

Marketing 102:

## When It's Not Enough JUST to Know The Industry . . .

By Taylor Cline

HCFI Marketing Solutions

For several weeks now, HCFI has been addressing the keys to success in the healthcare furnishings market, what it takes to win in the healthcare business and why the various success factors play such an important role. Now that you are armed with an understanding of what your organization needs to do, it is time to focus on how to "spread the word."

This article is the first of a two part series focusing on the keys to successfully marketing and branding your organization. This week, we will focus on why marketing initiatives have failed to produce the desired results. Our next installment will arm you with the tactics for not only getting to your customers, but also generating a lasting and favorable response to your company.

Effective marketing, planning and execution are the cornerstones of all successful sales programs and contribute to the overall success of your organization. Countless organizations have great products and services available, but they fail to effectively communicate what makes them different while truly understanding the industry and the buyer's needs.

Today, healthcare institutions, A&D, GPO's & IDN's seek out partners and suppliers that can understand and navigate the every day challenges they face, from requisition, specification and purchase of furnishings and equipment to facilities renovation to medical supplies. GPO's capture some of these sales simply because of the ease of purchase and the lack of time these already overburdened individuals have in making and evaluating decisions. To

be successful, you must be able to demonstrate that you understand your customers' needs and can provide the best solution to any issue or challenge.

Here's an example: Just prior to an HCFI Health Care 101 Training Session at a dealership, the manager for the medical sales team was sharing their new brochure touting their healthcare experience, service level and product offerings. Before beginning the training session, the dealer principal was asked to read the following copy out loud and explain why he felt it was effective. The following is an excerpt from this newly created healthcare brochure:

"Dealer X is Experienced in Developing Flexible, Integrated, and Comprehensive Solutions for Healthcare Interior Environments. Dealer X focuses solely on Healthcare institutions in providing furniture, fixture, and equipment (FF&E) products and services that provide solutions to ever-changing space utilization and functional requirements. These changes are occurring as Healthcare institutions are reducing their facility, engineering, and purchasing staffs. These dynamics place increasing importance on out-source partnering to find flexible solutions that equate to the best value return on investment, functionality, and aesthetics. Dealer X's staff has over 30 years of experience in design and development of unique solutions. Their portfolio of capabilities can be applied from project planning to final project completion. The performance of the Group is supported by using the administrative and operations personnel of Group Y, Inc., one of the largest contract interiors companies in Blank."

After completing the training session, the Healthcare Manager was asked once again to read the excerpt from the brochure and determine if it was still a viable marketing tool. He immediately said "No, it needs to be rewritten." Why does this marketing piece miss the mark? The brochure copy was very well written and explained the purpose of the company, but it fell short in demonstrating a true understanding of the healthcare facility's needs and challenges. The individual who reads this brochure must feel confident in your capabilities and believe the organization has the background and experience

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necessary to deal with issues such as managed care, cost containment, IDN structures, ALOS (average length of stay) and GPO contracts.

For example, let's take the statement "...development of unique solutions." This may give the reader the impression that this company does not fully grasp the unique buying challenges they face. The customer is seeking a partner that can provide solutions that they expect to be unique and well designed but also solves an issue or concern, provides high quality at a good value and works within the organization's constraints. The brochure also failed to point out that since managed care has affected the healthcare industry so dramatically, the customer may benefit from your dealership's understanding of the importance of design and aesthetics due to local competition among hospitals.

The intent of this excerpt was to show that Dealer X has the necessary experience and is capable of delivering well-designed products and solutions. Yet from the point of view of the reader, it sends an entirely different message.

Marketing is more than billboards, banners or business cards; it is the overall image and message that you present for your company. It is everything from brochure copy to voicemail greetings to press releases to event sponsorship. There are tremendous opportunities for dealers, designers and manufacturers to rise up and create a successful brand that will be readily recognized by the healthcare community.

So, what makes you special, unique or different? How do you demonstrate your understanding of the market? How do you stand out from the pack? The short answer? Through effective training, marketing and execution.

## Where do you begin?

As we have mentioned in previous articles, before



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you begin targeting the healthcare market, you must possess the background and knowledge necessary to sell and market to healthcare organizations.

Once you have prepared your arsenal, it is time to implement thorough and well-coordinated marketing, advertising and public relations campaigns. The first step in any successful marketing initiative is the development of a detailed plan that defines what you want to accomplish and how. This plan will should include a mix of elements, including the identification of market variables, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, definition of program/organization goals, objectives and strategies, as well as definition of the action plan and success factors.

Just like office furniture dealers, there is an abundance of advertising and marketing agencies that all say they have the same capabilities and state they can create anything and everything you need. Consider the example above though. The copy was well written, but did it achieve its goal? Was it specific to healthcare or could you have easily inserted bubble gum or car tires in place of healthcare and achieve the same result? Does your agency have the knowledge and experience necessary to successfully execute your marketing strategy and development?

*HCFI Marketing Solutions is a stand-alone division of HCFI specifically designed to help our customers define and achieve their marketing goals. Our team is comprised of individuals with extensive Healthcare, Office Furnishings, Medical Equipment and GPO/IDN experience necessary to help you plan, execute and manage successful and measurable marketing initiatives.*

*Combined with marketing of your service and products, education of your industry and training in your industry, we have the next step to continue on a path to success:*

*Health Care Furnishings Forum, co-sponsored by MMQB & Healthcare Design Magazine, will take place in Chicago on June 15th during NeoCon and is designed to give you an excellent insight into what the healthcare market needs and expects. You will hear from a variety of individuals from the A&D community, GPO's, IDN's, Distributors and Manufacturers of Healthcare furniture specializing in healthcare and many others on how to effectively penetrate the furnishings market in healthcare. Also, learn what not to do!*

*Learn about a very unique project being implemented by a large (pure) healthcare distributor from Los Angeles. Hear GPO's discuss their needs and issues and challenges. And of course, all the panelists will discuss "what's hot and what's not!"*

*Contact HCFI for assistance in developing your healthcare business via email at [info@hcfi.net](mailto:info@hcfi.net) or call 949-481-6888. To learn more about the Health Care Furnishings Forum on June 15th, visit our website at [www.hcfi.net](http://www.hcfi.net) where you can download the Registration Form.*



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