

# Potpourri BY MICHAEL T. FERRIS



**O**ur industry and its member agencies are like potpourri, the sum of the ingredients delivers the result. You may be wondering, “why the title?” Well, this month I am touching on a number of topics in one column. Most are the result of

questions posed to me over the last year or two, or ideas that I had in my notebook for future columns. This month you will notice an added feature to this column, The Sales Manager’s Corner.

## Not-for-Profit Agencies

Does the profit status of our agency make a difference in our marketing efforts? This is an excellent question. I would contend that everything about your agency makes a difference – especially if it is a differentiating factor. Not-for-profit agencies will want to stress that they are investing back into their communities. Most of the time these agencies have a long history of serving their communities and this should be underscored in the sales and marketing messaging. That being said, this is a point that will support your overall assertions about quality and service. It is not a feature that will carry a lot of weight – when surveyed referral sources say that all things being equal, they like dealing with a not-for-profit agency. The same referral sources, when asked, said that they would not base a referral decision based on the agency’s profit status.

The question I get from hospital based agencies is “Why don’t our own discharge planners, doctors, etc. use us as much as they should?” The freestanding agencies are looking at the hospital-based ones and thinking that they are getting all of the referrals coming out of that hospital. The truth is that the hospital-based agencies that stop worrying about forcing the use of their agency and start treating

the internal referral sources as customers will come out way ahead. It is always better to earn the business in the long run as those are deeper and stronger relationships.

## Pick the High Hanging Fruit

Don’t forget to come back to get the “high hanging fruit” after you have gone after all of the “low hanging fruit.” Every referral source has some additional referrals hidden by details. Look for the opportunity to educate your referral sources about all of the uses for home health and hospice, and you will get more of these referrals. Work with your referral sources to make sure that you are getting them to make best use of your services. Additionally, there are many referral sources in your market that are either non-traditional or are not high referrers. Look for ways to captivate that part of the market as well. Don’t assume that you got all of the fruit on the first pass!

## Easy is the Answer

If you can make the referral sources lives easier, you will earn their business. Look for how you can make it easy to work with your agency. Also look for ways that the referral source will perceive as making it easier. Customize your service protocols to fit their needs. Ask your referral sources how you can make things easier on a regular basis. Find out how to handle the orders and paperwork for them, and you will earn business. Paperwork is the number one complaint about dealing with home health and hospice. If you would expect a pizza delivery company to provide top notch service to earn your business, why shouldn’t your referral sources and patients demand the same?

These are just a few of the items on my list, so watch for others in future columns. I hope they are helpful. If you have any questions you want answered, don’t hesitate to ask. Happy Selling and Marketing! 🇺🇸

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## Leveraging Medicaid Waiver Opportunities



One of the most important ways to benefit from the Medicaid waiver patient population is to make sure to capture the Medicare home health or hospice business at your agency. I have seen too many times where the two divisions are operated separately and are not using one another when their patients need other services. The relationship must be one of team work and the desire to work together. This team building takes time and commitment from management to make it happen.

Internal referrals are lost many times because it is easier to let them go elsewhere. Make sure you have analyzed your systems and processes to make sure that it is very easy to make an internal referral. If it is not, you will lose referrals that should be captured internally. For many, attention to this area will result in a big return on investment. Keep in mind that you must earn the business from these customers, just like any others. Treat them as customers and you will see predictable results show up.


Finally, the ability to market and sell your agency as a full service, one stop shop should also generate more business. Make sure that the referral source knows that they can use your agency for any type of home care including Medicaid. This can be a significant competitive advantage in many markets. Ask for all of their business. Studies have shown that the retention rate and loyalty of customers goes up with each additional service line referred to. 

**Q** “How do I know if I should terminate a sales person for lack of productivity?”

**A** The fact that you are thinking about terminating someone for not producing is your first tip-off. Most of the time you are better off cutting loose the poor performers sooner than later. Your gut instinct is usually going to be right. That being said, it is very important to make sure that you have given this sales person every opportunity to succeed. In my book if they are working hard, doing what is asked of them and asking for help, they deserve every opportunity. If they are not following your sales system, then they do not deserve additional time and attention. If they are working hard and just need help learning the sales game, then you should be riding along with them, evaluating them each time and together determining the plan of action. Then the next week when you ride with them you will want to see them applying what you talked about. If not, then they are not working the system and really trying to succeed.

You are always best off to let someone go sooner than later. The low performers that are not progressing and especially those that are not working hard, will only pull your other hard working top producers down. You owe it to the entire team to only keep the best and get rid of the rest.

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*Each month Michael will address one issue or answer one question dealing with sales management issues. Feel free to submit questions to [cat@nahc.org](mailto:cat@nahc.org) *