As a physician, you can relate to the fact that referring doctors prefer to send patients to practices they know. In some ways, when you refer a patient to another doctor, you’re putting your own reputation at stake by endorsing a specific physician’s skills and services. This is why it’s important to use the time you have with a provider to build confidence in you professionally, while connecting with them personally. Below are some useful observations and tips we’ve collected from providers to ensure that your outreach encounters lead to a strong practice launch.

**Scheduling**

Most primary care clinics tend to be busier on Mondays and the day before/after long holidays. Similarly, Fridays tend to be difficult to plan as most providers and staff are trying to stay on schedule so they can start their weekends on time. For this reason, try to block time for outreach visits on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays, if possible.

**Getting Targeted**

Know that our liaison team recognizes that any time you’re taking out of the office is valuable. This is why we complete discovery visit and competitive research in advance to fully understand your potential referral base. This includes reviewing internal and external referral data to understand provider connections to your partners and competitors today, as well as the strength of those relationships. As a result, we’re making sure you have focused discussions with the right physicians to grow your new practice.

**Know Your Audience**

Because we schedule visits in advance, we can provide you with a list of the providers you’ll meet on your road trip(s). We encourage you to find out at least 1 personal and professional fact you can use going in the door to potentially ‘break the ice’. While many like to use the internet or peer reports to research these doctors in advance, don’t forget that your car ride with our team members is a great way to leverage the relationships we have built over time to fill in any gaps. If you’re asked to wait until the doctor is available, use your time wisely to study your surroundings for additional clues you can use to relate to your new contact.

**Be Curious**

While outreach can feel very much like a ‘dog and pony’ show, leading the conversation with a question about the contact you’re meeting with demonstrates you have a sincere interest in learning more about them. Whether your question is about something interesting you’ve learned about them, a hobby you have in common or their practice, asking something about them, and then listening for how you can be a potential resource, will generate some natural opportunities to collaborate on specific patients.
Clarify (& Practice) Your ‘Selling Points’

Before scheduling a road show, we like to ask what 3-5 things we can share that would make someone interested in learning more about you and your practice. Consider what makes you different from others in your same specialty. Make a list of the types of patients you like to treat the most and why. Identify a positive patient outcome that you’re proud of that might give someone else background and insight into why you do what you do. Once you have picked your favorite bullet points, rehearse them on your own or with your physician liaison so you can be ready to share these in a succinct, but impactful, way.

Welcome Your Wingman

We know boasting about yourself doesn’t come naturally to all. However, that’s our specialty! In each encounter, we plan to facilitate the introduction and then let you take the lead. If there’s a lull in the conversation or if there’s a key selling point we feel you might have missed, we may jump in and boast on your behalf before turning the conversation back to you.

Let Your Confidence Shine

Something else that doesn’t always come naturally is confidence—especially in unfamiliar situations or with unfamiliar people. This is even more true if you happen to be more introverted or reserved. Just know that research shows that 60% of how your message is received is tied not to what you say, but to how you say it. In addition to dressing for the part, it helps to practice standing tall, using controlled hand gestures, making consistent eye contact and smiling when you want to project confidence.

Craft Your Close in Advance

Physicians are in the business of healing, not the business of sales. Yet, building a new practice takes a bit of salesmanship. This includes knowing how and when to ask for someone’s business. This is especially key if the physician has established referrals patterns to other providers that you’re attempting to redirect. Consider using a soft conversation close like, “I hope you will consider referring your patients to my practice.” For conversations where you’re feeling a stronger connection, you might want to try out a more assumptive close like, “I promise that when you send your patients to me, I will take great care of them.”

Put Yourself in Their Shoes

Just like you don’t typically get married after the 1st date, a committed referral relationship doesn’t happen after your 1st visit. It may take multiple visits to convince a provider to give your practice a try. Moreover, those on their side need to have a good experience with those on your side for the referrals to continue. Some of the top reasons our referring providers stick with preferred partners include: (1) hassle-free interactions when scheduling a new patient consult, (2) dedicated placeholders in their schedules to work in a referral partner’s ‘urgent’ new patients, (3) access via mobile phone for in-the-moment ‘refer or not to refer’ consuts, (4) credentialed with key payers, (5) strong patient experience followed by, (6) prompt, digestible reports within 24-48 hours of consult.

Of course, if you have any questions or concerns about outreach preparations, our liaison team is happy to help. These best practices should, however, have you ready for a successful road show.