

Marketing Savvy: Recognizing the Power Within, How to Cultivate a Sales-Based Culture

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It's a tough economic environment for employers today—and for those who sell to those employers. Current financial realities, particularly as they relate to employees, have severely tested most occupational health programs.

But just because selling is more of a challenge doesn't mean that there's no prospective business out there. And there *are* ways to get it and keep it without taxing your resources. By powering up your most important resource—your people—you can tap a new source of sales potential, and instill a sense of motivation and pride in your organization.

Everyone Plays a Role in Sales

Selling, no matter how good the salesperson, was never intended to be a solo effort. In selling intangible services, as we do in healthcare, it's important that you and your entire team work in a coordinated, seamless effort that's focused on the customer.

It's also important that everyone, from leadership to operations, work toward the agreed-upon goal: gaining and keeping customers. In today's complicated and hectic environment, it's far too easy to forget the customer experience and instead focus on your department, clinical productivity, or processes.

Difficulties arise when you and your employees become too focused on individual responsibilities; everyone loses sight of the bigger picture. Sure, any healthcare organization would say its main goal is to gain and retain customers, but it's especially difficult to do, given the pressures in the industry today.

By evaluating how you sell your services and who's involved in that process you can have a new sales force without spending a dime. Consider the cause-and-effect of such a change.

- ❑ Everyone is responsible for selling in an organization, whether directly or indirectly. All of your employees are the foundation for the work you do; their day-to-day work is the backbone, and the product, of your organization. And their actions drive the way your organization is perceived in the marketplace.
- ❑ Giving people the information and tools to sell can elevate your brand to a new level and extend your message via a powerful sales force.
- ❑ Showing your team how to sell gives them the opportunity to demonstrate their depth and credibility to internal and external audiences.
- ❑ Having the team understand your sales and marketing strategies can help them become better attuned to what they're delivering and representing—and can alert them when the product may fall short of customer expectations.

5 Steps to Selling Sales in Your Organization

- Assess and understand your team and its impact on your customer.
 - Build a strategy and a plan. Share it with the team.
 - Create the sales vision and the team's role in it.
 - Customize the tools for educating your team.
 - Share the results. Keep the team involved. Promote
- Once you bring customers into your organization, the rest of the team is responsible for their experience (and making sure they come back and remain loyal). You can help your team create positive customer experiences by providing training and expecting accountability from each person.

Assessing Your People and Products

It's an enticing prospect, but before you rush to embrace your new team, evaluate your people resources. This goes for every area, from receptionist, medical technician and physician to the accounting and medical records departments. Take a close look at your people and how they represent your product and organization.

- Do their words and actions positively represent the image you want for what you offer and for your organization as a whole?
- What motivates your team? Remember that what pushes one person's buttons doesn't do anything for another. A salesperson might be motivated by incentives, while your clinical team might prefer a pizza day or a new piece of equipment for their clinic.
- Force yourself to ask the tough questions—of yourself. Do you see breakdowns in communication? A failure to provide adequate training or recognition for a job done well?
- Does the team seem to understand their accountability for their actions as representatives your organization, in addition to their day-to-day responsibilities?

Creating a Sales Culture Through Self-Awareness

Sales may be an uncomfortable term—the “s” word to many on your team. Realize that many team members only think of sales in the traditional sense, or may not deem themselves “good at selling.”

Others may hesitate to embrace a strategy that, at first, may not feel natural. Here's how to address some of the issues you may face.

- Break down barriers and preconceived notions. Talk about what sales is, and isn't. At Corporate Health Group, we define sales as “the process of matching the needs of the customer with the benefits your organization or product has to offer.” Focus on the positive and on the value: that you're selling a quality service and one that helps customers solve a business problem, such as helping customers manage workers' compensation or lost workdays.
- Ignite a passion in each employee for what they can do for the customer. Help them recognize that they should take pride in being part of a positive solution.
- Stress how each person makes a difference in selling the organization. It happens every time someone answers the phone, makes an appointment, and has contact with the customer.
- Encourage leadership to embrace their roles in the sales effort and demonstrate an organizational commitment to the process. Like you, they need to communicate the message to

customers and among your team.

- ❑ Realize and share the message that employees need to define sales for themselves. Help employees get comfortable with this definition, and then show how they can tactically support the sales and service mission within their own comfort zone.

Providing and Customizing Tools for Education

Spreading a sales-focused mentality requires education. One of your biggest responsibilities in the process is to give the team the building blocks to make them comfortable and confident in their role.

- ❑ Provide training and scripting tools that help people feel comfortable. It may include working one on one with a team member, or gathering a team off site for an informal discussion.
- ❑ Use existing meeting time as an opportunity to insert training, scripting, and practice sessions. Spend 15 minutes focused on a key topic or scenario. Repetition and ongoing training have lasting results and encourage team building.
- ❑ Customize the process to the person's position. Tom in Radiology needs different tools to make his role work than does Carol in Administration.
- ❑ Take team members out to meet and interact with your customers. It puts depth and credibility on the table. It also gives the team a better understanding of what the customer needs and what happens during the selling process.
- ❑ Schedule regular "check-ups" and gatherings to motivate and stimulate the team.
- ❑ Use the people who "get it" as ambassadors for enthusiasm and excitement.

Share the Results, Share the Success

No part of this strategy can work unless you provide the payoff. How are the team's efforts impacting the organization? Present the results, positive and not so positive, to demonstrate your faith in their efforts and your respect for what they have done.

- ❑ Show that everyone's efforts are having an impact: Collect data and share it with the team—it will reinforce their actions in the future. Share the information with leadership, too, so your team has respect and value upstream in the organization.
- ❑ Hold regular team meetings to share information, give pats on the back, and address challenges.
- ❑ Involve your team in the planning process for next quarter and next year.
- ❑ Ask a department team to build one customer service initiative they think is important. Have them implement it and report the results.
- ❑ Give people an incentive to embrace the strategy. Create a recognition program that rewards team performance. It doesn't have to be monetary; solicit ideas from your team on what they consider a perk.

Getting Your Team to Think "Sales"

- ❑ Make it personal, in terms and by job tasks your team members can understand.
- ❑ Give individual examples. "Barb, the nursing assistant, sells when she listens to her patients, when she follows through on orders," etc.
- ❑ Share scenarios they can practice and script with each other at department meetings. It will increase their comfort when they do it in the real world. If there are ongoing scenarios for a department, build a script, practice it, and encourage its consistent use. Comfort comes with making and practicing a process until it becomes familiar.
- ❑ Acknowledge positive sales and service experiences when you see them or hear about them.

Recommended Reading

Looking for more ways to strengthen your organization through team building? Corporate Health Group recommends the following books:

- ❑ *The Invisible Touch: The Four Keys to Modern Marketing*, Warner Books, 2000
- ❑ *Selling the invisible: A Field Guide to Modern Marketing*, Warner Books, 1997
- ❑ *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive*, Jossey-Bass, 2000
- ❑ *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*, Jossey-Bass, 2002

For more information, visit our Web site at www.corporatehealthgroup.com

Conclusion

When you recognize the power of your team and put it to work, you truly differentiate your organization from the competition, there's a wealth of benefits to creating a common goal of acquiring and keeping customers. You'll cultivate long-term loyalty, team ownership and morale among your team—plus a steady revenue stream from your customer base. What's more, leadership will have a heightened sense of value for your team and its overall success. And you will have done it all by realizing the value of your most important resources, without having to spend a dime.



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