OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE

Return-on-Investment in Occupational Health Sales

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It began with two cavemen, or even before: Bartering. Fair trade. A transaction where both parties (theoretically) walk away satisfied that they got a positive return on their exchange.

This concept persists to this very day. At a minimum, your urgent care clinic should understand return-on-investment (ROI) for two occupational health staples: work injury management and pre-placement physical examinations.

Work Injury Management

Employers need to get workers back to work as quickly and inexpensively as possible. Thus, you need to decrease the likelihood of a worker getting re-injured. Any discussion concerning the value of your clinic's injury management service must take into account both your injury management proficiency and prevention skills.

When selling such services, you must illustrate your clinic's ability to ensure a rapid return to work at a manageable cost. Sustainable return to work must be more than an idle promise; it requires meaningful justification.

Numerous attributes can lead to a more rapid return to work:

- **Care management software** facilitates faster and tighter control over the care management system.
- **Targeted case management** ensures that the cases most amenable to prompt coordination will get priority attention.
- **Modified duty programs** ensure more rapid integration into the workforce.
- **Continuity with occupational rehabilitation services** provides interventions to reduce lost work time.

The second half of the equation—lower costs—is more challenging because buyers frequently cannot see beyond average fees. Therefore, your clinic must differentiate between price and value (i.e., return on investment).

Next comes the *rationale* used to illustrate why your clinic is the best option. This requires an emphasis on the *likelihood* of your program making a difference, rather than a *guarantee*.

Rationale for a greater likelihood might include your track record, experience, or specific provider training or credentials.

Pre-placement Physicals

Unless your clinic addresses return on investment, you may find it difficult to compete with lower cost providers who offer pre-placement examinations primarily as a low-cost commodity.

Employers may "purchase" pre-placement physical examinations on price alone. They may go one step further and factor in convenience (e.g., availability to provide exams during traditional non-working hours, etc.). Unless prompted, the employer is unlikely to think of ROI when selecting a provider of pre-placement physical exams.

A well-conceived and delivered pre-placement physical exam is usually one that is based on an astute job analysis and performed by a provider who is skilled at matching job requirements to the applicant. Some practitioners do this well; many do not.

Thus, a value statement should stress your clinic's expertise in job analysis.

The rationale in support of this assertion might be physicians with specialized training in job analysis or software that provides the clinician with appropriate parameters and guidelines.

Sell on value, not price, and support the value of your product with meaningful and concrete examples. This is the heart of effective sales.

In summary, remember these four rules in using return-on-investment in occupational health sales:

1. Never be "beaten" on price alone.
2. Advise prospects that ROI is more important than unit price.
3. Ensure that every program provides a unique value.
4. Provide concrete rationale that your clinic's approach provides the greatest likelihood for optimal ROI. ■

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