

Knowing Who Reads Your Medical Device White Paper

By Alec Alpert

To write a successful medical device white paper a writer has to know the who, why and how concerning buying decisions in hospital settings. A typical hospital is a complex enterprise that owns a tremendous variety of devices, supplies, gauges and drugs for monitoring, diagnostics and the treatment of patients and disease prevention. Hence, to manage thousands of pieces of medical technology hospitals have a complex system of supervision, which consists of many departments, elaborate policies, procedures and protocols. A sales person cannot just walk in and start pitching. Protocols and procedures must be observed.

The sales process related to a healthcare facility is both a science and an art. Successful marketing depends on a thoughtful approach. It takes patience when selling to a hospital or a laboratory, especially when dealing with high-ticket items. No hospital will make a rush decision to buy a million-dollar MRI machine with \$100,000 in annual maintenance costs, for example.

Healthcare facilities have a system in place that assesses and acquires medical technology. Any medical device on the market is scrutinized closely. There is also an important learning phase in the process, during which a healthcare facility learns as much as possible about devices available on the market. During this learning phase, stakeholders read *white papers* among other sources of credible information. Stakeholders serve on the following types of committees (different hospitals may have different names):

- The Medical Technology Advisory Committee (conducts strategic planning and assessment of medical technology).
- The Capital Budget Committee (addresses the needs analysis, capital equipment prioritization and acquisition).
- The Product Standards Committee (ensures that technology under consideration complies with current standards of practice).
- The Capital Equipment Review Committee (oversees and manages the entire process, controls the overall capital budget).
- Technology Acquisition Working Groups (carry out the necessary functions to acquire the technology).

The typical standing members of these committees are senior administrators, medical doctors, engineers, accountants, technologists and physicists, who are MDs, PhDs, PEs and MBAs.

Other stakeholders may also read white papers and influence decision makers, such as the Purchasing, Biomedical Engineering, Central Supplies, and Information Technology departments, clinical users, nurses and technicians.

As can be seen, the audience of a medical device white paper is diverse, professional, highly educated and skeptical. Therefore, a white paper writer has to grasp the complex technology and create a highly educational, persuasive piece of writing that resonates with the level of expertise and expectations of the above-mentioned audience.

