

Physician's Role in Sales and Marketing

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There are two critical factors for success in urgent care and occupational health sales: *credibility and differentiation*. Physicians by their training, depth of knowledge and expertise are tremendous assets to your sales efforts. Engage your physician in your sales effort and you'll make a strong statement about the value of their role in your organization's success.

Get the right people in the right role.

Clearly defining the role and expectations for the sales effort will aid in optimizing the physician. Establish when you want your physician involved in sales, with what customers and what you expect or will measure as their effort in terms of sales results. Other tips to ensure the "right" fit; if you want a physician to be involved in sales and are recruiting, then recruit someone with sales experience, selling skills and personality. If you already have the physician in place, determine how best to use them in the sales effort.

Build the physician sales effort to match your market.

If you're in a highly industrialized marketplace requiring specific occupational health knowledge, your selling approach may benefit from using the physician to differentiate the value, technical skills and service you can provide the customer. If you're new to the market, engaging the physician in the sales effort may provide the "tipping point" for building new business or shifting market share. Sometimes a physician can be the administrative peer to your clients in a selling situation – ensuring management discussions about how your program can address their healthcare strategies.

Emphasize differentiation.

Work to develop benefit-oriented statements for your services. If focused on employers, emphasize the business and personal benefits the clinic's programs and services offer. If focused on consumers in a walk-in, urgent care model, focus on convenience, easy bill and personal care.

Define the physician's role.

Do you want the physician to provide oversight into sales strategy, approach and key targets for the right offerings? Or can they help by managing the retention of key accounts through quarterly customer meetings, reviewing data and the client site? Alternately, you may choose to focus them on new accounts sorted by targeted value for the clinic. Use the sales staff to open doors and qualify the opportunity, then positioning the physician visit as valued added to assist in closing the sale.

Clearly define the physician's time commitment. For instance, how many plant tours, worksite assessments, client appointments for new business or retention? How many hours per month are allocated to sales or retention versus patient care or clinical oversight? The challenge will be to build the expectations into productivity or performance measures and continue to optimize the physician's skills to benefit the clinic.

Most physicians didn't receive training in sales or marketing, so build in a means for them to learn. Develop team-selling techniques and practice prior to calling on customers. Provide sales training to your entire team; seek out articles, journals or professional development opportunities to reinforce the desired sales approach and skills.

At a minimum, work to develop the physician's role with the prospect or customer, providing them with key questions, benefit-oriented solutions and help them to optimize the sales staff in closing the sale.

The physician is critical to retention, satisfaction and loyalty. Involve the physician in customer service strategies, quality and process improvement, product delivery and management and client follow-up/communication. If you have the choice, hire a full-time professional salesperson and focus on keeping the physician's current business and growing it deeper and wider.

See the value the physician brings.

Recognize the physician as the valuable resource they are and you'll further differentiate your program in a cluttered marketplace. By evaluating your market, competition and the physician skill set, you'll be poised to build a differentiated sales approach that will keep the business you can't afford to lose and develop opportunities to win new business.



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