

Contents

Chapter 1	Comparing Current Models & Assessing Your Internal Readiness
Chapter 2	Developing the Business Plan
Chapter 3	Structure, Staffing and Recruitment
Chapter 4	Setting Measures and Tracking Results: The Importance of a Performance Measurement System
Chapter 5	Building an Effective, Equitable Compensation Package
Chapter 6	Sales and Staff Management
Chapter 7	Evaluating Your Program's Performance & Effectiveness
Chapter 8	Incorporating Sales Planning into Your Program
Chapter 9	Advancing Physician Relations
<i>Special Section:</i>	Words of Wisdom & Thoughts on Physician Relations

Introduction

Acme Hospital's board meeting last night left the entire executive team with a lot to think about. While each presenting member of the leadership team had worked to position their focus, activities to date and their predictions for potential revenue, the numbers just don't lie. Cardiology is down by 12 percent and Orthopedics is off as well. The sad truth is that the only area of revenue growth was in Pediatrics—and that's certainly not enough to sustain the bottom line.

There are no easy answers for declining revenue; unfortunately, the "quick fixes" of the past likely contributed to the current state. One thing's certain, however—things need to change. The organization has done a good job of managing expenses. The changes made in supply management, enhanced efficiencies and a tighter rein on overall spending have made a significant impact.

Moving forward, the board's mandate made it clear: Senior Leadership now needs to develop strategies to "grow the business." Consumer choice is alive and well and there's renewed interest in how to increase the number of patients in the key strategic service lines.

Well, we'd all seen the numbers and while we were holding our own in some geographic markets, we had substantial losses in others. The truth is that the consumers were choosing physicians who were referring to the competition. Sure, we get a few of their patients, but the majority are ending up over at St. Anywhere Hospital.

Our organization has done some things to enhance relationships with the medical staff, but even with multiple programs, there's no central strategy or focused effort. It used to be that if we provided services, the physicians would intuitively know that we expected loyalty/referrals in

exchange. That “assumed approach” didn’t work all that well, so what do we need to do to get more referrals from physicians?

The above scenario might not be a perfect match to your situation, but likely you’ll recognize a little of your organization in it. The logical question for Acme Hospital to answer is, “What can we do to fix this?”

The honest answer is that there’s no one magic program, process or recommendation. Across the country, healthcare systems have developed comprehensive physician strategies, encompassing joint partnerships, relationship, referral and recruitment functions, collaborative quality programs, leadership integration and more.

For many organizations, this list feels more than a little overwhelming. Isn’t there something that can be done to get things started—something that will begin to bridge the credibility issues of the past, help the hospital increase the satisfaction level of the physician, and give the organization a chance to earn the referrals?

There is. Increasingly, hospitals and other healthcare organizations are finding success in creating a physician relations program. These programs are not centered on just hearing the problems of physicians; we’ve done that before. Rather, the focus of the new program is simple: to strengthen the physician relationship, create new business and keep current customers.

If you’ve picked up this book, chances are you’ve already recognized the need in your organization to strengthen physician relationships. Maybe you’ve already made the big step (at least in your head) to try something different. If so, you’ve already crossed the first hurdle.

In the following pages, we’ll show you how to build a framework for your own physician relations program. Yes, we discuss strategy—but we also

give you some step-by-step tips and techniques that are essential at the implementation level. Whether you refer to it internally as “physician relations,” “referral development” or just plain “sales,” it’s all the same to us in this context. So you’ll find that we use the words interchangeably.

Like you, we’ve spent lots of time in the trenches and we’ve seen the pitfalls and the roadblocks that make it seem that trying something new will never work. But remember one thing: there’s no valor in not trying. A well-built, well-thought-out physician relations program is destined to work, despite any obstacles you encounter along the way. Yes, there will be bumps (and sometimes boulders) in the road. But we hope that the information we provide will give you the fortitude to push on and know you can make this happen.

This book is organized as logical steps in the process of building a program. We’ll talk about how to determine how your program should look and how to create a business plan based on your findings. Then we’ll help you examine your organization from the inside out, focusing on how to find the right people for the job, measure their on-the-job performance and compensate them.

Next, we put forth some ways to manage those bumps in the road, take the temperature of your program and make sure it’s on target both qualitatively and quantitatively. We’ll discuss how to grow your program once it’s in place. And, finally, we let our clients speak about their own experiences, sharing advice and caveats for those involved in both new and seasoned programs.

We encourage you to use this information as a jumping-off point, rather than a how-to manual. Every organization—and its physician audience—has its quirks and set of unique circumstances. So as you make your way through the chapters, keep in mind your own organization’s medical staff personality, structural needs, trust level and competitive environment.

There's no easy answer to creating the perfect program—in fact, there's no perfect program. The best ones are continually evaluating, reacting and retooling. We hope you challenge yourself to use the information in this book to create a program that's right for *your* own organization.