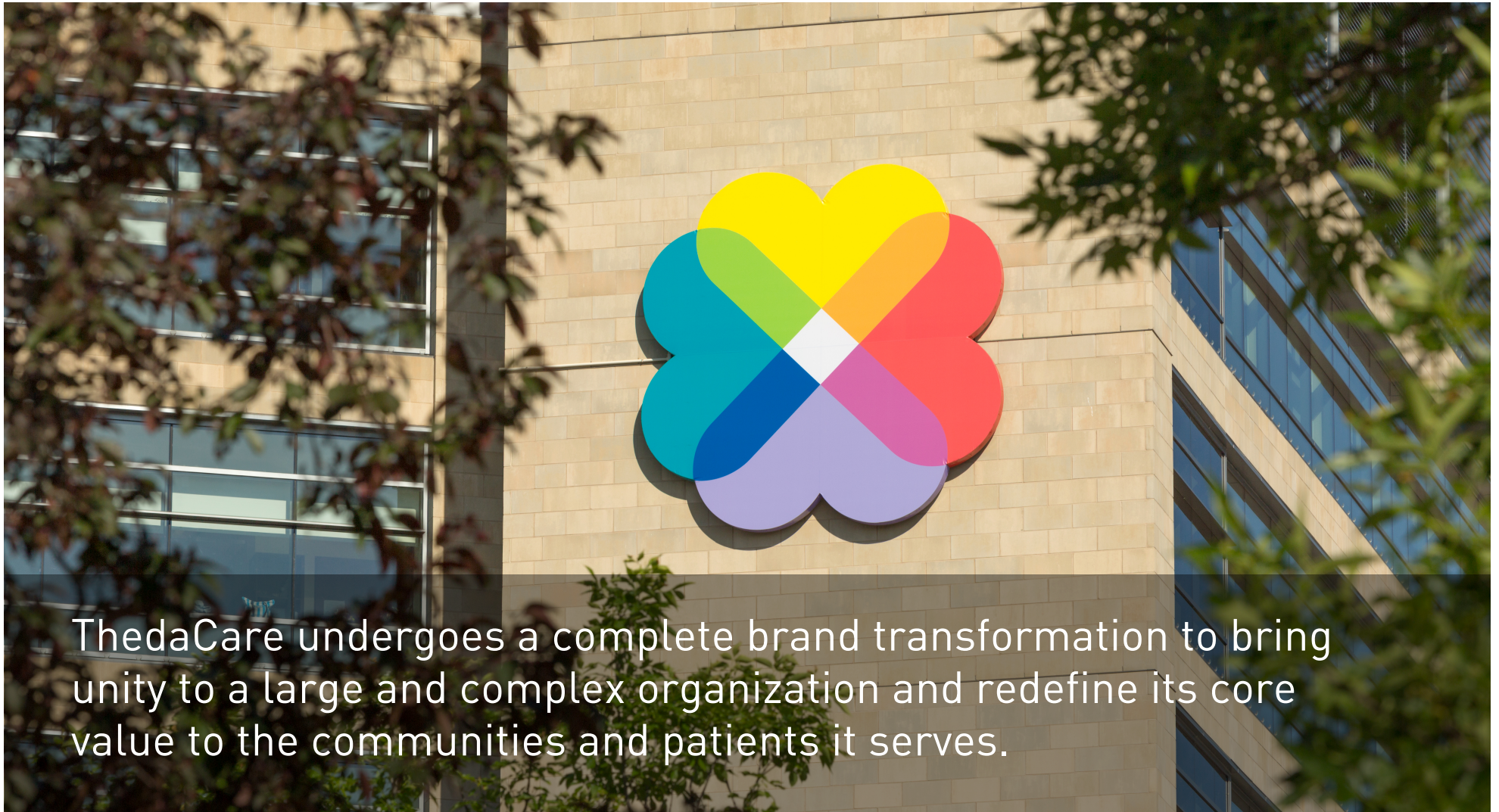


## THEDACARE CASE STUDY



ThedaCare undergoes a complete brand transformation to bring unity to a large and complex organization and redefine its core value to the communities and patients it serves.

## The Challenge

### **A Health System at a Strategic Crossroads**

ThedaCare is the largest healthcare provider in Northeast Wisconsin, operating multiple hospitals, cancer centers, surgery centers and diverse care networks serving hundreds of thousands of patients annually.

Like many health systems, ThedaCare faced a strategic challenge. Healthcare was becoming more complex and competitive. Patients had more choices. Expectations for experience, trust, and clarity were rising. The organization recognized that its existing brand no longer fully reflected the value it created for patients, communities, physicians, and employees.

ThedaCare's Leadership made a bold decision to undertake a major brand transformation initiative. It would be a system-wide effort to clarify:

- **what ThedaCare stood for and would not compromise on**
- **how its value to patients should be experienced across practice disciplines**
- **how the organization should present itself to patients and communities**

## What Was at Stake

Major brand transformation initiatives inside complex organizations are high-stakes undertakings. For healthcare systems like ThedaCare, the transformation touched nearly every dimension of the organization:

- patient trust
- physician relationships
- employee engagement
- community reputation
- strategic growth initiatives

original corporate signature

THEDACARE™

When organizations invest heavily in redefining how they present their value to the world, the risks are significant. Brand initiatives of this scale often struggle for predictable reasons:

**leadership teams have not fully aligned on what the organization truly represents**

**multiple internal stakeholders pull the work in different directions**

**the strategy loses focus as projects expand and silo into identity, digital, and communications programs**

The result is often a costly initiative that may produce attractive design work but fails to express the deeper value of the organization. Avoiding that outcome requires more than good strategy and creative work. To hedge the risk requires clear strategic intent and disciplined internal leadership of the transformation process.



## My Fractional Role at ThedaCare

**Client:** ThedaCare Health System

**Scope:** Enterprise Brand

**Transformation**

**Role:** Fractional Strategic Advisor /  
Brand Transformation Steward

**Impact:** System-Wide Brand Platform,  
Corporate Identity Development and  
Marketplace Implementation

**Engagement Duration:** 18 months

### **Stewarding Brand Transformation**

I was brought in as a fractional executive to help the ThedaCare leadership brand team guide their transformation initiative. My role was not to replace the various creative agency partners responsible for the creative and execution work. Instead, my responsibility was to lead and steward the strategic intent of the transformation.

In large transformations like this, success depends on specialized expertise and experience holding the strategic thread from beginning to end. That was my role as a fractional leader which included helping leadership:

- **clarify the deeper value the organization represented**
- **guide the positioning strategy and development process**
- **ensure alignment between diverse stakeholders**
- **maintain discipline and accountability throughout the process**

## The Expression

### Aligning Strategy, Identity, and Experience

Working with ThedaCare leadership and agency partners required balancing organizational complexity with strategic clarity. Healthcare organizations must communicate trust, expertise, and humanity simultaneously. ThedaCare's transformation needed to express all three.



- strategic brand positioning
- messaging architecture
- brand identity development
- digital and communication systems
- campus wayfinding and facilities signage systems
- internal communication alignment across teams



# The daCare

100 County Road B



*"I would have traveled as far as I needed to go. But, everything we needed was right here."*



**Charla's Story**

Twins! I could hardly believe it. We saw both of them in our eight-week ultrasound and our obstetrician saw they were in a unique situation: basically they were sharing the same placenta. Right away, we made a plan to give birth two months early. And we understood that this would be a risky pregnancy all the way through.

Everyone—the entire staff at ThedaCare—was wonderful. They were thorough, they followed up, and I might even say they were overprotective! No one had seen a case like ours in a few years. When I went into the hospital at twenty-seven weeks, the nurses gave me the best care anyone could ask for. I was in there for five weeks, and they became like part of my family; so loving, so sweet, so attentive. And sure enough, the girls arrived right on time at thirty-two weeks—and they are just perfect.



*At ThedaCare, wellness is something we think about every day.*

And it starts right here, with the people we work with every day—our employees. Keeping workers healthy is an important focus for any organization, but when you're in the healthcare field, it's more than a focus. It's the foundation. As Brenda Leigh, a health coach for ThedaCare said, "We're here to walk side-by-side with our employees on their wellness journey."

For the last decade our Employee Wellness Initiative has been helping employees exercise more, eat better and live better. It's not a one-size-fits-all approach, because every person is different. And it didn't happen overnight, or without effort. People like Brenda have helped change the culture and atmosphere at ThedaCare to create an environment structured for success.

"Some of our sites now offer exercise centers where employees can go for free," she said. "We offer strength training and yoga, and participation keeps growing. Processed foods have been replaced with healthy, natural foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, many of which are grown locally."

Changes have been noticeable. Smoking is down. Sick time is down. Health insurance costs are down. Thanks to the Employee Wellness Program, things are definitely looking up at ThedaCare.

"And maybe the best part is that it's virtually free to our staff," Brenda said. "I can't think of an easier, more convenient way to live a healthy lifestyle."



*"The HealthWorks program reminds me that making healthy choices is up to one person—me."*  
— Jen Meyer, ThedaCare employee





## The Outcome

### A Brand That Endures

The result was a brand transformation enabling ThedaCare to express its purpose and value across disciplines and facilities more clearly to the communities it serves. But perhaps the most meaningful outcome came from the ThedaCare Brand Team who carried the initiative forward. A leading member of the brand team later reflected:

“Had we done this on our own we would have been more challenged by all the complex issues we faced...your guidance faced these challenges, and we didn’t derail the process. The result is a beautiful, recognizable brand with messaging and storytelling that people still talk about today.”

Major brand initiatives are rarely about visual design alone. They are about helping an organization clarify and express the value it creates for people. And when done well, that work becomes part of the organization’s impact and legacy.

## The Strategic Insight Behind the ThedaCare Transformation

Brand transformation initiatives are often approached as marketing or design projects. The thinking starts and stops with a new logo, messaging, website and marketing campaigns. The real work of transformation is much deeper than that. The most successful transformations begin by clarifying something far more fundamental:

### **What unique idea of value does this organization represent in the minds of the people it serves?**

In healthcare, that question carries enormous weight. Patients are not simply choosing medical services. They are choosing an organization they trust to care for them and their families at the most vulnerable moments of their lives.

For an organization like ThedaCare, the brand therefore needed to express something deeper than clinical capability or operational scale. It needed to reflect the human meaning of the organization's work. ThedaCare's Idea of Value owned in the minds of patients: Peace of Mind.

Clarifying that meaning for diverse audiences was essential before any visual identity, messaging system, or digital experience could be created. Once that strategic intent became clear, the creative work could begin translating it into a coherent system of expression across the organization.

### **This is the principle behind what I describe as an Idea of Value.**

An Idea of Value is not a positioning claim created by marketing. It is a meaning customers and communities come to believe about an organization based on how it behaves over time and the value it consistently creates for them. An Idea of Value is the meaning customers come to believe about an organization that they love, depend on, and cannot easily replace with available alternatives.



When the core Idea of Value becomes clear, the brand transformation process becomes far more focused and powerful. The role of stewardship in initiatives like ThedaCare is not simply to guide creative and execution work. It is to ensure the strategic idea of value guiding the transformation remains clear, disciplined, and aligned from beginning to end. When that happens, it becomes an undisputed expression of the value the organization represents.

**The ThedaCare Case Study represents a prime example of the approach that guides my work and the point of view I bring to founders and leadership teams undertaking similar transformations in their business.**



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