

CASE STUDY

Turning Awareness Into Action

How a Brand Overhaul Strengthened Community Trust for Salem Health Cancer Center

A rebrand, website transformation, and year-long awareness campaign that made cancer education more human, focused, and accessible.



BACKGROUND

Salem Health's Cancer Institute faced a growing challenge: while patient volume remained steady, many local patients were choosing to receive treatment in Portland, believing larger hospitals were more advanced or trustworthy. I led a full digital and brand transformation to change that perception — rebuilding community trust and keeping local patients local.

The initiative included a name change from **Salem Health Cancer Institute to Salem Health Cancer Center**, a complete website overhaul, and a year-long awareness campaign blending education, storytelling, and consistent visibility.

Together, these efforts refocused the brand around one goal: making it clear that world-class cancer care was available right here in Salem.

At a Glance

Client: Salem Health Cancer Center

Location: Salem, Oregon

Scope: Rebrand, website overhaul, awareness campaign

Timeline: 1 year

Team: In-house (Marketing, Clinical, Leadership)

Goal: Strengthen local trust and keep patients in-region

When Excellence Isn't Enough

CHALLENGE

Despite being one of Salem Health's largest and most profitable service lines, the Cancer Institute's brand was struggling to connect. Its website used three generations of outdated templates, had no standard navigation, and contained more than 70 scattered pages—many duplicating or conflicting with one another. The overall experience felt disjointed and confusing, making it easy for patients to assume better options existed elsewhere.

The name itself was also a barrier. "Cancer Institute" implied research or academic work that Salem Health didn't do, while staff, providers, and patients naturally referred to it as the "Cancer Center." Internally and externally, the brand lacked focus.

At the same time, the service line leadership wanted to expand awareness through educational content—something akin to WebMD. I saw that as risky. Our goal shouldn't be to explain all cancer; it should be to show that Salem Health was the trusted expert in treating it locally. Convincing leadership to make that shift was a critical turning point.

Despite these brand and content challenges, the Cancer Institute's clinical quality was exceptional. The program was nationally recognized — accredited by the Commission on Cancer, the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers, and designated a Center of Excellence by GO2 for Lung Cancer. These honors were significant achievements that many larger Portland programs hadn't earned — yet few patients even knew about them.

The disconnect between clinical excellence and public perception became the heart of the problem: if people understood the quality of care available in Salem, many would choose to stay close to home for treatment.



Translating Insight Into Strategy

OBJECTIVES

Our goals were ambitious but clear:

- Reposition the “Cancer Institute” as Salem Health Cancer Center — focused on treatment, not research.
- Modernize and simplify the website, reducing content from 70+ pages so things are easier to find.
- Build brand credibility through a cleaner, more consistent digital experience.
- Launch a sustainable awareness system that maintained monthly community visibility.
- Reinforce local trust so patients would feel confident choosing Salem Health for care close to home.

STRATEGY

We began by reframing the Cancer Center’s identity around trust, clarity, and accessibility. The new name, Salem Health Cancer Center, better reflected what we did and aligned with how staff and patients already referred to the service line. It was a simple, human change that immediately made sense to everyone.

From there, I rebuilt the Cancer Center’s digital foundation from the ground up. Using Google Analytics, I identified which pages were actually used and consolidated or retired the rest. I created consistent dropdown navigation, selected new imagery, rewrote all copy, and implemented SEO best practices. The final site was fully mobile-friendly, visually cohesive, and focused on one clear promise: expert, compassionate care in Salem.

Once the foundation was set, I led a year-long awareness campaign focused on education, storytelling, and prevention. Each month spotlighted a specific cancer type, building steady engagement across digital, print, and community channels.

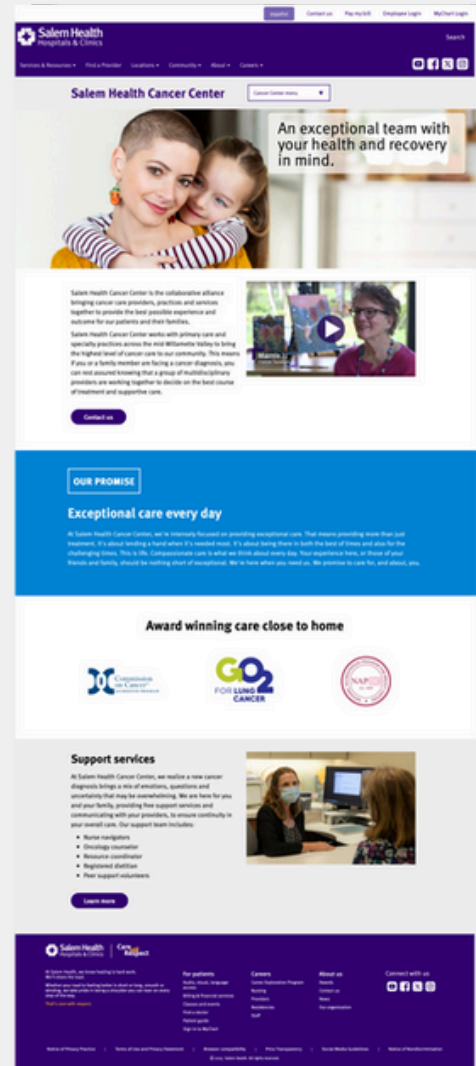
Bringing the Strategy to Life: Part 1

Guided a Strategic Name Change

After analyzing naming trends among regional competitors and reviewing internal usage, I proposed renaming the service line from Cancer Institute to Cancer Center. The new name reflected our true focus—patient care—and matched what staff and providers were already saying. The shift aligned internal language, eliminated confusion, and made our brand more relatable and trustworthy.

Rebuilt and Refocused the Website

I led a full rebuild using Salem Health's most current web template—finally creating a consistent user experience across devices. Every page was rewritten for clarity, optimized for search, and structured for accessibility. All images were given alt text, content was kept at a 6th–8th grade reading level, and mobile responsiveness was standardized. The new site reduced frustration: people found what they needed faster, spent more time on relevant pages, and viewed fewer unnecessary ones.



Bringing the Strategy to Life: Part 2

Developed Patient Storytelling Campaigns

We introduced human-centered stories to make the Cancer Center's message more emotional and approachable. I initiated and oversaw the creation of multiple patient videos, including a feature on a group of female cancer survivors who formed a dragon boat team that's still active today. Additional wellness videos showcased survivorship, healthy eating, and staying active during treatment—all aimed at showing life beyond diagnosis.

Developed Patient Storytelling Campaigns

To sustain visibility, I created a 12-month content calendar aligned with national cancer awareness months. Each campaign featured a single cancer type, with posts and visuals tailored for education and empathy. Campaigns appeared across the website, social media, digital signage, and internal communications, all using a cohesive design system.



Unsinkables

The Unsinkables dragon boat team, based in Salem. This inspiring group of women is comprised entirely of cancer survivors, caregivers and others.

The dragon boat team was founded in 2015 and rows year-round. The group regularly participates in regional and international competitions.

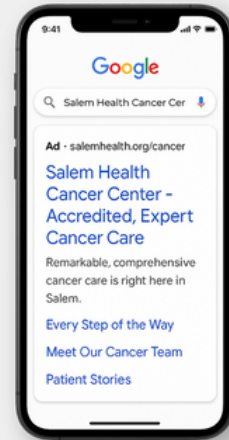
Bringing the Strategy to Life: Part 3

Implemented Multi-Channel Advertising Campaigns

I secured a dedicated marketing budget and launched coordinated digital and print advertising to maintain consistent visibility.

- **Digital:** Continuous campaigns on Google, Meta, and Spotify focused on education and brand awareness, with mid-funnel efforts tied to screening events.
- **Print:** Regular placements in the Statesman Journal, Keizertimes, Mom Magazine (Mid-Willamette Valley edition), and a quarterly publication for physicians.
 - Ads ran weekly or biweekly in newspapers and monthly in Mom Magazine, always full-page.
 - Physician-facing ads reinforced professional credibility and local referral confidence.

Together, these efforts ensured a steady drumbeat of awareness and reminded the community that advanced cancer care was available nearby.



Bringing the Strategy to Life: Part 4

Strengthened Internal and Community Engagement

I also supported internal communications and on-campus events that connected staff, patients, and survivors. These included art projects, physician talks, and free health checks that brought the community together. I promoted these events through internal channels and helped standardize how the Cancer Center communicated about support groups, making it easier for patients to find and attend the right ones.

Aligned Stakeholders and Physicians

Throughout the process, I regularly presented to the Cancer Center's steering committee—sharing results, upcoming campaigns, and performance insights. Even after the main project concluded, I remained part of those monthly meetings as the unofficial marketing liaison, ensuring continued collaboration between clinical and marketing teams.



Measuring the Impact

RESULTS

- Reduced 70+ pages to fewer than 20—improving clarity and navigation.
- Boosted engagement: longer time on page, fewer clicks per visit.
- Strengthened community presence through cohesive digital and print campaigns.
- Achieved full accessibility compliance across pages and visuals.
- Earned positive feedback from leadership and staff—branding made the Cancer Center feel more credible and modern.
- Inspired other departments (e.g., Cardiology) to adopt similar refreshes.
- Increased patient retention and reinforced local trust in Salem Health's capabilities.

LESSONS & IMPACT

This project demonstrated how clarity builds credibility—and how credibility drives retention. By aligning language, simplifying content, and humanizing the message, the Cancer Center became more than just another service line; it became a trusted presence in the community.

The rebrand, website rebuild, and ongoing awareness campaigns didn't just improve marketing—they helped protect local market share, strengthened patient confidence, and inspired other departments to follow suit.

In the end, the Salem Health Cancer Center project proved that **thoughtful marketing doesn't just inform people—it changes where they turn for care.**