could trust. Key learnings like the "About Us" being more front and center, and broader topics by visitor type (eg, patient vs caregiver) and transplant stage (eg, preparing for transplant, posttransplant) were some of the many actionable takeaways from this research.

Adapting to Different Visitors

Different stakeholders had different purposes and needs. While patients were often looking for comfort and hope along with information, caregivers (family members and friends) turned to the site to become subject matter experts. They needed help making difficult decisions about treatment centers and financial issues, as well as deciphering right questions to ask during doctor visits. And healthcare providers, it turned out, tended to log on to solve a particular patient problem—finding a support group, a mental health provider, even financial aid.

Each of these stakeholders required different pathways catering to their needs—and while there might be room for overlap, there could be no room for confusion. Including these unique perspectives in the research led to actionable insights on how to ensure the right information was easy to find for each type of visitor.

Partners in Research and Solutions

For Stewart, working with Magnolia “was a great collaborative process. Nothing Magnolia did was a boilerplate solution, at no time did we feel they were forcing anything on us. They put a lot of thought into what questions we should ask.”

Kessler concurs. Being part of the process at every step meant that “when we finally began to get enough data to begin to see themes, we were able to shift focus, look into other unknowns, or explore another area we were a little fuzzy on. Magnolia was very flexible, and it was easy to make those changes, and make the most productive use of our time.”

Magnolia wrapped all their learnings into a report for the BMT InfoNet team and their developers. BMT InfoNet is now working on implementing these strategies into their new website, and Magnolia’s research has made a huge difference.

Stewart makes the point: “I do hear from our developers how intensely they’re relying on the information that was in that report, as they’re figuring out how best to structure the navigation. They are paying very close attention to it, and suggesting changes based on the research.” Stewart and Kessler are optimistic that these changes will drive more return visitors to the website and create a reliable, user-friendly, go-to resource for their members.

With such a plethora of information and resources on their website, the BMT InfoNet team now has a clear plan of action to bring certain high-value resources more front and center so they are more easily accessible and utilized by their members.

Stewart and Kessler feel they can now more confidently say that the updates being made “really will reflect the way users would like to see the site.”

Looking Forward

BMT InfoNet had long known the value of input from their site users. Both positive feedback and constructive criticism received from their site users were always taken to heart and used to improve their services.

However, now, through the collaboration with Magnolia, the organization has a fresh perspective on the value of proactively reaching back into the community to find out more about how they can serve their needs and plan to do so more in the future.

As Stewart reflects on the experience, “like everybody, we live in our little silo, so it reinforces the notion that if you’re going to serve a population, that you’re really talking to the population.”

For Magnolia, the team was able to apply their skills in a new arena, deepen their understanding of the patient mindset, and—perhaps most importantly—do something tangible to give back to a nonprofit that routinely gives so much. This initiative was one of many where Magnolia aims to invest in patient communities through its CSR efforts.

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Magnolia Innovation is a market research consultancy to some of the world’s most innovative healthcare companies. We focus on helping our clients answer their toughest strategic questions. For more information, please visit www.magnoliainnovation.com.

BMT InfoNet is a patient advocacy organization devoted to serving transplant and CAR T patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals through every step of the process. For more information, please visit www.bmtinfonet.org.

