

Networking & Co-Promoting for other Companies as an HME Sales Professional:

Is this Good or Bad?

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In recent months, while on sales calls with HME Sales Professionals, I have noted a growing trend in the HME industry. Sales professionals are being asked to help other groups or agencies with networking in the medical community. Is this good or bad?

First let's clarify what is really happening here. HME Sales Professionals are being asked to help market the service of these other organizations because:

- These organizations do not have a marketing professional of their own
- Their marketing professional is not doing an adequate job
- They do not have an adequate market share
- They like your company and are just looking for a collaborative effort (rare, but it happens)

Here is the rest of the story.

The HME Sales professional is calling on a specific agency. Usually, it is a sleep lab, home health agency, or even an assisted living facility or long-term care facility. The administrator has seen the consistency with sales calls. After some basic conversation, the administrator realizes that sales calls positively impact the HME bottom line so they wonder, "Would such calls be good for my business as well?"

First let me say, I GET IT. I don't know that I AGREE WITH IT, But I GET IT.

I was on a call with a HME Sales Professional recently. We were visiting a home health agency. During our visit, almost simultaneously, both the HHA sales person and the manager asked if we could help market their service. With a few short probing questions we were able to uncover that their call base was very low and they needed to touch more people. Later, while on a separate sales call with a different HME sales professional at an assisted living facility, we quickly learned that they had fired their sales person and asked for us to help them market their services. I could give you several other examples, but I would rather give you the solution.

There are only two things you can do when faced with this situation. First you can say yes and market the services of these various agencies and businesses or you have to graciously and professionally decline. Should you decide to co-market this other agency or business here are some things to consider before you commit:

- On whom do they want you to call? Their "call deck" must fit with your current customer base. You should not change anything that you are doing.
- What are you going to say when you do co-market their business? Do you want to look like a "double agent" or keep your focus on the HME products you are already paid to market?
- Check the business out thoroughly before you decide to do this. You may not know what the medical community's opinion is about this business, so investigate before you commit.

- Will this help or hurt your current business? Will the medical community look at this co-marketing as a positive or a negative?

Honestly, I am not in favor of this. I believe there are too many variables and this has the potential of damaging your businesses reputation. So, how can you get out of this graciously? Here is what I might say:

“Thank you for your confidence in both my company and my marketing ability. While I am honored that you asked me to co-market your business, it really is very difficult for me to do that. As an independent home medical equipment company, I have the privilege of serving numerous medical professionals and businesses and gain referrals from them on a monthly basis. For me to single out one of these businesses would not be fair to the others that also refer business to me. Here is what I can commit to: if asked by a medical professional about your organization, I promise to give provide them with a solid recommendation of your services.”