

Case Study: Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network

One of the strongest sales tools in healthcare today is a solid relationship-building strategy. It's been a plan that the Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network (LVH) has embraced—and one that's delivering success.

The 800-bed system is located on three campuses, two in Allentown and one in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. More than 1,100 physicians are members of the health network.

Corporate Health Group has worked with the LVH team to put together a physician network development strategy. The plan, says Carol Biscontini, senior vice president of marketing and communication, has been effective in nurturing relationships with other physicians in the community—and ultimately bringing several of them on board.

Paramount to realizing success, she says, is the support and feedback of the entire internal LVH team. "What makes this work is that we involve people across the institution," she remarks. And that means not only marketing and management professionals, but department chairs, physician specialists and others who have valuable connections with their peers outside the system.

The group regularly meets to discuss ways to strengthen their external relationships and discusses progress made to date. Sharing the hits and misses, says Ed Dougherty, vice president, physician network development, gives everyone involved a strong sense of their impact on the team.

"The more we can communicate with and have our physicians involved in the process," Dougherty says, "typically the shorter the sales cycle." And by asking for feedback from the team, Dougherty says his group gains insight into creating new opportunities.

Overall, he adds, the process has helped the LVH team look at their goals in a new way. "Our physicians are outstanding, and they're glad to share their ideas from a sales point of view as well as a clinic perspective."

The results in the past six months, Dougherty and Biscontini assert, have been well worth the effort. Dougherty likens the progress to the national pastime. "We want to keep hitting a lot of singles back to back, rather than hitting a grand slam only occasionally. By regularly hitting singles, things start happening and we gain momentum."