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Introducing an exciting new Speaking Engagement Session by *Clint Maun, CSP*

Has your organization forged strategic alliances with other healthcare providers, managed-care entities, or the government? If you already have developed healthcare partnerships, or if that's a goal for your success, **Clint Maun** provides valuable information and insight to help you craft your strategic master plan.

We welcome the opportunity to [talk with you about this program or to customize a session that provides your desired outcomes.](#)

The Valuable Ingredients for Network Partnerships



Today's post-acute organizations have a new mandate which is to **create significant value**. This holds true for the customers, the government, and especially, as part of integrated networks. This session will detail the **three value ingredients** and how to organize them in a successful recipe for success. The three ingredients are:

- **Quality**
- **Outcomes**
- **Cost**

Objectives

At the completion of this session, the participants will be able to:

1. Define their value proposition for inclusion in a network
2. Determine exactly what needs to be done to mix the ingredients successfully
3. Organize a proven process to secure network placement
4. Design a team-based organizational effort to successfully manage the value proposition

This session will employ real-life examples/case-studies, along with lecture and group discussion.



Communication Corner

Helping Patients Feel Informed & Empowered

Healthcare information and choices can often turn out to be confusing and overwhelming to patients and their families. Indeed, not only is a patient dealing with a health issue or condition, but they're also having to make sense of a lot of new, complex information and then, if that weren't enough, they're tasked with making several decisions relating to their care. Fortunately, there's a lot you and your healthcare organization can do to help patients in this process. And helping patients understand information and options has benefits across the board. According to a study published in the journal *Health Affairs*, patients who were encouraged by healthcare staff to review options and get more involved in choices had 5.3% lower overall medical costs, 12.5% fewer hospital admissions and fewer elective surgeries.

Below are some straightforward approaches experts have found to be effective and can make a big difference in helping patients feel more informed and empowered about making decisions.

- **Offer decision aids.** Decision aids can include pamphlets, brochure and even interactive programs and videos that patients can view online. Decision aids walk patients through different options, translating complicated medical jargon and statistics about risk into simple language and visual aids.

A review published in the journal *Cochrane Reviews* found that decision aids improve patients' knowledge of their options, make them feel more informed and clear about what matters most to them, and leads them to participate more in decision-making. The reviewers concluded that the aids reduce the number of people choosing elective surgery and *have no apparent adverse effects on health outcomes or satisfaction.*

- **Simplify and use graphics to help describe complicated options.** Research suggests that patients can quickly get overwhelmed with too much information at once. Patients who have to choose between several treatment options can get easily confused and frustrated when the doctor starts discussing statistics, recovery time, and side effects (often using medical jargon and

unfamiliar terms). Some organizations are addressing this challenge by leveraging web applications that allow healthcare staff to create graphics and icons that visually reveal risk information, making it easier for people to grasp the information. Research has found that presenting information about test results and treatment options in such formats can help patients understand the incremental benefits of risk-reducing treatments and the risk of developing side effects from medications.

Studies have also shown that when healthcare providers simplify information and take the time to go over options one at a time, patients respond extremely well. In one study among breast cancer patients, researchers found that women who considered therapy options one at a time had significantly better comprehension of relevant risk information than those who had to consider all options at once.

- **Give patients the ability to quickly and easily access their health information.** Research shows that access and knowledge helps patients understand the importance of playing an active role in their own care. As such, more healthcare providers are using electronic medical records to help answer questions via secure email messaging, and provide direct access to test results.

Some providers are even allowing patients to view part of their medical record, including the notes that doctors, nurses and other clinicians write after a visit—using a model called OpenNotes.

A trial of OpenNotes conducted several years ago found that two-thirds of patients who read their notes reported feeling more in control of their care, being more prepared for office visits and understanding their conditions better. The *American Journal of Medicine* also recently published recommendations for providers who use this type of technology, noting to avoid jargon and medical abbreviations that might be misinterpreted—saying “short of breath” instead of “SOB,” for example—and using supportive language such as “the patient chose not to pursue treatment” rather than “the patient refused treatment.”

Without a doubt, data shows that empowered patients who play a part in decision-making leads to better outcomes, fewer invasive procedures and lower costs. What’s more, those who participate in healthcare decisions with their doctor are less likely to regret the choices they make and more likely to stick to the treatment regimens they select. Use the strategies above to help your patients achieve this same type of success!

“The real opportunity for success lies within the person and not in the job.”

–Zig Ziglar



The Leading Edge

A Closer Look at Your Competitors

A clear and concise understanding of your competitors—who they are and what they're offering—can help you make your healthcare products, services and marketing rise above the rest. It can also enable you to set your prices competitively and help you to respond to rival marketing campaigns with your own initiatives.

Here are some proven strategies to help you analyze your competitors and how to best gain an understanding of what they're doing and how to act on the information you gather.

Identify who Your Competitors Are and What They're Up To

Your competitor(s) could be a long-time rivalry you're aware of or it could be a new healthcare business offering a substitute or similar product that makes your own redundant. Keep in mind that competition isn't just another business that might take money and patients away from you. It can be another product or service that your organization should consider selling or offering.

So, the first part of understanding your competitors is identifying both the existing and new. There's a usual list of suspects where you can gather this information, including local business directories, advertising, conferences, information provided by customers (on questionnaires), and of course, Internet searches. The web can indeed get some great (and quick) info, but, ***you need to go beyond a basic web search.***

To be sure, there are a variety of online tools that can offer great insight into your competition. Here are just a few examples:

- **SpyFu:** Spyfu is a great site to review your competitors' websites and to research what type of online advertising, keywords and Adwords they're buying: <https://www.spyfu.com/>
- **Alexa:** The Amazon product can help you dig up new and interesting information on your competitors: <http://www.alexa.com/>
- **Google Trends:** Google Trends allows you to search and filter by topics to view the latest industry trends: <https://trends.google.com/trends/>
- **Google Alerts:** Google Alerts allows you to monitor the web for interesting, new content on your healthcare organization, the industry in general, and of course your competitors. You can also set up alerts on your organization to see if/when you're mentioned anywhere on the Internet: <https://www.google.com/alerts>

Key Items to Capture

While you're performing your competitive analysis, make sure you're capturing and recording:

- all products and services they offer
- the prices they charge
- their staffing numbers
- their annual report (if a public company)
- their advertising
- their media activities: on social media, networking sites, news, radio, TV, etc.

Get in touch with your Competitors & Customers

Get firsthand exposure to your competitors by actually visiting and speaking to them. For example, give them a call and ask them questions your facility regularly gets from patients and prospects. How and where do they answer differently? Phone and face-

to-face contacts will also give you an idea of the style of the organization and the initial impressions they make on customers.

You should also make an effort to chat with your competitors at business events like conferences or trade shows. Be sure you're always friendly and professional—you want to understand how your competition operates, but you never want to tarnish your reputation.

Lastly, when it comes to identifying sources of information about your competition, don't forget to talk to your own patients and customers! Speaking to customers is one of the best (and cheapest) ways of gathering real information on competitors. If you find that a new patient/customer has used another facility, find out who they were using, and why they switched to you. Do the same when you lose a customer—try to capture what they preferred about your competitor. If you gather enough of this feedback, you'll get a very clear idea on what competitors are offering that customers and patients view as preferable.

Create an Action Plan & Recommendations

After you've completed your analysis, evaluate the information you find about your competitors. This will help tell you where you can improve as well as what you're doing well. In fact, you may want to categorize and organize your competitive analysis into what your competition is doing better, what you're doing better and what seems to be equal *playing field*. Create an action plan or recommendations to share with your leaders. Make sure you're calling out strengths as well as opportunities. You want to maximize and exploit what you do exceptionally well and fill in gaps where you're falling short.

*"Life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we react to it."
-Dennis P. Kimbro*



News You Can Use

Highlights from the Nursing Home Salary & Benefits Report

Data from the *Nursing Home Salary & Benefits Report* was recently released by the *Hospital & Healthcare Compensation Service*. The report includes salary trends among nursing facilities that participated in 2016 and 2017. Some of the highlights include the following:

- Nursing home administrator salaries rise 3%, nursing directors 2.6%.
- Nursing home administrators' salaries increased nearly 3% over the past year to an average of \$97,401 in 2017, according to the largest salary survey of its kind.
- Nursing home administrator salaries averaged \$94,584 in 2016, rising 2.98% in 2017.
- Executive directors and chief financial officers for skilled nursing facilities also experienced salary boosts between 2016 and 2017, at 2.46% and 2.09% respectively. Both positions earned less than their counterparts in continuing

care retirement communities, report results revealed.

- Directors of Nursing (DON) gained a 2.64% salary increase over the past year, going from an average of \$89,092 in 2016 to \$91,444 in 2017 at facilities that reported data both years. Assistant DONs also fared well, with average salaries increasing 2.31% to \$71,474.
- Directors of marketing also experienced a salary boost in 2017, increasing 2.83% to \$56,484.
- The salary and benefits report also documented national annual turnover rates, or the number of times a facility replaced a position in one year. For top-level executives, that rate reached 17.62% in 2017.
- In total, 1,970 long-term care facilities with a total of more than 175,600 cumulative employees contributed data to this year's salary and benefits report, now in its 40th edition. Of the respondents, nearly 80% of facilities reported that they were for-profit, while slightly more than 20% were nonprofit.

Learn more information or purchase your own copy of the [Nursing Home Salary & Benefits Report](#).

*"Education costs money. But then so does ignorance."
-Sir Claus Moser*



Just For Fun

What Happens When a Lawyer's Car is Hit

A lawyer returns to his parked BMW to find the headlights broken and considerable damage.

There's no sign of the offending vehicle but he's relieved to see that there's a note stuck under the windshield wiper.

"Sorry. I just backed into your Beemer. The witnesses who saw the accident are nodding and smiling at me because they think I'm leaving my name, address and other particulars. But I'm not."



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