



CREATE BRAND LOYALTY

THROUGHOUT YOUR DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL

Industry Consolidation
Branding Your
Salesforce

*Top 5 Challenges of Selling
into Private Practices*

THE **frank** AGENCY

Creative Marketing Solutions. Real Results.



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FALL 2017

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COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?

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From the President

FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE EVERYTHING.
MAKE YOURS OUTSTANDING.

No matter your industry, selling into practices is a complex process, and it all begins with a first impression.

I'm not talking about the moment your sales rep shakes hands with a practitioner. I'm talking about before that. The *first* first impression – the impression made with your marketing.

Whether you sell directly or through a distributor, the messages you send through your marketing are what pave the way for your reps. Without strong positioning that conveys your value – how you differ from all the rest and how you can be an asset to the practitioner – you may not even get the chance to pitch.

So what is your marketing saying about your brand? Do your messages tell a story of success in the practice? Does your brand positioning create an environment of preference in your target, and even in your distributors?

We're The frank Agency, and for years we've been developing strategies for those companies faced with the difficult task of selling into private practices – and helping them achieve lasting success. We focus on innovative techniques for building stronger brands, creating loyalty throughout the distribution chain, and helping you get your foot in the practice door.

And, in this issue of re:view, we're bringing you our insight on these topics, and many more.

So take advantage of our 36 years of proven B2B marketing expertise as you dig into strategies that will boost your bottom line and help you take control of your brand – and your future.

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INSIGHTS,
INNOVATIONS AND
STRATEGIES FOR
THE MEDTECH
MARKET

CREATING BRAND LOYALTY

THROUGHOUT YOUR DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL



**IN PRACTICE SALES, YOU'LL FIND A NUMBER
OF INFLUENCERS ARE AT PLAY, DETERMINING
THE OUTCOME OF YOUR EFFORTS.**



As a company that sells into private practices, you're tasked with a unique challenge: reaching a sales target that consists of a wide variety of decision makers. Rather than an individual or even a compact group that makes the final call, you're faced with a veritable ecosystem of stakeholders, all of whom have some say in the purchase decision.

This complex environment requires even more careful targeting and campaigning to every level and influencer within the supply chain. By consistently and strategically focusing your attention on each member, you create preference from end to end and secure the loyalty of your audience.

But strategies to reach each level differ. Marketing that's meant to reach practitioners may not be as compelling to office managers. Thus, it's important to truly know every

type of influencer in your sales ecosystem, develop the right marketing messages, and make use of the appropriate channels to communicate with them most effectively.

Beyond this complexity, you have additional variances depending on whether your company sells directly or through a distributorship. This creates even more differences in how you focus your marketing.

The Direct Sales Influencers

In direct sales, you'll find a number of influencers are at play, determining the outcome of your efforts. First, we'll look at those that often hold most of the cards: purchasing groups and practitioners, and the connection between the two.

The Purchasing Group/Practitioner Relationship

If your target is medical or dental practices, you've certainly

dealt with GPOs at some point. These groups are able to secure discounts for their practices by striking contracts with suppliers and distributors. This cuts costs for the practices, but it also makes the practitioners far less likely to buy outside of their GPO contract. Thus, if you're not on the group purchasing contract, you're not in the game. Or are you?

Practitioners and other decision makers may be persuaded to buy off-contract, or even push their GPO to start including certain products or companies in their contract. If there is enough demand for the product, the purchasing group may find it in their best interest to add them to the contract – or the practitioner may simply be motivated to buy on their own.

Again, this entirely depends on demand. There needs to be enough desire on the part of the practitioner or end user to

**MAKE AN IMPACT ON PRACTICE GATEKEEPERS BY
HAVING A STRONG, MULTI-CHANNELED ONLINE
STRATEGY IN PLACE. YOUR WEB CONTENT,
SOCIAL PRESENCE, AND RETARGETING TACTICS
WILL ALL PLAY A ROLE IN FURTHERING YOUR
LEAD GENERATION.**

get around the pull of purchasing group discounts. This can be accomplished through the messages you send both through your salespeople and your marketing materials.

Messaging that simply relays product features is far from compelling to practitioners. They have seen countless ads that list how a product is the best, fastest, most reliable, most cutting-edge, and so on. Instead, marketing needs to focus on communicating practical, yet innovative, answers to specific industry challenges.

Most practitioners go looking for new products in response to a problem that has arisen. Thus, you can draw in interest by first addressing the problem – then showing how your product is the solution. This creates a personal, relevant draw for the practitioner, which in turn gives rise to the demand. This method is useful even in practices without GPOs, as practitioners are significant stakeholders in every decision in every practice.

The “Gatekeepers”

So-called because of their role of guarding the practitioners' time, practice “gatekeepers” (e.g., office managers) generally play a role in purchase decisions as well.

Since these influencers aren't always as knowledgeable about the field or the products as the practitioners are, they turn to the Internet to research products

or when tasked with finding a solution to a problem.

For you, this means having an extensive, multi-channeled online strategy in place. Your website content should be founded on strong SEO principles for more search visibility, with a streamlined user experience for better lead generation. Combining this groundwork with retargeting, paid search and display creates multiple digital touchpoints with which your audience can engage – thus increasing opportunities for interaction.

The Patients

According to Google research, 89% of consumers conduct online searches to resolve their medical or health-related questions. This is a huge potential source of influence in practice purchasing.

For example, a patient experiencing a medical issue may turn to the Internet for self-diagnosis. In doing so, they may research treatment options and discover that the procedure

they'll most likely need can be performed more quickly or less invasively using specific equipment or technology. This patient may then seek out a doctor solely based on what type of equipment they use in procedures.

Consumers are more health-conscious and research-inclined than ever before. If your marketing extends to reach the patient point of influence, you create demand in this group – which, in turn, causes demand from the practitioners who wish to gain more patients.

The Distributorship Model

All of these same influencers remain if you're selling through a distributor, but there's an additional challenge: generating preference in the salespeople.

Your distributor has a number of brands it's pushing in addition to your own. In general, the salespeople have no preference as to what brand they sell, as long

GOOGLE RESEARCH SAYS THAT 89% OF ITS USERS PERFORM HEALTH-RELATED SEARCHES ONLINE, WHICH SHOWS US THAT HAVING A ROBUST ONLINE PRESENCE AIMED AT CONSUMERS IS MORE CRITICAL THAN EVER.

as they're able to sell as much product as possible. Therefore, the distributor sales team will often resort to pushing whatever is a sure sale.

Many companies create monetary incentives for the sales team to motivate them to sell their specific brand. The wrong type of incentive, however, may only succeed in cutting your own margins – and as soon as the incentive is gone, so is your sales increase. Instead, making use of unique and proven incentive strategies will serve to encourage and motivate the sales team in a more lasting way.

Yet another effective way to motivate the sales team is to make it as easy as possible for them to sell your product. By supplying your distributors with

high-quality marketing materials (for example, original leave-behinds or specialized brochures) and in-depth training on the unique selling points of your product, you make it that much easier to sell, and the team will be confident they can close more sales.

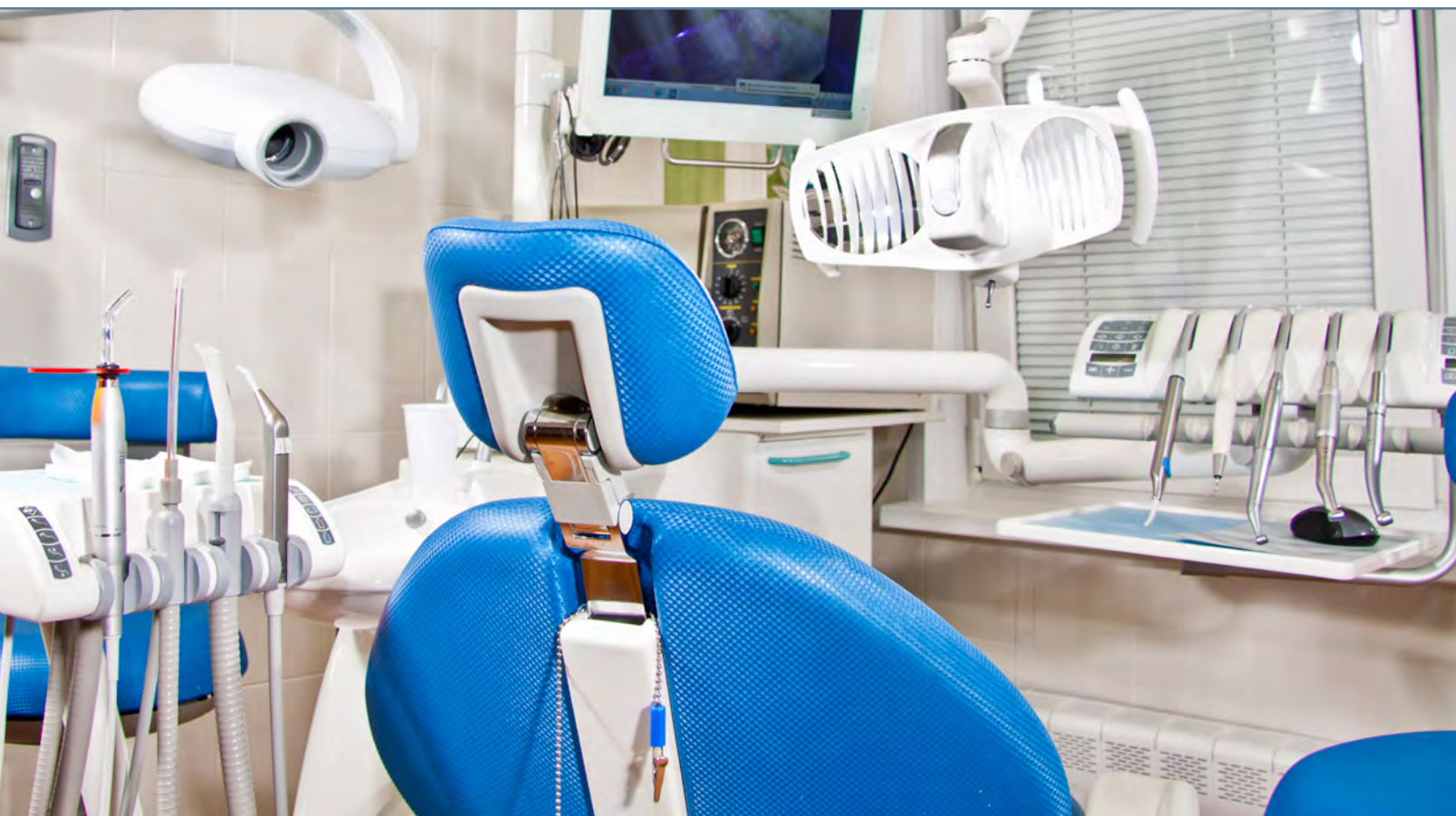
Streamlining the sales process for your distributor also relies on the previously outlined strategies of targeting consumers and practitioners. If there is enough market interest, sales will come much more smoothly, and sales reps will want to push those products first.

Building Loyalty from Preference

Preference must be crafted at each point of contact within the

sales cycle. By targeting every member of your ecosystem, you shape perceptions of your brand in consumers all the way to practitioners and other decision makers. This perception and visibility is what inevitably drives initial demand and, ultimately, brand choice.

From here, you can move forward to develop loyalty, as sales opportunities become long-lasting relationships. What started as a mere inclination can become the foundation of a high lifetime value customer base – and it all starts with a comprehensive plan that targets each and every player in the chain. •



LOST IN THE COMMOTION?

DON'T LET YOUR SALESPEOPLE GO UNNOTICED.



Tap into our years of experience within the medtech industry and discover tried-and-true strategies for driving market share. With our help, you can advance your brand and ensure your products are seen.

Let's talk today.

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FACING DOWN



INDUSTRY CONSOLIDATION



If there's one overarching trend that can be observed within the healthcare industry, it's consolidation.

A rapid uptick of mergers and acquisitions in the 1990s, mainly attributed to the managed care movement, cooled slightly in the early 2000s. But, in more recent years, the 2010 Affordable Care Act has contributed to a second swell of consolidation.

With 102 deals announced in 2016, mergers and acquisitions have seen a 55% rise since the ACA passed in 2010 (according to *Health System Management*). The types of consolidation vary from hospitals acquiring other hospitals or medical

Rising education costs mean younger doctors are graduating with overwhelming amounts of debt. With overhead and administration costs to consider, private practice is far less feasible for practitioners already saddled with what amounts to a monthly mortgage payment in school loans. Thus, many doctors are seeking to unburden themselves of their practices by selling to a hospital and becoming an employee – no longer strapped with the hassle and heavy costs of running their own business.



practices, to the dental realm where dental service organizations (DSOs) are buying up private practices. However these consolidations occur, their impact is far-reaching – and presents challenges for the supply and technology companies that sell into practices.

The Consolidation Movement

Practice consolidation has been on the rise for nearly 30 years, with many practices submitting to purchase by hospitals or large medical groups. This is due to many factors, most of which could be boiled down to one root cause: cost concerns.

Additionally, the ACA offered a number of tenets that encouraged mergers (albeit indirectly), in the hope that larger health systems would have an easier time defraying patient expenses and providing more efficient services. For example, one such tenet of the ACA offers Medicaid and Medicare disbursements only per medical condition treated – not per service provided. This is an incentive to provide better, more efficient care for Medicaid and Medicare, but a byproduct was increased risk for the practices and hospitals, which spurred more consolidation to help limit these risks.

Though it's happened more slowly than the mergers of the medical field, the dental industry, too, has seen a consolidation swell for similar reasons. According to *Dentistry IQ*, the costs of running a practice continue to rise as revenue either flatlines or declines, and crippling dental school debt is yet another obstacle many practitioners struggle to manage. Thus, growing numbers of private practices find a reprieve through a DSO handling administration and costs.

This rapid acceleration of consolidation throughout both the medical and dental fields has had a ripple effect through the technology, equipment and supply industries. Hospitals and practices are trying to cut costs wherever possible, and this, combined with the smaller number of practices due to mergers, has created a market where there is simply less sales opportunity.

The lack of sales avenues has in turn created its own consolidation movement – consolidation of supply and technology companies. Unable to keep up with the pricing pressure and the stiff competition that comes from having fewer sales targets, now tech and equipment companies, as well as suppliers and distributors, are joining forces to ease the tension. Yet, even with merged resources, equipment and supply industries struggle to adapt to the limited, heavily cost-conscious target market now facing them.

Overcoming the Challenges of a Sparse Audience

Not all tech or supply companies have the resources or desire to form mergers in order to compete.

In such a limited and fiscally-minded landscape, medical companies must look beyond mergers and price dropping to accommodate for the shift in priorities.

Rather than continuously lowering equipment and supply pricing to meet the desires of practitioners or other decision makers, companies should instead be focusing on the overall value of their products – and using this perspective as the focal point to drive sales.

Products that are less expensive don't always yield the best value. Often they break more easily, require more maintenance, and don't offer as much versatility. The move for tech, equipment, and supply companies now needs to be toward innovation: creating products that are one step ahead of the technological advances, and are built to last and deliver the most use with the most efficiency. Products that can render these benefits will increase practitioner revenue, as improved efficiency and a slower replacement rate mean more services performed over longer time periods.

Messaging that consistently emphasizes this expansive lifetime value will leave a much greater (and longer-term) impact on a practitioner audience than merely dropping the bottom line. Thus, your marketing from beginning to end needs to state and restate: There is no product like ours – and with it, you can advance your practice and obtain the value you need to move forward.

But it's not just the message that matters – how it is transmitted is just as critical.

CREATING BRAND PREFERENCE IN A CONSOLIDATED MARKET REQUIRES THE KIND OF INNOVATION AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP THAT MAKE YOUR COMPANY STAND OUT FROM THE REST.

Digital Strategy for the Modern Device and Equipment Marketer

While many aspects of equipment and supply sales are still in-person endeavors, an increasing number of practitioners and other decision makers perform their own online research prior to speaking with sales reps or making purchase decisions. This gives a unique opportunity to reach your target and influence them before they even know specifically what they're looking for.

To accomplish this, you first need to have a robust content and SEO strategy in place. Your target will be searching for answers to particular pain points; anticipate their questions, offer expert answers, and in so doing, you provide a low-key yet highly impactful first impression of your brand.

Even if you have top-notch SEO standards in place, organic search should always be accompanied by paid search and display. A recent study performed by Google showed that even if you've earned a first place ranking for organic search, omitting paid search ads will still significantly decrease your click rate, as a higher organic ranking does not necessarily make up for paid search. The two combined, however, keep your brand at the forefront of searches and increase the likelihood of clicks and eventual lead generation.

Yet a third tier to your digital strategy is data-driven retargeting. When your search efforts have

succeeded in driving traffic to your site, your job is to then keep your brand fixed solidly in the target's consciousness. The goal is to drive them back to your site so you can generate a lead which will turn into personal contact with a sales rep – and then, a lifetime customer. Retargeting gives you just this opening.

By making use of analytics tools to collect data on who's visiting your site and where they focus their attention, you're able to segment your leads according to level of interest, geographic location, pain points, and so forth. Then you can retarget them with ads tailored to these specifics – a constant reminder of their need, and how your brand can resolve that need.

There's Sales – and Then There's Leadership

Industry projections tell us that consolidation isn't going anywhere anytime soon. But equipment and supply companies don't need to beat or join with consolidators; instead, adopting powerful messages and progressive digital strategies help you penetrate through the tides, rather than fight against them.

Invest in your own innovation and thought leadership to amplify your brand and make your company a voice that stands out, creating brand preference and value that far outweigh the pervasive cost concerns. •



BRANDING YOUR SALESFORCE

How to Transform Your Sales Team into Trusted Solutions Advisors



It would seem that the sales terrain for equipment and supply reps is more complicated than ever before.

Not only have industry consolidation (see more on page 10) and pricing pressure shrunk the sales market, but practitioners have also placed a crackdown on the time they're willing to spend with reps.

In 2016, AccessMonitor™ performed a study specifically on medical practices that showed the number of “rep-accessible” physicians, or physicians who meet with 70% or more of reps who request meetings, dropped two percentage points in 2015 alone. Some medical practitioners have even enacted a closed-door policy (Medscape) to avoid interruptions.

Every practice, whether medical, dental, veterinary or otherwise, must deal with sales reps on some level. After all, they need the equipment and supplies the reps have to offer. But too often practitioners' view of reps is highly negative, and salespeople tend to be seen as a nuisance at best, or flat-out dismissed at worst. Perhaps some of the onus falls onto the reps and companies themselves, as many have failed to build lasting relationships and show practitioners they exist to benefit their practices.

Overcoming the “rep-perception” can be a struggle for any tech or equipment company, but like every challenge, it can be mastered with a fresh approach and an accompanying strategy.

Recreating the Rep

As long as a sales team is seen as unwanted or unhelpful, you'll never make progress within practices. Reps need to be more than just salespeople – they need to be trusted industry advisors. They need to be individuals who help practices in tangible ways rather than just delivering sales pitches and vanishing into the ether.

Consider the individuals you trust most. They're knowledgeable, consistent and available – never pushy or disingenuous. Rebranding your reps doesn't mean just changing the name of your sales team or making some other superficial modification. Rather, it should be a complete rebuild of who your reps are and what they offer.



Let's dig deeper into how this should look in practice.

Transformational Tactics

The first step to rebranding your salesforce is finding your team's strengths. What aspect of your sales team makes them stand out from all the rest? This will be the focus of your rebrand campaign. For instance, if your team is especially proficient in their knowledge and use of practice technology, they may be branded as tech experts who can help practitioners troubleshoot their technology or assess their needs and deficiencies.

Next, in order for a rep rebrand to succeed, it needs to first be enacted within the mind of the sales team. Their outlook on *themselves* must shift if anyone

else is to view them in a new light. Thus, the salesforce's new perspective should be, "This is who I am," not, "This is what I sell." They are now solutions experts: not just individuals trying to sell a product.

Once the mentality is formed and fully integrated into your team, you can then unveil this new salesforce to the public through messaging conveying that your new team is not primarily in sales – their main focus is aiding practices.

Since online research plays a pivotal role in practitioner purchase and problem-solving decisions, your new messaging should be disseminated and supported by digital campaigns. Content, social media, display and retargeting all need to be implemented and interwoven to

create a comprehensive, multi-channeled effort that cements your expert sales team firmly in the mind of the audience.

Now, it's critical that in-person efforts not be neglected during this rebranding transition.

Remember that this campaign is first and foremost about the practitioner-rep relationship – while you're approaching these associations from a new angle, the personal aspect must still remain and be a significant focal point of your campaign.

Use your team's expertise to develop an in-person event that allows your sales team to get their feet in practice doors – this time, not as sales reps, but as solutions advisors. They may offer a free product tune-up, training or practice advice to help practitioners



with their challenges and give them something of value. By presenting your services to the practice, you forge solid relationships and position your team as partners who are there to assist practitioners – be it through simple advice or through selling a product solution.

When Vendors Become Consultants

As market share shrinks and practitioners become less inclined to sacrifice their time to reps, your success depends more than ever on your sales team's ability to gain inroads and develop relationships. And this will all boil down to creating a reputation for your salesforce as expert practice assistants that offer valuable resources and services – not played-out sales gimmicks.

A rebrand of your sales team will reshape practitioners' perceptions and expectations, allowing you to gain the opportunity to transform them into lifelong customers. But this approach not only garners opportunities – it also propels your name into an industry mainstay, and one that's synonymous with practice advancement and unparalleled solutions. And this, in the end, will be what sets you apart in a competitive and complex industry. ●

Transformational Tactics for Rebranding Your Salesforce



1. DEFINE YOUR STRENGTHS



2. CREATE SOLUTION EXPERTS



3. FORGE SOLID RELATIONSHIPS



IN THE NEWS: Industry Regulations and Legislation Changes

With every change in governmental leadership comes the inevitable repercussions across industries. Healthcare is especially affected by the political climate at large, and 2017 has shaped up to be a decisive year due to the changing of the guard that occurred with the Trump administration.

There are many impending transitions on the table, and everyone within the healthcare industry has questions. What exactly will change? How will these changes affect my specific healthcare function? How will my bottom line be impacted?

Those within the technology and supply industries certainly feel the pressure as whatever changes occur in healthcare trickle down to potentially affect their sales. Though the changes are uncertain and somewhat speculative for right now, we can still take a look at some of the projected legislative measures on the table and how they would influence the technology and supply industries.

The Possible Repeal of Obamacare

Though the Obamacare “skinny repeal” failed in July and the Graham-Cassidy rollback attempt died in September, there may very well be future attempts at repealing Obamacare – even if the exact scale and time frame as yet remain to be seen.

Should it occur, one positive aspect of an ACA repeal would be the subsequent cancellation of the Medical Device Tax, which was instituted with Obamacare

and medical device companies would retain their margins without struggling under additional taxation.

Yet another component of the ACA that may be done away with under a repeal is the Sunshine Act. This legislation increased industry transparency by mandating that medtech, device, pharmaceutical and supply companies disclose any payments, gifts or other financial ties to physicians. These disclosures were essentially an act of good faith to show the public

if and where any potential conflicts of interest may arise. Eliminating this act, while it certainly would reduce the amount of hoops companies have to jump through to get their products out, could have an ultimately negative effect by increasing public skepticism toward physician and manufacturer alike.

Institution of the American Health Care Act

The AHCA has failed for now, but the current administration may seek to establish some alternative healthcare act in the future. Though the likelihood of this remains to be seen, one big concern about the AHCA which would most likely still exist under a new incarnation of this act would be Medicaid rollbacks.

Under the AHCA, the intention was for the federal Medicaid

budget to be cut back by about \$800 billion (according to CNN), and states would each receive either a capped block grant or a per capita grant for each enrollee. This would result in service reductions, and fewer services provided would mean practitioners would not be willing or able to pay for more advanced equipment. If such deep Medicaid cuts were enacted under a new legislative effort, the results could be seriously detrimental to the device and technology fields.

The Changing Landscape of Insurance Providers

Aside from these legislative challenges, the reaction of insurance providers against exchanges has caused further difficulties throughout the healthcare ecosystem. Many providers are pulling out of ACA healthcare exchanges, as there simply aren't enough healthy people signing up to defray the costs of sicker individuals. With fewer options from which to choose in the exchanges, coverage is more limited and thus, the insurance reimbursements which doctors receive are limited as well. Similar to the effects of Medicaid cutbacks, fewer insurance payouts result in practitioners that are less likely to purchase new devices or technology, as they're not certain their purchase costs will be recouped.

The varied political and regulatory atmosphere makes the future of health-related industries unclear, but companies that take measures to increase transparency and product excellence will adapt despite the changes around them.

and placed significant strain on the device industry. In fact, it caused so much backlash that this 2.3% excise tax was put under a moratorium in 2012 – a break which is set to expire at the end of this year. Should Obamacare be repealed, however, the moratorium from the Medical Device Tax would be permanent



It is unclear whether President Trump will take action against the subsidies that are currently in place under Obamacare. For now, with the failure of the ACA repeal, it appears that subsidies will remain in place and continue to help defray insurance companies' costs – thus extending coverage to individuals and offering reimbursements for practices.

The HITECH Act

Enacted in 2009, the HITECH Act was created to encourage practices to switch to electronic health records (EHRs). Funds were given to practices that showed “meaningful use” of such technology, but soon this will change over to practices being fined for not showing the desired progress with EHRs.

To be in compliance, most practices, if they have not already begun to use EHRs, will be looking to transition in the near future. This provides a unique and organic inroad for companies specializing in EHR software and equipment, as demand for these products will peak in light of the Act's requirements.

Adapting Tactics to Changing Times

While it's difficult to predict the outcome of most of these regulations that are still up in the air, if

legislation does not go in favor of healthcare-related industries, then technology and equipment companies will have to face the challenge of reaching a potentially smaller market share. The most effective way to overcome this difficulty will be to set your company up as an industry leader.

Building a prominent name and reputation within the industry will position you to make gains when funding eventually increases and practitioners resume making purchases. But, in order to distinguish yourself as an industry leader, you'll need to foster innovation in your products and support them with in-depth research. Then, by setting yourself apart through your innovation and high standards for excellence, you can elevate your brand further through increased transparency to practitioner and patient alike. A holistic, permeating commitment to pushing the boundaries of your products, while assisting practitioners, will bolster your brand and place you at the forefront of the industry.

With positive and negative legislation on the horizon, the forecast is still unclear. However, by boosting your brand and focusing on industry leadership, you position your company to retain its footing and remain steady – regardless of the legislation in place. •

2017's top five challenges of selling into private practices



Developing relationships with practitioners.
Working with group purchasing organizations.
Matching product innovation with marketing effort.

It's no secret that selling equipment or technology into practices is a multi-faceted and intricate process. Yet with each obstacle, equipment companies are also presented with the chance to develop more innovative strategies for engaging their audiences. Here, we'll address what we see as the top 5 concerns facing technology, device, and supply companies – along with some methods for clearing these hurdles.

1 Getting the Initial Opportunity

One of the main difficulties of selling into private practices is securing an opportunity to meet with decision makers. While often minimized, this is actually becoming an increasing problem for sales reps due to practitioners' tightening schedules.

Practitioners are already incredibly busy, and this has only increased as they try to fit in a high volume of patients each day to maximize their revenue. This, combined with the fact that office managers tend to closely guard the practitioners' time and availability, creates an environment where getting your proverbial foot in the door is all but impossible in some circumstances.

In order for a meeting to occur, some initial stage setting needs to happen.

First, by analyzing your current customer demographics and pain points, you can gain a better understanding of who may benefit from your products and have the most interest. By targeting these practices with a focused marketing campaign that addresses the specific pain points of your demographic, you can create initial awareness and interest in your product. Then, when your salespeople reach out to these practices, the decision

makers are far more likely to make time for your team. Without this prior knowledge of who you are and how you can improve their bottom line, practitioners will not be willing to move their schedules to accommodate a sales meeting.

2 Competing with Companies that Offer Complete Solutions

If you specialize in one specific product, you place yourself in a difficult niche and find yourself competing with the larger companies that offer not just similar solutions – but *more* solutions. The practice that can purchase all of their equipment or supplies from one company or distributor cuts down on their administrative time and costs. Thus, it becomes a struggle for companies that specialize in one type of product to make headway in these practices.

To overcome this obstacle, you must convey value. Decision-makers need to see that the overall value in buying this specific product will outweigh the initial cost or effort associated with working with another vendor. If the product will provide a long-term monetary value to the practice, then practitioners will be far more inclined to take on the short-term inconvenience of adding another supplier into the mix.



3 Regulatory Issues

Regulations within the health-related sphere are constantly changing and creating pressure on equipment, technology and supply companies (see more on this on page 18). Of late, these regulations have led to consolidation that has shrunk the prospect pool significantly – thus, increasing competition.

To stand out, technology and supply companies need to portray themselves as innovators and thought leaders. With distinctive brand positioning and a commitment to furthering both their industries and the practices that purchase from them, these companies will show themselves to be partners with the practitioners – not just average businesses out to make a sale.

4 Working with GPOs

Many medical and dental supply companies find themselves trying to sell into practices that are part of group purchasing organizations (GPOs). Increasing numbers of practices are joining GPOs to defray the costs of equipment and supplies, so getting a practitioner to purchase outside of their contract can be a challenge (see more on this on page 5).

In order to get around this difficulty, your marketing needs to show your target that the product is an investment. It will help the practitioner grow their practice and lower their expenses in the long run – thus, delivering a higher ROI than a lower-quality product.

The same strategy goes for practitioners who own private practices. They, too, have significant cost constraints that influence their purchase decisions, and products that provide a high total value will be a substantial draw for these practitioners.

5 Providing Evidence-Based Research

It almost goes without saying that practitioners want to see evidence to support the efficacy and quality of a product before they purchase it. They need to be assured that the product will truly be safe and beneficial for the patients and their practice. But this goes beyond simply having the research performed.

This effort also entails building and supporting an ongoing reputation by partnering with industry authorities. It means marketing in qualified journals and periodicals to shape a distinctive name for your brand that's synonymous with scientifically examined, high-quality products.

ADDRESSING THE OBSTACLES

The challenges facing device and supply companies, though significant, are by no means insurmountable. The solution is not to simply push harder, but rather, to push smarter and with a mind to creating longevity – not just landing another sale.

Instead of a focus that consists of selling more product, make it your priority to establish prominence within the industry. This may be done by developing a distinct positioning that sets you apart from other brands and displays your industry expertise, and uniting this with messages that emphasize value over expense. These messages can then be disseminated through highly targeted, data-informed digital and traditional channels for a wide and yet focused impact.

With these specific methods and the overarching goal of establishing leadership, the byproduct will be increased market share – and a name that will carry weight and make waves regardless of what the future brings. •



The Doctor Will See You Now

**WAITING FOR AN
OPEN DOOR? DON'T.**

The frank Agency understands the challenges of getting in front of private practice decision makers. Take advantage of our proven lead generation strategies and wealth of industry knowledge, so you're never left out in the cold.

LET'S TALK.

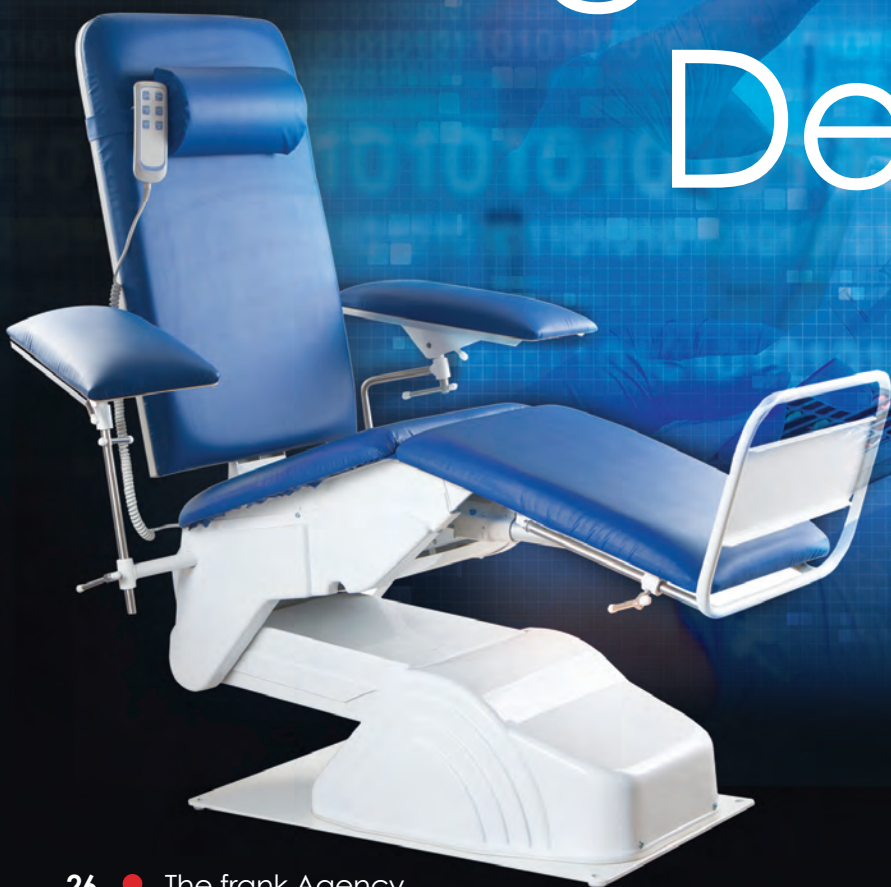
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Spotlight on Digital Dentistry



Revolutionary methods for imaging. Groundbreaking uses for laser technology. The world of dentistry has seen a surge of technological applications in the past 20-30 years, but surprisingly, they are only recently becoming standard for dental practices.

Dental Economics asserts that dentists are notoriously slow to adopt new technologies. One 2013 study showed that only 5-16% of dentists used technology such as digital impression making in their practice – an astonishingly low rate, considering that this technology was being pioneered in the 1980s!

However, dental practitioners are finally taking the leap. Digital dentistry is coming to the forefront, and practitioners are gathering steam and aligning with this new paradigm to avoid being left behind by their peers.

So what exactly does digital dentistry bring to the table? And, more importantly, what can we expect next?

We'll take a look at the recent advancements and how it's affecting the world of dentistry, and then peek into the future to see what may be coming down the pike.

The Technological Transformation

The tech movement has extended itself to a number of processes within dentistry. One notable

development has been in the realm of imaging.

For decades, the extent of oral imaging was limited to X-rays or film photography. These time-consuming and costly methods were the first to go, however, with the advent of digital imaging.

Today's intraoral scans and digital radiography allow practitioners to quickly gather extra- or intraoral images of the mouth, then view the images electronically for less downtime and more convenience. Digital scans, in particular, take an average of only 6 minutes to complete – whereas a traditional impression takes closer to 20 minutes. Thus, intraoral scans allow for a much quicker patient turnaround, and greater practice efficiency.

Digital intraoral scans and digital X-rays also have the significant advantage of being able to create three-dimensional views – a capability that was not possible before the digital advent. With a 3D perspective on what's going on inside the mouth and even under the gums, practitioners have a much greater ability to treat issues – even before they become issues. Additionally, three-dimensional digital imaging has paved the way for greater accuracy in digital impressions, which leads to fewer remakes in the manufacture side.

Along the same lines, the growth in digital intra- and extraoral

imaging has led to an increase in CAD/CAM technology use (or, computer-aided design/ computer-aided manufacture). CAD/CAM for dentistry was first being unveiled as early as 1985, but due to the rudimentary nature of imaging techniques and software at that point, the resulting manufactures were complicated and expensive to complete. Now the advances in intraoral scans make for precise digital impressions, which may then be translated via CAD software and used to form the designs for crowns or implants. Since the subsequent designs are based on more in-depth, three-dimensional imagery, the resulting manufactures can be made quickly and with a much higher

success rate. Some practitioners have estimated that they save anywhere from \$4,500 - \$10,000 *per month* since their purchase of CAD/CAM machinery – simply because they avoid lab costs, multiple patient appointments, and expensive remakes if something is not fulfilled correctly.

Laser technology has also made breakthroughs in the dental world. Brought into practices sparsely in the 1990s, this tech has only recently become more widely used. Lasers can now be used for everything from cleaning teeth to treating gum issues. Not only do lasers reduce pain in procedures, but they also create more accuracy and even boost recovery time for patients.

The Digital Workflow

Yet another advancement, *per se*, is the implementation of digital workflow within the dental practice.

The technological developments mentioned are by no means siloed. They are meant to support each other to create a fully digital, streamlined experience for practitioner and patient alike. For example, restorations now can be performed seamlessly as the practitioner digitally scans the patient's mouth, then views the images from all angles to determine the best course of action for the patient. Some scanners have the capability to allow necessary crowns or implants to be ordered directly





from the digital scanner screen. The product is then designed and manufactured with CAD/CAM technology, then shipped to the dentist. This means that within a matter of days a patient can be fitted with a crown or implant – and one that is designed around every nuance of their mouth for a more customized fit.

The digital workflow can also be applied to endodontics, orthodontia, and other specialized fields of dentistry, so that no matter the issue, it can be resolved quickly and precisely. For this reason, digital dentistry has resulted in a more efficient and competitive practice, better patient experiences, and a high return on investment for the practitioner.

The Digital Trajectory

The digital movement is far from over. The technology will continue to advance and bring about even more streamlined processes and workflows. But what exactly will this look like?

At this point we can only speculate, but there are some interesting theories on the subject.

Scientific American describes the future world of dentistry as one that is largely remote: people will buy their own handheld toothbrush intraoral scanners, which can assess problems and send images to their dentist via cloud technology. The practitioner can then design and order an appropriate solution on the spot, and the patient only has to set foot in the office to have the solution fitted.

Some also theorize that, similar to the path of medical technology,

oral surgeries will be guided by computers and implemented with lasers for advanced precision.

Others contend that the main change will be the material used in dental repairs; rather than using synthetic materials, some say that a living, stem cell-based material will be the new primary repair agent to help teeth heal themselves.

It's hard to say whether these predictions are accurate or realistic, but one thing is certain: now that the digital age has finally made inroads in dentistry, we can expect that dental procedures will only become more streamlined and that patient experiences will continue to improve. And, if adopted and furthered, these advancements stand to shape the field of dentistry into one that is far more accessible and palatable for patients of all backgrounds. •

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