



SELLING HEALTHCARE

5 STRATEGIES TO CREATE HIGH-RETURN
RELATIONSHIPS IN HEALTHCARE SALES

Gary Polsky with Andrea Rowland

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER



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Selling Healthcare: 5 Strategies to Create High-Return Relationships in Healthcare Sales

GARY W. POLSKY
WITH ANDREA ROWLAND

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800 East 96th Street,
Indianapolis, Indiana 46240 USA

Selling Healthcare: 5 Strategies to Create High-Return Relationships in Healthcare Sales

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About the Authors

Gary W. Polsky's nearly 30 years' experience in the healthcare industry—from managing home infusion sales to running hospitals to founding hospice companies in four states—has afforded him firsthand knowledge of the importance of strategically building and leveraging High-Return Relationships to achieve success in business and beyond. Moreover, his work with terminally ill patients and their loved ones has convinced Gary that, at the end of the day, nothing is more important than the people around you and the experiences you create together. His desire to improve quality of life serves as his motivation for his entrepreneurial endeavors, philanthropic work, and multimedia outreach efforts under the umbrella of Apex Lifestyle Design. Gary holds a master's degree in hospital and healthcare administration from the University of Houston-Clear Lake.

An award-winning former daily newspaper journalist and regional magazine executive editor on the East Coast, **Andrea Rowland** strives to engage readers with an entertaining narrative style that blends scholarly research with enlightening anecdotes. Since relocating to the beautiful American Southwest, Andrea now focuses her time and talents on exciting writing and editing projects and healthcare communications. She holds a master's degree in the humanities from Hood College in Frederick, MD.

Dedication

To aspiring leaders in the dynamic world of healthcare sales

Acknowledgments

During the past two decades, I have documented on an almost daily basis all my observations and epiphanies gained during my entrepreneurial adventures in healthcare. This book is a synergistic product of that knowledge, gleaned from countless weekly sales team meetings, lots of trial and error, and, ultimately, sales strategies that deliver.

In my sales leadership role, I coached teams of both rookie and veteran healthcare sales professionals and demonstrated new and smarter ways to create rewarding personal referral relationships with doctors and their office staffs, hospital and nursing home case managers, social workers, and many others. The content that I used to direct these crucial, business-building Monday meeting presentations originated from hours spent in libraries and bookstores devouring everything I could find; from incorporating lessons learned from experts and colleagues in the fields of sales, team building/motivation, and leadership; and from my own varied

healthcare sales experience in hospitals and hospice. Most important, the information I'm sharing in this book has been tested time and time again by numerous healthcare sales professionals in actual fieldwork with consistent growth results.

Along my path, I have been inspired by many amazing business leaders, but none more so than author Stephen R. Covey, who passed away in 2012 from a tragic bicycle accident and who gave me *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Putting his words into action instantaneously changed my life. I learned to be more proactive, expand my vision, and forge a strong personal–professional balance. From that point forward, my life became more exciting, my focus became clearer, and I began putting together written objectives of what I wanted to achieve.

I could never have attempted to express my voice to the world without the tremendous dedication of my coauthor, Andrea Rowland, an Associated Press award-winning writer and editor. Her relentless commitment to organizing my many notes and thoughts, and turning them into a published work for the world to read, has been the true catalyst that helped me both complete this book and design a comprehensive platform for sharing my sales and leadership ideas.

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I owe a very special debt of gratitude to my longtime friend and mentor, Scott Goldberg, entrepreneur extraordinaire, for his unwavering belief in my vision and for acting as financier for many of my business plans, going back to my first business venture in 1993.

Several colleagues made invaluable contributions to the content of this work by sharing stories of their own success in selling to the healthcare world, including Steven Glucksman, medical insurance sales; Shelly Denson, hospice sales; Michael Porpora, pharmaceutical sales; and Samantha Stonebrook, medical equipment sales. I also extend heartfelt appreciation to Ralph Fern, home health sales, a very dear friend of mine and a guru in the art of sales team motivational techniques, who served as a valuable peer reviewer for this book.

For modeling a strong work ethic and giving me the foundation for entrepreneurship—and for always believing that I could achieve my wildest dreams—I want to thank my mother, Helen Summerfield; my grandfather, Max Toys; and my many wise and wonderful uncles.

Finally, I want to thank my beautiful wife, Joyce, for her devotion and encouragement, and my two talented daughters, Jenna and Ellie, for their hugs and enthusiasm and for the privilege of allowing me to pass on what I have learned to the next generation. They are more a part of this book than they will ever know. In many ways, my desire to be a positive role model for my family motivated me to work smarter, not harder, and to help others do the same. My family's consistently strong love and support will always be the source of my daily inspiration and my bright outlook for the future.

We Want to Hear from You!

As the reader of this book, *you* are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we're doing right, what we could do better, what areas you'd like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you're willing to pass our way.

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Introduction: It /s Personal

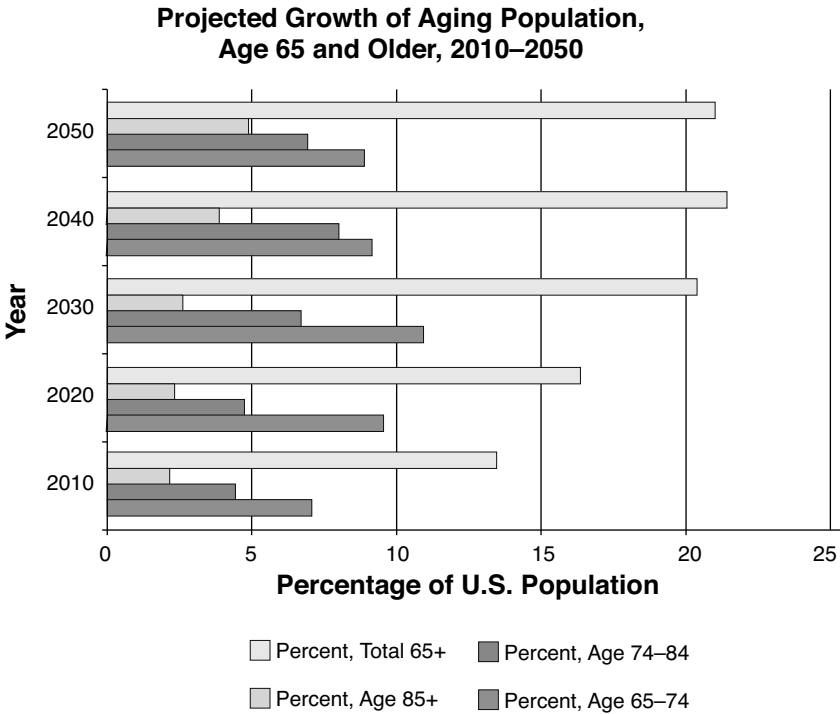
I've been fascinated by the healthcare industry since I was a kid waiting in the backseat of my physician father's car while he made house calls in Houston. I loved the excitement of the emergency room and admired the talents of doctors like my dad to make a meaningful difference in patients' lives. My appreciation for this dynamic industry took on a new dimension when I studied the business side of healthcare in college and forged my own career in hospital administration, home infusion sales, and, eventually, hospice. Throughout my three decades in healthcare, I've witnessed sweeping changes aimed at strengthening the system and protecting its integrity, such as the evolution of the Diagnosis Related Group (DRG) system and the implementation of the Stark Law (<http://starklaw.org>). And I've watched the industry explode with new opportunities in fields ranging from assisted living to telehealth.

Along the way, I've forged invaluable relationships with others in both healthcare and the greater business community. These individuals have mentored me, befriended me, worked alongside me, and ultimately helped propel me to tremendous personal and professional success. Grooming and growing what I like to term High-Return Relationships—and teaching my colleagues and subordinates how to sell and excel with passion—has been an amazing journey and an experience I'm excited to share with you.

The Right Career at the Right Time

Why now? There’s never been a better time to build a career in healthcare sales. As the U.S. population’s aging boom races toward its peak—the number of Americans over the age of 65 is expected to skyrocket, from 40 million in 2010 to more than 72 million in 2030, according to the U.S. Administration on Aging¹ (www.aoa.gov/) (see Figure I.1)—the number of both healthcare workers and workers in related industries who are needed to support this graying population will continue to soar. A study prepared by the Center for Health Workforce Studies at the University of Albany found these characteristics of older adults:

- They consume far more prescription medications than any other age group.
- They are much more likely to suffer from chronic illnesses.
- They require the lion’s share of hospital, nursing home, and home health services.²

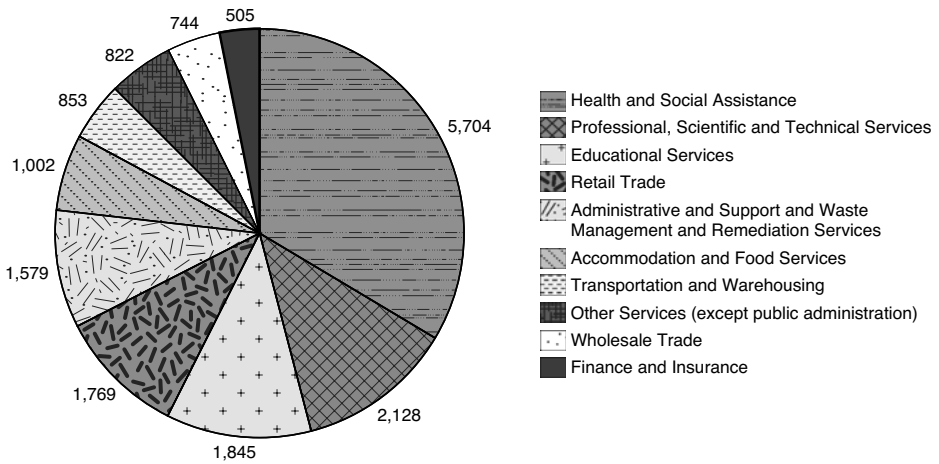


Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure I.1 The number of Americans who are older than 65 is projected to reach 20 percent of the total U.S. population by 2030.

In fact, healthcare-related jobs comprise one-third of the fastest-growing occupations in America, as projected by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (www.bls.gov/).³ The BLS predicts that employment in the healthcare industry will rise 27 percent through 2014, compared to a 14 percent average increase for all industries combined. By 2020, the agency forecasts 5.7 million new jobs in the healthcare and social assistance industry, as shown in Figure I.2. That employment surge is fueled by the ballooning elderly population and technological advancements in healthcare.⁴

**Numeric Change in Wage and Salary
Employment in Top 10 Service Industries, 2010–2020
(Projected in thousands of jobs)**



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure I.2 The healthcare and social assistance sector is expected to grow by more than 5.7 million jobs by 2020.

New Legislation Equals New Opportunities

The new Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as “Obamacare,” compounds the growing demand for healthcare sales professionals because the far-reaching reform law requires most Americans to carry health insurance by 2014 (or pay a fine). This means the market for prescription drugs and other medical services and supplies will increase by an estimated 34 million

consumers, according to information from the Obama Administration (www.whitehouse.gov/healthreform).⁵ In addition to the dramatic market expansion, the Affordable Care Act opens the door to new opportunities in healthcare sales. For example, InMedica market researchers forecast that the telehealth industry will grow by 55 percent in 2013, largely because of the role of digital technologies in improving post-acute care.⁶ The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) (www.cms.gov) began penalizing hospitals for preventable hospital readmissions (www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/AcuteInpatientPPS/Readmissions-Reduction-Program.html) (Section 3025 of the ACA) in October 2012. A comprehensive study by the Health Research & Educational Trust, an affiliate of the American Hospital Association, pinpoints post-discharge telemonitoring as a key strategy to reduce costly readmissions.⁷

In the following chapters, we look at the impact of the Affordable Care Act (www.healthcare.gov/law/full/index.html) on the process of selling to healthcare providers.

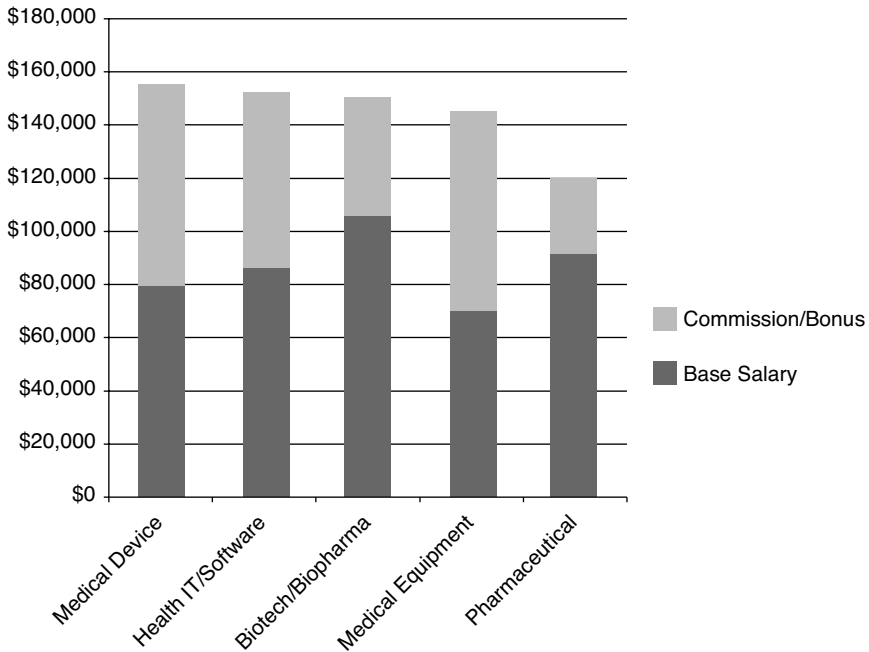
Skilled Sales Professionals in High Demand

The jump in healthcare-related jobs will include the skilled salespeople needed to market medical and nonmedical products and services—including hospice, home health, assisted living, pharmaceuticals, healthcare information technology, and medical equipment—to an evolving cohort of decision makers with astronomical purchasing power. In October 2012 alone, more than 10,000 healthcare sales and marketing job openings were posted on the industry's top five employment sites, as reported by MedReps.com (www.medreps.com).⁸

High earning potential makes a career in healthcare sales even more attractive. MedReps.com's recent survey of nearly 1,500 medical sales representatives (titled "2012 Medical Sales Salary Report" [www.medreps.com/medical-sales-careers/medreps-salary-survey-2012.pdf]) shows an average total income of \$136,819, with entry-level salespeople (less than two years' experience) reporting average yearly compensation of \$80,000. As Figure I.3 shows, medical device salespeople reported the highest annual earnings, which averaged \$154,753 in 2012.⁹

Sales professionals representing the high-growth hospice, assisted living, and home health fields—all areas deeply affected by the aging population—also command notable pay. As of January 9, 2013, several top salary-tracking sites listed median national salaries of \$45,000 (glassdoor.com) and \$52,063 (payscale.com) for a hospice sales rep, \$55,000 (glassdoor.com) for an assisted living marketer, and \$55,000 (glassdoor.com) and \$52,063 (payscale.com) for a home health sales rep/marketer. These figures do not include additional compensation such as bonuses, which are typically offered to sales professionals in these healthcare fields.

2012 Income by Product Sold (Rounded to nearest hundred)



Source: "2012 Medical Sales Salary Report," MedReps.com

Figure I.3 Medical device sales reps reported the highest earnings in 2012, with salary and commission/bonuses totaling about \$155,000.

Reaping High Returns

More than ever, I believe, a career in healthcare sales offers the dual rewards of financial success and the fulfillment that comes from engaging in meaningful work. I've been blessed to reap both dividends through my entrepreneurial and advocacy efforts in hospice over the past 20 years. I'm grateful for the vision that inspired me to pursue a calling in this particular field. Hospice will play an increasingly important role in our society as the population ages and more patients and healthcare referral sources alike embrace quality-of-life improvements and cost savings for the terminally ill.

Yet my own experience and the collective experience of my stellar team leaders and professional associates in healthcare sales and beyond—some of whom you will meet in the following pages—have convinced me that enduring success in our

ever-changing industry demands more than a strong education, industry-specific training, and a straightforward sales formula.

It's all about developing High-Return Relationships.



Note

High-Return Relationships: Prequalified connections elevated beyond the professional level by a genuine desire to connect as individuals, with shared passions and a long-term outlook.

High-Return Relationships Cultivate Customer Loyalty

The best salespeople understand that, by systematically building close personal connections with their clients, they create and nurture the customer loyalty that underscores phenomenal long-term growth. The primary objective of the High-Return Relationship is to achieve growth; the relationship must help both parties move closer to their shared and individual goals. In a High-Return Relationship, both parties also feel understood and appreciated, which reduces stress and builds trust.

The intimacy in High-Return Relationships grows from a multifaceted connect- edness and palpable chemistry expressed through communication grounded in respect and integrity. You share an emotional attachment with your customer, a reciprocal sense of caring that fosters loyalty in business and beyond. Your clients care about *you* in addition to the service you provide to them through your work, just as you care about *them*, not just the sale.

Creating a High-Return Relationship involves learning a client's birthday, favorite foods, and hobbies, as well as the person's job responsibilities, chain of command, and budget. It means understanding what makes a client excited to get up in the morning, in addition to what time he or she gets to work. This sort of professional intimacy stems partly from finding those unique, intrinsic things—like common interests, and shared values and goals—that energize you with a sense of urgency to work together for mutually beneficial results.



Note

A High-Return Relationship is a mutually beneficial connection that is fueled by your sense of urgency and a shared purpose, and maintained through short- and long-term goals that you establish together.

The Five-Pronged Approach

This book gives you the tools to develop the High-Return Relationships that drive sales growth. By learning and leveraging the core strategies in the next chapter—laser-focus, a sense of urgency, an agendaless presence, nonverbal communication, writing ability, and diligent research—you can achieve your greatest potential in healthcare sales and beyond. As you continue reading, you'll learn to build High-Return Relationships through a five-pronged approach:

- **Strategy No. 1: Project a magnetic presence.** Inspire interpersonal connection, setting the stage for the relationship chemistry that's so critical for growing strong High-Return Relationships.
- **Strategy No. 2: Light the spark of rapport.** Stimulate the heartbeat of the High-Return Relationship with strategies such as leveraging your Likeability Factor and communicating with compassion.
- **Strategy No. 3: Listen to understand.** Put your selfish agenda aside in favor of listening to understand, to deepen the High-Return Relationship bond and ensure its longevity.
- **Strategy No. 4: Show appreciation, admiration, and respect.** Connect with your customer's heart and head through the positive expression of your appreciation, admiration, and respect.
- **Strategy No. 5: Write relationship development plans.** Write the script for how you want each High-Return Relationship in your life to unfold. After all, if you don't write it down, you don't have a plan.

It /s Who You Know

Unquestionably, your business activity will increase if you remain focused on making strong new connections each week—a primary indicator of overall sales performance in many companies. Think about how many potential High-Return Relationships you will uncover if you meet just one new person every day—especially someone you've prequalified by identifying strong growth potential. Beyond boosting the bottom line, however, my hope is that systematically creating High-Return Relationships will jumpstart your journey to personal fulfillment.

All my experience in the world of business and the nuggets of knowledge I've gained from studying the human condition through my work in hospice have made it abundantly clear that success and joy truly hinge on the people around you and the experiences you create together. Human capital is absolutely critical for continual growth. As Jim Collins so aptly put it in *Good to Great*, "If we get the right people on the bus, the right people in the right seats, and the wrong people off the bus, then we'll figure out how to take it to someplace great."¹⁰ Let's get rolling.

Endnotes

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Core Tactics to Connect

Throughout this book, we refer to a number of core strategies that will strengthen your ability to connect with prospects and deepen existing High-Return Relationships. These core tactics include the following:

- *Learn to laser-focus*
- *Adopt a sense of urgency*
- *Do your research*
- *Project an agendaless presence*
- *Specialize in nonverbal communication*
- *Write—and write some more*

Learn to Laser-Focus

When you laser-focus on a specific goal—whether it’s garnering more patient referrals or introducing a new product to the healthcare marketplace—you must give 100 percent of your attention, energy, and creative power to make it happen. The same is true when you laser-focus on a High-Return Relationship. By pushing aside any distractions—cellphones, email, the argument you had with your boyfriend last night, the to-do list scrolling in your head—you free your brain to work its wonders. This means grounding yourself completely in the here and now, totally present to take full advantage of the sales opportunity at hand.



Note

Now is when the magic happens. Here is where you can make a difference at this moment.

Laser-focusing your energy on the High-Return Relationship includes watching and listening with a burning desire to learn more, to understand better so that you can strengthen your bond. It means looking and listening for the real emotion, meaning, and motivation behind words and actions, and responding with empathy and sincerity. Laser-focusing your energy also entails creating and maintaining written Relationship Development Plans with specific goals and deadlines (more on this topic in Chapter 6, “Strategy No. 5: Write Relationship Development Plans”).



Note

Laser-focus your energy on discovering your client’s needs, wishes, expectations, and values.

When you laser-focus your creativity to grow the High-Return Relationship, as outlined in the Relationship Development Plan, you tap into the unlimited power of your imagination to conceive out-of-the-box concepts and mutually rewarding solutions. What client wouldn’t want to do business with a healthcare sales professional who serves up the most innovative ideas—especially if those ideas are targeted specifically at meeting that client’s individualized needs on multiple levels? Your creativity also enables you to blur the line between work and play, to add more fun to the mix.



Note

Be more creative, to distinguish yourself from the competition.

Above all, by focusing your full attention, energy, and creative power on cultivating the High-Return Relationship, you light the spark of explosive rapport. This is the harmony you create with another person through the presence you project, what you say and what you don't say, what you do and what you don't do. An emotional connection, this harmony is the heartbeat of High-Return Relationships.

“I think the one lesson I have learned is that there is no substitute for paying attention.”
—Diane Sawyer¹

Adopt a Sense of Urgency

Do or die. That's not just a phrase meant for emergency room personnel. It's the attitude you need to continually cultivate your network of High-Return Relationships. This make-or-break mentality fosters the sense of urgency required to maintain your growth momentum. You passionately believe that you have something worthwhile to offer, and you know that the more mutually beneficial relationships you develop, the more opportunities you will have to share your product or service. Without sacrificing your integrity, you will do whatever it takes to create and strengthen these connections. This sense of urgency keeps you pumped up for new opportunities, pushing you past the status quo in pursuit of stellar results.



Note

Meaningful new relationships = Meaningful new opportunities

Acting with a true sense of urgency means focusing with intensity on your most critical growth objectives for each High-Return Relationship. A sense of urgency helps alleviate stress by forcing you to prioritize—to focus your attention, energy, and creativity on big-impact relationships and associated goals and tasks.

Communicated with confidence, credibility, and conviction, your sense of urgency also inspires your customers to share in your vision. A sense of urgency is a “zest factor,” a catalyst for tapping latent potential, spurring us to rise to the next level of ability and creativity. In the words of leadership expert John P. Kotter, a well-communicated sense of urgency “stimulates alert, focused, and fast-moving behavior that is relentless in its mission.”² And when you aim your sense of urgency at the heart as well as the head, you magnify results.



Note

Zest Factor = Catalyst for growth

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS: IPUS SPARK SENSE OF URGENCY

I consider my company's inpatient hospice units (IPUs) vital zest factors—vortexes of organizational excitement and collaboration. These state-of-the-art, acute-care centers serve as homelike alternatives to a traditional hospital. Our entire team's energy and excitement build as the day nears for a new center's doors to open. Everyone feels vested in the project because they know it will make a meaningful difference in their lives and the larger community. The collective sense of urgency is palpable! We work harder and more cooperatively than ever to achieve the shared vision.

Do Your Research

“What’s the latest advancement?” a hospital executive might ask. “Will Medicare reimburse the cost?” Know the answers. Preparation plays a major role in creating and maintaining High-Return Relationships. Research can mean the difference between short- and long-term success for these all-important connections. Every good healthcare salesperson knows the product or service inside and out, keeps constant tabs on the competition, and anticipates objections. That’s a given. The great salespeople take their research to another level. They carve a competitive edge by incorporating the latest industry news and information into their value propositions (see the sidebar “Pave Your Way by Leveraging the ACA”), and they put in the time up front to evaluate a prospect’s long-term growth potential in a process known as prequalification.

Prequalification: The process of evaluating a prospect’s long-term growth potential.

You must prequalify a potential High-Return Relationship to ensure that you can satisfy each other’s needs. How?

- Talk to others in your professional network—colleagues, clients, and business associates—who have engaged with the prospect. Ask about their experiences. See if they think the prospect is a good fit for you and for your healthcare products or services.

- Get involved in professional/trade organizations (visit <http://selling-healthcare.net/index.php/resources/trade-organizations> for a list). In addition to the wealth of industry-specific knowledge such memberships offer, they provide excellent opportunities to rub elbows with prospects and others who know them.
- Do online research. It's amazing what you can learn when you Google a prospect.
- Ask key qualifying questions over the phone or during your initial drop-in before you set up the first face-to-face meeting.

No big investment of time is required to pave the way in preparing for more productive High-Return Relationships. And the more time you spend out in the field, the faster you'll identify your ideal partners, the people with whom you need to connect to grow your business.

PAVE YOUR WAY BY LEVERAGING THE ACA

The rollout of the Affordable Care Act (www.healthcare.gov/law/features/index.html), and the widespread changes it mandates, has made it more important than ever for healthcare sales professionals to stay ahead of the research curve. New information about the ACA's impact on healthcare stakeholders across the board seems to be released daily, affecting how salespeople industry-wide do business. The healthcare sales and marketing pros who stay on top of the ongoing research—and then leverage that knowledge to strengthen customer relationships—will excel as sales leaders in the evolving world of healthcare.



Note

The key is the ability to position products and services as beneficial, in as many specific ways as possible, to the ACA's three-fold mission: to improve quality of care, expand access to care, and reduce costs.

For hospice sales reps, the mission of the reform law offers strong back-up for their primary value proposition: hospice's proven track record for improving quality of life, available at no or low cost to all terminally ill patients, while reducing the financial burden on the healthcare system. More specifically, reps can position their company's hospice services as a way to avoid the ACA's financial disincentive for avoidable hospital readmissions. For instance, hospice IPU marketers armed with studies that illustrate how hospice helps keep patients out of the ER—and who can effectively communicate this information to the right referral sources, weaving compelling company-specific benefits into their value story—will gain the competitive edge over less law-savvy salespeople.

You will find more examples of how healthcare sales professionals are affected by the Affordable Care Act, and tips for leveraging the new legislation, throughout this book.

Project an Agendaless Presence

When you laser-focus your attention on the physician, nurse, healthcare administrator, or case worker sitting across from you and shift your energy to determine how best to serve that client, you project an agendaless presence. Of course, both parties benefit from the High-Return Relationship; the point is that the real rewards come from shifting your focus from what you can *get* to what you can *give*.



Note

We all want to spend time with people who strive to understand our unique needs and who genuinely want to make our lives easier or better in some way.

Projecting an agendaless presence requires listening without thinking about what you will get out of the conversation. Instead of thinking about how you can make a sale, laser-focus on hearing your customer. How can the new drug your pharmaceutical company offers or the new medical equipment your company distributes benefit the client? What

are the customer's specific concerns in light of the new ACA legislation, and how can you help? When you project an agendaless presence, you thoughtfully ask the right questions and listen carefully to the answers.

An agendaless presence demonstrates respect by showing that you value the client's insight and care about his or her unique needs. When you focus on the benefits you can offer instead of scheming for

“Stars in these fields [sales and client management] do not approach a customer or client with the determination to make a sale.... They would rather cultivate a relationship where their advice is trusted than torpedo their reliability just to make a sale.”

—Daniel Goleman,
Social Intelligence³

self-gain, you sow the seeds of mutual respect, a key characteristic of High-Return Relationships.



Note

When you dive into each High-Return Relationship off a solid platform of mutual respect, the bonds you forge will go deep.

Specialize in Nonverbal Communication

There's always more to the story than what's being said. Experts estimate that up to 70 percent of communication is unspoken—including facial expressions, body language, gestures, and tone of voice. From the way you shake a customer's hand to how straight you sit, your nonverbal cues reveal who you are and how you feel. The signals your body gives work with your words to convey your message; they can either reinforce that message or dilute it.

The Eyes Have It

How do you feel if a referral source for your home healthcare program fails to meet your eyes during a conversation? Like he's not telling you something that his eyes would reveal? Like he's not that interested in what you have to say? What you see in your customer's eyes can offer valuable clues into what he or she is thinking or feeling. Maintaining a consistent, comfortable level of eye contact indicates focused attention and interest. In addition, steady eye contact while you're talking about what you have to offer adds credibility to your message.



Tip

Maintain eye contact to convey interest, credibility, confidence, and sincerity.

Smiles Are Contagious

Doctors tell us that a smile can lift our spirits, boost our immune system, and reduce stress. A smile is also an important sales tool—especially in our high-stress industry. Many doctors, nurses, and administrative staffers in multispecialty clinics spend their days attending to the needs of a seemingly endless stream of sick patients. Tensions rise in tandem with wait times. These hardworking medical professionals appreciate the sales representative who shows up with a genuine smile each week. Remain conscious of the message(s) you're sending with your facial

expressions. Consider how many thoughts and feelings you convey with a sincere smile or a frown or a raised eyebrow. If you go into a meeting with a frown, you're probably going to get a frown in return. You're much more likely to leave that same meeting with a sale if you enter with a radiant smile.



Tip

Deploy your brightest smile to captivate your prospects.

Just Relax

Like a smile, relaxed body language is a sure-fire prescription that helps set a positive, low-stress tone during interactions with prospects and clients. What messages are you sending when you clench your jaw, hunch over in your seat, or cross your arms tightly against your body? Body language experts say these motions can relay unfriendliness, discomfort, or anxiety. Just as much as what you say with your words, what you show with your body can convey your approachability, likeability, and confidence. In addition to illustrating your excitement and dedication to growing the High-Return Relationship, your body language expresses your willingness and ability to make that process fun and relaxing. An open posture—shoulders down, back straight, belly in, arms loose and natural—says, “My heart and head are open to what you’re telling me. I’m happy to be here. I know the hospice services I’m offering will benefit your patients. I can make your life less stressful.”

Gestures like tapping your finger and twirling your hair can betray feelings of impatience or anxiety. They show you are not laser-focused and might make your client or prospect feel less than important. Such gestures weaken or confuse your verbal message. On the other hand, positive gestures, like nodding, signify your agreement, acknowledge shared beliefs, and help put you in sync with your customer.



Tip

Relax your body language to make customers feel more at ease.

Get in Touch

Touch is perhaps the most powerful nonverbal expression of professional intimacy. A light touch on the arm conveys sympathy or understanding; a gentle pat on the back expresses affection or support; and, when given with respect, a heartfelt hug truly speaks volumes. Offered in the spirit of kindness and with regard to the

comfort level of the recipient, touch breaks through barriers to professional intimacy and deepens the High-Return Relationship. We explore the power of touch in Chapter 5, “Strategy No. 4: Show Appreciation, Admiration, and Respect.”

Write—and Write Some More

From composing concise emails, to posting on social media sites, to creating detailed Relationship Development Plans, writing is a critical tool for forging High-Return Relationships. Writing offers an opportunity to connect beyond the one-on-one time you spend with a customer—to elaborate on your products or services, to ask questions that demonstrate your desire to get to know that person and his or her business, and to share insights and resources. Through writing, you present yourself and what you have to offer on another level, adding depth and dimension to the High-Return Relationship.

Writing helps you understand yourself better and makes you better understood. Putting pen to paper or fingertips to keyboard forces your thoughts into focus, helps you make elusive connections, and sheds light on answers that were just out of reach. Writing helps clarify your sales goals. It makes ideas tangible. It provides perspective. It’s a conduit for organizing, prioritizing, and analyzing. Writing demonstrates commitment.



Note

Writing turns you into an *instant producer*.

When you laser-focus your time and energy to write a well-thought-out proposal for the new healthcare technology you’re selling or the new assisted living program you’re promoting, you breathe life into your vision and show that you’re serious about taking action. It shows that you’re smart, well organized, and committed to building the relationship through specific, realistic, mutually beneficial actions.

Celebrate Successes

As you put these core strategies into play to create and nurture the High-Return Relationships that light your way to success and fulfillment, remember to celebrate often along your journey. Celebrating recharges your energy level and infuses

“The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn’t being said.”

—Peter F. Drucker⁴

your schedule with excitement. Celebrating the growth of each High-Return Relationship and your individual and shared accomplishments in even the smallest ways—like tweeting your gratitude for a new referral to your home health service or a larger-than-usual purchase of medical supplies, or sending a handwritten note of congratulations when one of your clients earns an industry award—can work wonders in deepening the relationship. When you acknowledge your customers' achievements, *they* feel recognized and appreciated. And that makes *you* a more valuable connection.

Exercises

Practice Your Tactics

- Videotape an interaction between you and someone close to you (a friend, spouse, or coworker). Make sure your conversation is at least five minutes long; the longer you chat, the longer you have to forget the tape is rolling. As you review the tape, note your body language.
- Create a list of qualities that set your product or service apart from the competition. Create a list of qualities that set *you* apart from the competition.
- Put together a list of 10 questions to prequalify a potential High-Return Relationship.
- Pinpoint three ways the Affordable Care Act affects your sales process. Incorporate your findings into your value proposition(s).
- Create a Celebration Planner. Brainstorm a variety of ways to acknowledge the achievement of your short- and long-term goals. Do this for each client.

Endnotes

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