

RT Managers Want

Smooth Partnerships with Vendors

Department managers speak up on what sales reps can do to make the partnership work best

Many respiratory care department managers say that if they have the time, they really enjoy visiting with a sales representative and learning more about a company's new technology. When they don't, it's just one more thing taking them away from an urgent obligation. What can sales reps do to streamline the process for working with busy managers?

"Schedule appointments in advance for discussions or presentations," says Jan Thalman, RRT, respiratory care manager at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, NC. She also suggests reps have necessary literature or samples ready to go to save time, and says reps should "focus on the specific questions and needs of the customer."

Carl Mottram, BA, RRT, RPFT, FAARC, operations manager of the pulmonary function labs and rehabilitation at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, agrees. "A scheduled meeting is much better than a drop-in cold call." He appreciates an "honest, 'matter-of-fact' delivery of the information" as well, and wants a rep who will come into his office with specific goals and objectives and sales promotions. "I want to see specific information about the product they are marketing. This would include documentation of advantages to the patient, the user, maintenance, data management, etc."

Scheduling appointments in advance tops the list for Debi Lasseter, RRT, as well. The respiratory

care manager at Torrance Memorial Medical Center in Torrance, CA, also wants honest, accurate information — but only in the areas she really needs. "Just give me the information I asked for," she says.

Dilshad Merchant, MS, RRT, CPFT, respiratory care services manager at Morton Plant Hospital in Clearwater, FL, says she's most impressed by reps who are able to share "clinical advantages of a new product demonstrated in a non-biased study."

She also appreciates it when the rep is prepared. "Have all your information available and ready — and provide free samples for trials." She says she doesn't want to have to purchase items before she's had a chance to try them out.

All four managers also emphasize the importance of service after the sale. "I usually have a rep come back in a month and re-inservice after the staff has utilized the equipment so they can ask questions," Lasseter points out.

Thalman calls inservicing "vitally important," and notes that reps also need to be clear whether inservices are included in the price of the product. "The integrity of the sales representative is in jeopardy if the service was presented as a component of the product purchase" and then not delivered as such. "Service after the sale influences future sales, as well as external feedback," she says.



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Mottram wants inservicing to include not only training but also competency assessment tools and occasional follow up after the sale. Merchant agrees follow up is important. She stresses that the rep needs to come by to see “how things are going.”

What don't these managers want to see from the sales reps who visit their offices? Their top three pet peeves:

- Thalman: “Not taking ‘no’ as an answer. Downplaying the competition rather than providing

information related to their own product. Showing up without an appointment.”

- Mottram: “Someone who doesn't return calls or follow up as promised – breakdown of trust. Told you false information about the product. Just give me the information and provide good service.”

- Lasseter: “Not scheduling in advance. Not being available when you need them to be. Not being straightforward on their product.”

- Merchant: “Showing up without an appointment. Trying to show products that I have no interest in. Saying negative things about competitors.”

Busy managers will always try to find the time to see a sales rep when the meeting can be mutually beneficial. Keeping up with the technology is key to fostering safe, effective patient care. 🐾

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