

Eli's Hospice Insider

Marketing: A Marketer By Any Other Name Would Be As Effective

There are two main types of liaisons, marketing expert explains.

What type of marketing staffer will bring you the most return on your marketing investment?

There are generally two types of marketing employees, explains **Stephen Tweed** of **Leading Home Care ... A Tweed Jeffries company** in Louisville, Ky. However, hospices and home health agencies tend to call them both "liaisons" of some sort, so it can get confusing. The terminology dates back to the days of cost-based reimbursement for HHAs, when marketing costs were prohibited under Medicare, Tweed recalls.

Type 1: Many hospices and HHAs employ what in other industries would be known as sales representatives or account reps, Tweed says. "They are clearly in a sales role."

Type 2: And many hospices employ a person with a clinical background, such as a nurse, as a liaison. The person may call on a variety of referral sources, or she may be stationed at one or two hospitals or nursing homes to facilitate discharges from those institutions, Tweed says. When it's time for a discharge, the discharge planner will contact the in-house liaison and the person will visit the family, provide education, obtain medical records for admission purposes, etc.

Evaluate Potential Referrals To Decide On Liaison Type

Both types of liaisons can be very effective, Tweed maintains. "They absolutely work" at growing the quality and quantity of referrals.

Whether you want to use a liaison dedicated to one or two institutions will depend on the volume and type of referrals generated there and the liaison's relationship with the discharge planner, Tweed advises. The planner must like and trust your liaison for the relationship to produce favorable marketing results.

Keep in mind: The discharge planner wants to get the patient out of the hospital or nursing home timely, make sure the patient is getting quality care, and get no negative feedback from the patient, Tweed says. Some providers also use the "liaison" term for outside marketing contractors, but experts advise steering clear of those relationships (see related story, p. 65).