

7 SMART WAYS **FOR HEALTH CARE SALES REPS** **TO BUILD TRUST AND CREDIBILITY WITH** **HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**

For health care sales representatives, these are the best of times and the worst of times.

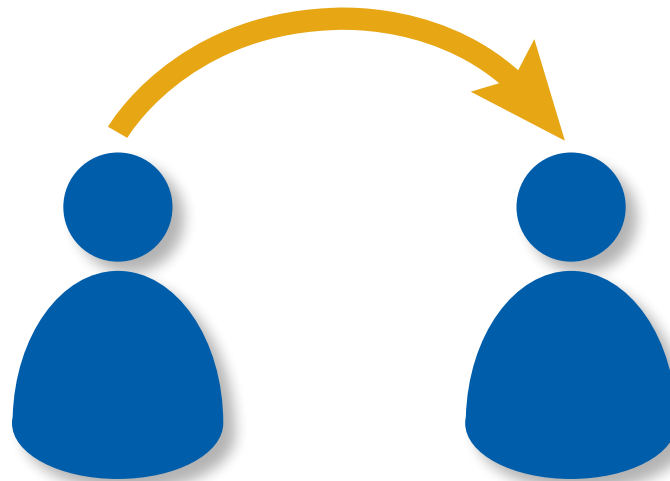
It's the worst of times because somewhere along the line, your reputation took a hit. You came to be seen as the always-in-a-rush guy, the I'll-bring-the-donuts guy and the I'll-treat-you-to-a-weekend-in-Vail-if-you'll-favor-my-products guy. You're also dealing with fallout from the Physician Payments Sunshine Act, and looking for ways to offer value instead of dinners and golf trips. That's especially hard to do with the industry evolving at warp speed.

It's the best of times because difficulty is a catalyst for transformation. So transform. Start by bringing your clients real value instead of gifts. Then take your worth to an entirely new level by actively helping them navigate the changes in their world.

Before you can do any of this, you'll need to re-establish the credibility you lost when your industry was letting the good times roll. Here are seven smart ways to do it:

1. Think like the person you're selling to.

Get inside his or her head, whether you're dealing with the physician, practice manager, CEO or CFO. Understand that person's unique perspective and address it. A physician, for example, will be motivated by patient care and results, while a CFO will respond to information about the financial benefits of your product or service.



2. Be different.

Stand out from the sea of reps calling on your client. Be professional. Set expectations from the start — for example: “I’m going to need more than five minutes of your time if we’re going to have a meaningful conversation.” Also, rely on the Sandler® principle of getting permission up-front to ask questions. Say, “Is it OK if we start with some questions so I can figure out how to help you?” This approach will make your sales call feel less like a pitch and more like a conversation.



3. Be up-front with the incumbent to take the uncertainty out of the transition.

Remember, the incumbent isn't necessarily a competitor. It can also be a process. The fact is, organizations usually have to change processes to start doing business with you. That means asking people to change their behavior. It also means asking your contact to do something different and take a risk. People tend to want to avoid taking risks in the workplace, because it makes them fear for their jobs.

It's tempting to sweep potential pain under the rug and hope for the best. Instead, address it early in the sales cycle. Acknowledge that there will be pain, yes, but with great benefit on the other end.



4. Do your research. Take a holistic approach to the account.

The importance of understanding an organization, top to bottom, can't be overemphasized. You probably know representatives who zero in on one function. They only call on physicians, for example, hoping these will be the “quarterbacks” to push their product up the line. But they ignore the practice managers — which is a bad idea. Get out of your comfort zone. Do your research. Know when the decision gets made and who makes it.



5. Rethink your communication style.

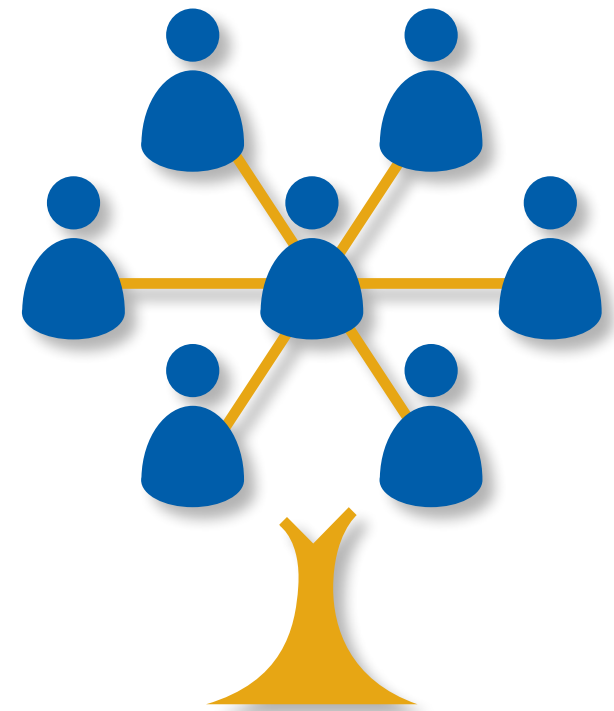
Always keep one of the oldest Sandler philosophies - the 70/30 rule - in mind. Fight your instinct to do all the talking. Instead, talk 30 percent of the time, asking questions, and spend the other 70 percent listening to the answers.

Also, be sure to sell your product in a way that's protective of your client's ego. Rather than telling a physician to use an endoscope in a certain way, frame it as a *suggestion*: "Others have used it this way and had a lot of success." Or turn it into a *question*: "Have you seen the research on the new technology that's finding 20 percent more polyps?" If a client tells you something you don't want to hear — that your product is too expensive, for example — don't defend. Instead, ask why the person feels that way. Get him or her to open up. Your willingness to consider the client's point of view will build trust.



6 ■ Leverage your client relationships and create a referral tree.

There's no substitute for great word of mouth. Because the best way to get in front of a prospective client is through an enthusiastic introduction from an existing one, start working on your "referral tree." Identify a few clients with whom you can talk about referrals, and set dates to meet with them.



7 ■ Help your clients from a marketing perspective.

Hospitals and health care practices are more competitive than ever. They're looking for ways to differentiate themselves and attract patients, so think strategically to help them with their marketing. Remember that the focus has shifted from "we have great doctors" to "we have state-of-the-art technologies." Tell them, for example, why your equipment is faster, lighter, more durable or more effective. Do a good job of peeling back the layers, and you might just help a hospital that's been losing patients to market itself more effectively. (How valuable would *that* make you?)



Having a systematized approach to selling is crucial for health care sales representatives,

particularly when the medical world is evolving so quickly. The Sandler Selling System® methodology offers an effective, proven and measurable way to increase sales performance. It doesn't rely on quick fixes, but instead creates sustainable success through real-world tactics for prospecting, qualifying, making the deal, closing the sale and generating referrals.

Learn more about increasing sales and success with a proven, systematic approach to selling.