

Strategy = Plan; Tactics = Action; Logistics = Everything Else!

"Developing A Healthcare Plan & Making Sure Your Healthcare Strategy Gets Implemented"

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Tactics = Action is the second in this series and means we are now developing the steps to success in the planning process for business success in dealers, manufacturers and distributors.

Defining tactics is really quite easy. If you desire to enter healthcare, you need to think of the products, markets, customers, distributors, reps and many other things before entering. So your strategy has been developed and now we need to build the actions steps to begin moving towards our goal.

There are different angles that need to be discussed, such as dealers/distributors, manufacturers, rep firms, etc., as you all have different areas to consider; however, for this article, we will assume you are a contract furniture dealer, just for simplicity.

Your goal is to enter healthcare quickly and effectively and achieve a positive ROI as soon as possible with your current sales force.

As an example, your first tactic might be finding products that are desirable to your healthcare customers. We need to discover customer needs in contract furniture or ancillary items that are needed for you to differentiate yourself from the "others". Assuming you don't have all the resources a large manufacturer has at their disposal, how do you find out what is really "hot" in healthcare? This is fairly easy nowadays, thanks to the Internet, various sources and healthcare magazines. You could just ask questions of individuals knowledgeable in healthcare and/or visit friends in local hospitals. You may find out that the "hot" thing may be a key surgical procedure.

One surgical example might be gastric bypass surgery = Obesity = Bariatric furniture! Everyone is on the trail of bariatrics, but the opportunity is very large, and few, if any, have become students of this incredible procedure or market. Learn what furniture is needed, view the surroundings in an obesity clinic and just think how you could add value to the setting. In other words, what else could you supply that might solve issues in the customers environment? Take your sales hat off for 15 minutes, become a consultant and don't look at the environment from a dealers' perspective.

Another tactic could be visiting hospital websites and learning more about their "money departments". Visit these departments in person and ask questions, develop solutions for their needs and find the products that solve their issues and challenges.

At this point, you will either succeed or fail in getting the product line to sell! Most likely you will fail if you do it like it is done today in many dealers. Here's what typically happens; a call is placed to the manufacturer. A discussion follows regarding the line or territory being open in your region and what it takes to bring the line into your dealership. You get the answers from the manufacturer and you hope for a "yes." If it is a "no", you pursue your other options. Odds are the manufacturer already has dealers and needs to see some differentiation from you to give you their product line. When using this approach, giving the line to you will probably be a "no" more times than a "yes".

We suggest the following tactic that would provide a higher success factor in securing a line: Contact the manufacturers that supply the products you have determined to pursue and sell. Meet with them and impress upon them that you are a professional and know everything there is to know about that particular market or department and that it's your area of expertise. If you

can, show you know more than the manufacturer! Explain why their products fit well with your plan and what the benefits are to them to provide you their line. You will stand a good chance of receiving the manufacturer's product line in healthcare. Most of your competitors will use the "old" approach; our approach will impress them!

So, in Bariatrics, learn all you can about gastric bypass that is pertinent to what you are attempting to achieve. Understand the patients and the needs of the facility. Be able to speak the language! If you take that tremendous knowledge to the bariatric manufacturer, they will be impressed and desire your dealership.

Please understand, most of your competitors do not do this. They usually take the easy way out; they hear bariatrics is "hot" and they start making calls to bariatric manufacturers telling them how well they control their territory, how strong they are locally, and how great their relationship is with a certain hospital. Then they expect the bariatric manufacturer to roll over and give them their highly coveted line.

Clearly, large manufacturers have very strict policies and good criteria on who gets the line. However, in these specialty healthcare situations, it is usually the smaller manufacturers who are the ones developing these unique products for these specialty areas. They need to be sold on you!

The last thing to be mentioned today should have been the first, but it rarely comes at the beginning of entering healthcare. TRAINING! I know I saw some of you wince or smile when you read that word . . . training. Right? You know what we're saying, you've been there!

Healthcare is a different animal. I had some interesting meetings last week with a large distributor who finally understands that healthcare is different. They said, "Healthcare is like GSA, if you don't know it, it seems so difficult to penetrate, but when you find someone who knows their way around GSA, it really isn't very hard."

We know our way around healthcare and like us, you need to understand where to go, who to see, how to approach them, and what to say and how to say it! We have been attempting to demonstrate some of these "pearls" in the last few weeks. There are many ways to gather this information on healthcare, such as becoming a student by attending healthcare events, healthcare training sessions, seminars, or whatever is available in your local or regional market.

You must expedite this "knowledge gain" to keep get and keep ahead of your competition and do it right the first time! A great sales person in contract furniture may not make it in healthcare for many reasons, one of which is the time it takes to get a large project; another is their inherent lack of interest in a market they do not fully understand.

Your first step is to send someone to the upcoming Health Care Furnishings Forum which is co-sponsored by MMQB & Healthcare Design Magazine and held in Chicago during NeoCon on June 15th.

Health Care Furnishings Forum will give you an excellent insight into what the healthcare market needs and expects. You will hear from the President of Medline Interiors, a large healthcare company, who is effectively penetrating the furnishings market in healthcare. Also speaking will be A&D experts who are proven successful in healthcare. Listen to them as they tell you what you need to do and what not to do to assist them in project business. 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!"

To learn more about the Health Care Furnishings Forum, visit our website at www.hcfi.net where you can download the Registration Form.

Contact HCFI for assistance in developing your healthcare business via email at info@hcfi.net or call 949-500-4636.