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Is Independent Advocacy Right for Me?

Transcript of Podcast 4: How Do Patients Know to Hire Me?

This is the **fourth** in our series of podcasts entitled **How will patients - potential customers or clients find me? How do they know to hire me?**

So many – TOO many newbies jump into our advocacy profession thinking their participation will be a field of dreams – as if – all they need is a website, or a business card, or a listing in a directory and holy Baby Bells! Listen to my Phone ring! (Yes – I know I’m dating myself with that ma bell reference, but honestly, most new advocates know exactly what it means, and for those who don’t... that’s your assignment for today – look it up!)

Well, baby bells or no, it just does NOT work that way.

Here’s the thing: no matter how long you have been doing advocacy work, whether you were a nurse for 30 years, or you helped your aunt through her cancer diagnosis for a few years, or you have a specific condition yourself and know the entire community of others who have that same condition – no matter how long or how well known you are... what people DON’T know is that you are available to help them – and that they need to pay you for doing so.

So in this podcast we’re going start with these three points:

First – the fact that people need to know you are available to help them.

Second – the fact that people need to understand that it’s a paid gig.

And third – one that few newbie advocates ever think about, but the minute we discuss it they realize is true, and that is, that not very many people even realize such a thing as a private pay, independent advocate exists.

So let’s tackle the first one: the fact that people need to know YOU are available to help them

No matter how well known you are anywhere in your life – your current job, your neighborhood, your church or synagogue, or your Rotary Club or the PTA... or anywhere else, no matter how well people know you -- there is one thing they ALL have in common – not ONE of them can read your mind.



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Yup – despite what my ex-husband used to think – no one can read someone else’s mind and that’s especially true when they are sick and scared, fearful, doubtful, or reeling from a hospital bill that has taken their breath away – all the emotions someone experiences at the point they need an advocate... unless you have very specifically TOLD them, and TOLD them many times, then they don’t know you are an advocate or care manager who is available to help them. It’s not information that comes to them through the universe.

Further – fact #2 – even if they know you have helped someone else, and often this happens when you are a nurse, when word has gotten around that you’ve helped a neighbor or friend – even if they realize you do some sort of advocacy work, then probably do NOT know you’ve shifted to a pay-for-service model. I hear this from nurses frequently, “I’ve done advocacy all my life and now I just want to be paid for it!”

Yes! I get that! And you should be paid for your work! But few people make that leap on their own. You must tell them, and tell them many times.

Our point #3 is really more about the universe of need you are entering than it is about your specific advocacy, but it’s a fact you’ll need to deal with as a new advocate: that is, that private-pay, independent advocacy just isn’t well known yet. People think of hospital advocates, or some of the other advocates we’ve mentioned in previous podcasts, but millions of people who could use an advocate’s help and can even afford an advocates help – don’t even know advocates exist to help them.

So – why these three points? To help you understand the answer to “how will people know to hire me?” And the answer is – because you, as a business owner, are going to tell them. You’re going to do what is known as MARKETING – which just means telling people what you can do to help them. A subset of MARKETING is what we hope to do – that is, CLIENT ACQUISITION. As a business owner, you’ll do what you can to let YOUR universe know you are available to help them, for pay, and you will use marketing tactics to do that.

Now – this sometimes scares people. They tell me they don’t want to do this part. They hate the idea of having to sell themselves or to convince someone to hire them. I get that. Let me repeat, YES – I – GET – THAT. And I’ll ask you to believe me when I tell you that through APHA membership, we do a LOT of marketing assistance, including this emphasis – now pay attention please – that if you have done your marketing well and right – meaning, you have



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developed a good website, you've written effective listings in advocacy directories, and you have a good email list of potential clients, then you may NEVER have to do any sales.

What do I mean by that? I mean NO, you will never have to cold call someone or convince them to hire an advocate. That's sales. No, instead, when your marketing materials are well composed, then by the time someone calls you, they already know they want to hire an advocate. You'll just need to assure them you can help them with that they need. That's it.

If you are already a member of APHA, then please go ahead from your Dashboard and link to the ORB – the online resource bank... then look for two Knowledge Centers. The first one will be the Marketing Center, and the second one will be the Web Marketing Center. Right there you'll find what you need – articles, webinars, podcasts, courses.... And if you want to discuss client acquisition with others? Just jump into the Connect Discussion Forum... do a search for an answer to your questions or just jump in and ask your questions. Believe me – if YOU have a question, at least a dozen others have the same one. They'll be happy you asked!

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