

Passion, Ethics and Sales

By Michael T. Ferris



The best way to create a solid business foundation is to foster a sales-focused organization that is customer centric. If the agency approaches every decision with the question “what’s best for the patient?”, then everything else will fall into place. It empowers all members of the agency to focus on selling its services, increasing referrals and pride for the company.

Customer-centricity marries sales with customer service. Training teaches your customer service (intake) personnel how to recognize and respond to sales opportunities. Customers are recognized as the organization’s most important asset, and the sales approach and management of customers takes a long term orientation.

Customer centric sales techniques are built around needs assessment. The sales people (both outside and inside) ask purposeful, relevant questions. They have meaningful conversations with customers, and offer solutions directly related to their needs. This then empowers referral sources to make the only logical choice your agency. Selling home care and hospice services requires the perfect balance of sales and people skills, product knowledge, enthusiasm, and ethics.

Passion is contagious and produces sales results. Having a positive image and visualizing success are essential to maintaining an enthusiastic attitude. The sales team must feel that they are empowered, appreciated, respected, and heard. This is true in all realms of sales, but is especially true when selling intangibles such as services.

Putting the customer first will pay big dividends—this includes the agency putting the needs and wants of the patients first, as well as those of the referral sources. If you ask 100 referral sources what is most important to them when selecting a home care or hospice, 95 percent of them will respond, “They take good care of my patients.” But when you ask what that means to them, you start getting actionable insights that can be used to build strong relationships.

Train the sales team to ask how they can make a referral source’s life easier. If you can make it demonstrably easier to refer to your agency, you will get the referrals. Find out how the referral source would like to be treated, and then create a customized “plan of care” for each of them.

Communicating Quality

The best way to communicate quality is to personify, it make it tangible. The key lies not in just talking about quality, but in demonstrating it to referral sources in a way that is meaningful to them. Use tangible examples that demonstrate how quality shows up at your agency. Here are just a few ways to do this:

- Use benchmarked data in graphical format to show how your outcomes compare to others;
- Utilize telemedicine and explain that your agency feels that this represents the new standard of care for many diagnoses, and that you have made this investment

because it's consistent with your approach to patient care;

- Patient and family testimonials that speak to the wonderful care they received from your company;
- Endorsements from local, well-respected physicians;
- Demonstrate how easy you are to work with; attention to these details translates to quality in the eyes of the referral source; and
- Introducing clinical field staff to the physicians and offices of the patients they serve; the proverbial 'putting a face' on quality.

The secret to sales success lies in building a reputation for doing the right things for the right reasons. Approach all sales opportunities with pride in the value added that is brought to the community. Be respectful, easy to work with, and trustworthy. Demonstrate your passion for home care and hospice, act with integrity, and keep smiling. Until next month, Happy Selling!

About the Author: *Michael Ferris is Managing Principal, Home Care Marketing Solutions, Chapel Hill, NC. Mike is a leading expert and author of six books and three ebooks enabling agencies to compete and win. His newest books are "The Field Guide to Selling Home Health" and "The Field Guide to Selling Hospice". NAHC Members receive a 15% discount on all publications. Mike may be contacted at mike@hcmarketingsolutions.com. Sign up for his free sales and marketing newsletter at www.hcmarketingsolutions.com.*