



Choose Words Carefully in an Occupational Health Sales Call

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The art of using the “right” words and avoiding words that tend to harm one’s sales effort is undervalued.

Consider these recommendations:

Use strong, descriptive, positive words. Your choice of words should reflect the image you wish to portray of your urgent care clinic, and the attributes that go along with such an image (e.g., energy, confidence, focus, and warmth).

How about asking your staff to list the 10 words that reflect the most positive things about your clinic and then make a composite of those words? Then emphasize these words when communicating with prospects or clients.

Avoid weak, ambiguous, and negative words. Negative words tend to filter into many sales calls. Avoid words that might be construed as negative, critical, or that suggest lack of confidence in your clinic’s abilities. It is far better to be silent than to introduce a negative.

Use euphemisms to convert negatives to positives. Negative issues can easily be converted to positives, provided you take the time to consider the conversation in advance. For example, “problem,” should become “opportunity.” Or, “your injury rate is too high,” becomes “if we can help bring your injury rate down to historic levels for your industry, it would lower your workers’ comp costs.”

Reflect the word choice of the other party. If “one man’s meat is another man’s poison,” then “one man’s words are another man’s meaningless phrases.”

In short, certain words resonate well with some and other words resonate better with others. Encourage prospects to discuss their needs, wishes, and fears. Listen carefully, taking care to note their choice of words, especially

those they use frequently. Reflect positive words back verbatim and convert negative words into meaningful euphemisms.

Qualify, always qualify. Short of mathematical certitude, nothing is “certain” and the word “never” covers a mighty long time. As a consultant, I wish to project an image of humility and be covered for the inevitable times that I miss something or offer a recommendation that is not necessarily viable. Pepper your written and oral suggestions with phrases such as “in my opinion,” “it seems to me,” and “if I were you I would....” Conversely, avoid such phrases as “you must....”

Keep coming back to your competitive edge. Your most important words are the words that succinctly describe your competitive edge, i.e., what sets your clinic apart. Synthesize each competitive edge down to a word or two and find a way a repeat those words often. Viable, competitive edge words include “experience,” “locations,” and “proven outcomes.” If your program has “the Edge,” don’t be shy about repeating the word/phrases—over and over and over again.

Never promise. Cost savings and return on investment are critical to employer clients and prospects. Therefore, it becomes tempting to “promise” specific savings or a projected return on investment using unrealistically high or arbitrarily developed numbers.

Any statement regarding cost savings or return on investment should be to the point but not so specific that your prospect will have unrealistic expectations or think you are offering a guarantee.

For example, instead of making risky predictions like “we should be able to reduce your costs by 20%” or “we will provide you with a positive return on investment,” simply tell your client, “I am confident that our clinic’s management of your employees’ health will help you reduce unnecessary costs and result in a positive return on investment.” ■



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