



## 25 Sales and Marketing Pearls

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This month's column provides some easy-to-execute sales and marketing tips that we have found helpful in moving a clinic's occupational health initiative forward:

### Sales Skills and Techniques

1. **Use euphemisms to convert negative phrases into positives.** "You have a problem" should be "You have an opportunity." "You have a high injury rate" becomes "if we can help lower your injury rate, it would result in lower workers' comp costs."
2. **Orchestrate clinic visits to make the close.** Make clinic tours easy for the prospect, schedule tours at times that make sense, plan conversation points with key personnel in advance, and complete paperwork (e.g., billing) while the prospect is on site.
3. **Be a great communicator.** The great communicator expresses even the most complex topic in a simple and direct manner. Vary your pace, listen and probe intently, and maintain focus on your inherent message.
4. **Consider the "fear factor."** Recognize the potential importance of a prospect's parochial interests during a sales encounter. Structure questions to determine where a prospect sits on the "care about my company/care about myself" continuum and adjust accordingly.
5. **Focus on the golden minute.** The first 30 seconds and last 30 seconds of a sales call tend to be more important than



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all of the activity in between. Develop an orchestrated routine for both segments.

6. **Capitalize on the "herd mentality."** For every early adaptor, there are 10 others who prefer to follow the crowd. For every buyer who buys *offensively* out of desire, there are 10 who buy *defensively* out of fear. You can use this understanding to your advantage by discerning to what degree your prospect is a defensive buyer and by employing a "herd mentality" selling approach when you do identify a buyer.
7. **Emphasize the positive.** A positive attitude is a self-fulfilling prophecy for success. Respect the prospect's time, qualify every suggestion ("in my opinion"), guarantee nothing, memorize key points, and never call attention to a negative.
8. **Use an incremental approach to get to "yes."** Resist the use of tired closing jargon or simply "asking for the order." Instead, establish a sense of urgency ("according to your figures, you are spending \$10,000 a week, or \$2,000 a day, on workers' compensation. The sooner we get started...").
9. **Use questions to generate sales.** Speak no more than 20% of the time during a sales call, and use most of that time to ask relevant questions, probe (e.g., asking the prospect to expand on vague, yet critical terms such as "quality" and "responsiveness"). Move the prospect through a logical sales process.
10. **Structure your sales call.** Carefully plan several key components of your sales call, including your opening statement, the "roadmap," your program benefit statement, your basic close/action step, and your final comment.

### Marketing Outreach

11. **Draw attention.** Draw attention to your services in a

world of finite attention spans. Invariably, people notice—and remember—the unique rather than the traditional. Take a chance on something unproven but new, rather than always sticking with a “proven” yet tired approach.

**12. Simplify and keep repeating your message.** In our information-saturated world, you must keep your message ultra simple; keep repeating it and use multiple modalities (e.g., voicemail, e-mail, website, direct correspondence) to transmit the message.

*“Leaders recognize the need to effect a sense of balance in everything they do.”*

**13. Market on a “shoestring.”** New communication channels have made it easier, less time consuming and less costly to market services. Use modern outreach vehicles such as e-mail, voicemail, audio-based education, and your website to effect optimal marketing on a shoestring budget.

**14. Use customer service to enhance business.** Word-of-mouth from happy customers can enhance growth. Tips for upgrading your internal customer service include:

- hiring people-oriented personnel
- developing a written customer service plan
- involving all personnel in this ethic
- setting the bar high
- providing ongoing training
- evaluating continuously
- rewarding exceptional service.

**15. Use e-mail as a core marketing tool.** Effective sales are in the details, and e-mail “paper” trails can preserve this detail in an easy, organized manner. You can write an effective e-mail in less than a minute. Compared to the old days, you can become an icon of productivity.

**16. Use your physicians in sales when appropriate.** Consider the nature of your market and the physician’s inherent sales/marketing savvy. Include a definition of a physician’s time commitment, parameters for participation, the nature of handpicked prospects, and appropriate follow-up in your plan.

**17. Use education as a marketing tool.** Although live educational seminars and conferences and printed newsletters may still have a place, the education card can be used more

cost-effectively through web-based audio education, periodic e-mail blasts, and audio town forums.

**18. Speak eloquently to the community.** Offer your audience a clear objective and roadmap, involving them from the outset. Do not force movements; speak from the heart; minimize audiovisuals; throw out a challenge; and show genuine appreciation for everyone’s time.

**Sales and Marketing Management**

**19. Embrace the culture of constant change.** Maintain an active plan to periodically assess every aspect of your program, constantly tweak your plan in response to changing market realities, and try at least one new marketing initiative every year.

**20. Use sales metrics.** Maintain and analyze sales metrics such as “quality” telephone calls, face-to-face sales apportionments, prospect/client conversion rates, and the mean dollar value per relationship.

**21. Constantly motivate sales professionals.** Include an effective feedback system, appropriate training, an inspiring workplace climate, and practical, challenging (but not too challenging), specific, and understandable goals in your proactive plan.

**22. Hire a superior sales professional.** Learn more about a candidate by asking such questions as “If I asked the 10 people who knew you best what was your best trait as a person, what would they say?” or “If you were hiring a person for this position, what four traits would you look for? Why?”

**23. Emphasize time management.** Fine tune the sales job description, cluster sales professional hours by activity type, tighten meeting time, script, and avoid being obsessive about little things.

**24. Provide a “win-win” incentive compensation plan.** A “win-win” incentive plan is gross revenue-based, never capped, paid quarterly, layered for higher compensation for higher levels of achievement, and supplemented with non-financial rewards.

**25. Be a leader.** Leaders recognize a need to effect a sense a *balance* in everything they do and *empower other future leaders*, for a true leader should leave behind a legacy of his or her leadership. As the eyes, ears, and spokesperson for their clinic, a sales professional must strive to become more of a leader. ■