

The following is a brief excerpt from the Physical Therapy Success Manual. This particular section describes one method of establishing rapport with your physicians and how to win more referrals. It picks up with a sample appointment with your Doctor(s). (We have already walked through the process that has taken you most effectively to this point.)

Part Two:

You have successfully set-up a lunch or appointment with the referral source. So how do you get the business? An appointment of fifteen minutes would be enough time to establish a rapport, differentiate you from the competition, and ask for the business. More time is better, but less time may well lead to an unproductive meeting.

Take the time up front to let the doctor know your background, where you went to school, years of experience, and why you chose physical therapy as a profession. More importantly, ask the doctor(s) about themselves. The best way to build a relationship is to get the doctor(s) to like you, and the most effective way to do that is to get them to talk about themselves. Doctors especially have the underlying need to be the experts at what they do and want their associates to recognize that little fact. I have had several occasions in which all I did was ask the doctor to tell me about his background and twenty minutes later he was still talking and yes, I got the business.

Ask the doctor(s) what they expect from the physical therapy clinics that they refer their patients to. What things are not being offered? What are some areas they would like to see improved? If they do not offer some suggestions, be prepared to offer them a few suggestions of your own. Examples might be: do they consistently get progress notes sent with each patient when they come back to them for follow up? If not, might some objective measurements or functional improvements help to save them time

with their patients? Do they hear complaints regarding lack of continuity of care secondary to being shuffled between several different therapists from one visit to the next? During this process it may be a good idea to take notes when the doctor(s) is talking. This will demonstrate interest, initiative, and active listening. By doing this you are sending a very clear message that you understand and are ready to deliver on the expectations they have put forth.

1. Next, get into selling the doctor(s) on why they should give you a handful of patients to treat. Do not ask for the world up front. Ask for a trial of five to ten patients over the next month. At the same time, if the doctor(s) are willing to send you more patients then gladly accept.

Be specific in what you are asking and let them know exactly what type of patient you are looking for so that whenever they see your patient type they will think of ***your practice***. Paint the picture that referring patients to you is beneficial for the doctor as well as for your practice. Let them know how you are different. The following are examples of different selling strategies that have worked time and time again to gain many new referral sources in several practices.

Strategy #1

You are a clinician and a business owner. You can and should spin this fact to your advantage. Sell your practice against a hospital based outpatient facility or against a practice owned by a large conglomerate or national chain. Let the referral source and community know that you are different in that you have a vested interest in them and their patients reaching the highest possible outcomes in the shortest amount of time. Why? Because this is the only way you feel that you will be able to build a solid reputation as the best physical therapy practice in town. Do not shy away from politely and respectfully targeting and differentiating yourself from the competition.

Strategy #2: Dialogue

“Doctor, the physical therapy offered at (competitor’s name) is good. But frankly your patients will often see three different therapist or therapist assistants or even aides on their first three visits. I am different in that I guarantee that when a patient starts with a specific therapist, that therapist will see them at a minimum of eighty per cent of the time, and usually one hundred per cent of the time. This will allow for a much better continuity and standard of care to your patients.

“ I want your patients to feel like you have referred them to the best physical therapy practice in town and that they are being well taken care of.”

Strategy #3: Dialogue..

(There are many variations and an example of effective dialogues you can and should use to get patient referrals The Physical Therapy Manual offers additional insights into this process)

The following excerpt can and should be implemented to separate your practice or yourself from the competition and will help to ensure additional clients.

(pg18)

New referrals are flowing in and it is imperative that communication with the new referral sources is maximized. Know what form of communication each physician prefers, whether it is by fax, telephone call, a written note or monthly face-to-face meetings. It is essential to update your referral sources regularly on each client. You must be in the habit of asking your patients, when do you see your doctor again? You should always strive to send a progress note with them. Even if this point has not been previously discussed with the referral source it shows a high level of commitment to your patient and to the doctor and it will differentiate you from the competition. It is *always* a good idea to have the patient hand deliver their progress note to the physician. This way the patient will know exactly how they are progressing in therapy because you took the time to discuss this with them. This also saves the doctor time in the office because he will have a very succinct update of both the patient’s objective measures and improved functional ability. Key learning here, be sure these notes are extremely accurate. If a mistake is to be made, make sure it is on the conservative side. It is better to under-promise and over-deliver when the patient sees their doctor rather than have

the doctor perceive that the patient, according to your note, is doing better than they actually are. This can be a deal breaker. You never want to find yourself in a position where the doctor thinks you are trying to overestimate their patient's progress. They will lose confidence in you or think you are just incompetent. If a patient has not progressed then be upfront with the information because the doctor will want to know this. If this happens to be the case, which it will be for a certain number of patients, then it would be appropriate for you to call the doctor's office before the patient is to return for a follow up and explain what is going on in this particular case. That way, the doctor knows that you are on top of the situation and knows the reasons for the lack of progress.

Communication is key to building strong relationships. Consistently sending physicians copies of initial evaluations, progress and discharge reports will distinguish you from your competition and will ultimately earn you more business.

We have spent many years compiling information that can truly help drive your success as an individual therapist or as a practice owner.

Remember when you buy the Physical Therapy Success Manual you will also receive a Free copy of The Patient Compliance Handbook and our most Frequently Asked Questions.