

Physician Advisory Boards

Increasing Physician Engagement and Feedback



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Overview – Giving Physicians a Seat at the Table

Hospitals today are increasingly prioritizing the customer experience, including finding innovative ways to increase patient engagement and understand their perspective. One common resource is a patient advisory board or council, in which patients are recruited to provide guidance on improving experiences and share feedback about specific initiatives. While patient advisory boards are becoming a well-known resource for partnering with patients, a less common resource that is also impactful is a physician advisory board. In this white paper, we will review the benefits of a physician advisory board and best practices for getting started.

Similar to patient advisory boards, physician advisory boards serve the purpose of increasing physician engagement and giving voice to physician perspectives. Whether composed of external community physicians or internal medical staff physicians, physician advisory boards provide strategic and operational insight to the physician marketing and outreach process, supporting issue resolution and sharing market insight about physician and hospital relationships. These boards also represent an opportunity to cultivate relationships with physicians that are built over time, and which can create tremendous customer lifetime value.

Best practice organizations include internal engagement as part of their physician relationship strategy, so that leadership is aligned with meeting referrer needs and continuously supporting the physician relations efforts. Physician advisory boards represent a deep appreciation for the strategic importance of physician relationships, and how they can facilitate internal support and enhance mutually beneficial relationships among physicians.

Getting Started

Physician advisory boards can be composed of referring, employed, or affiliated physicians – or a mixture of all of these. Generally, recruiting physicians who refer patients frequently, have had past referral challenges, or who are interested building their professional expertise through clinical information and updates are primary candidates to join an advisory board. A mix of physician types, demographics, backgrounds, etc. is ideal for obtaining diverse feedback. Recruiting those who are frustrated or vocal about challenges can promote honest feedback, as long as they are able to focus on the interests of the group rather than solely their frustrations.

For academic medical centers, alumni have an existing relationship that can be cultivated for providing feedback, referrals and philanthropy. Following up and maintaining contact with physician alumni who have established practices in the area is a helpful starting point for recruitment. For internal physicians, a best practice is to establish recognition programs for those who participate in physician relationship-building activities (including but not limited to the advisory board) and highlighted as part of the medical staff's annual performance review.

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Recognizing all members online or through other visible platforms reinforces their value and helps them build their professional reputation.

Although physicians today are busier than ever, they can be motivated to participate if it will help them take care of their patients, make the referral process easier, and provide them with the opportunity to make a difference in the areas that are important to them. Below are some benefits of joining an advisory board that can be useful when recruiting physicians. However, be sure that the activities of the advisory board align with the expectations set during recruitment. It is also important to set realistic expectations, including the time commitment required, expectation of regular attendance, agreement to nondisclosure of confidential topics discussed, and requirement to prioritize the needs of the system above private agendas.

Potential Benefits:

- An opportunity to develop personal relationships with other physicians
- Access to resources and information that will help them take better care of their patients
- Education to make informed/optimal referral decisions
- Ability to contribute to process improvements, particularly in areas of access and clinical communications
- Identify opportunities to collaborate on research and medical educational activities in the community
- Contribute to enhancing their reputation in the community

Tips for Success

A clearly defined purpose for the advisory board and its members is critical to successful outcomes. The board needs to know that their input is valued and acted upon – so having an agenda that helps keep them on task and providing regular updates (such as how feedback from the previous meeting was used) is recommended. Periodically asking the group about their priorities and areas they would like to provide input about is also helpful, as their motivation and commitment will be increased when topics are important to them.

The advisory board meetings can be led by the physician outreach team and/or administrative and medical directors. As with any other meetings, carefully managing the agenda so topics are relevant and appropriate for feedback from the board is important to continued engagement. For new initiatives or strategic plans, obtaining feedback early in the process is necessary for obtaining actionable feedback.

Examples of topics that tend to be appropriate for advisory boards include:

- Early-stage strategic plans or initiatives
- Potential new initiatives

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- Current performance (data related to quality, satisfaction, etc.) and priorities for improvement
- Day-to-day needs of providers, and how well they are being met
- Industry changes or reforms impacting physicians

Quarterly meetings tend to be a realistic amount of time to expect, and many organizations find it best to host dinner meetings so that physicians are not required to take time away from their patients. Although there is no single correct way to manage membership, since it can be difficult to ask longtime members to step down to provide opportunities for new members to participate, it can be helpful to set term limits that promote regular rotation of members.

As with any group, it is necessary to have a leader who can keep the group on task, redirect conversation when needed, and emphasize positive interpersonal skills.

Key elements of an effective team that are applicable to advisory boards, and which board leaders should strive to reinforce, include:

- Having a common mission for working together
- Agreeing on a plan and direction to achieve goals
- Knowing what needs to be done next, by whom, and by when, to achieve goals
- Recognizing how they can help each other be more effective
- Dealing with conflict openly and in a manner that promotes diverse opinions
- Appreciating and utilizing the unique expertise and experience of members
- Recognizing the accomplishments of the group

Taking Action

In sum, physician advisory boards can be a highly valuable tool for understanding the perspective of physicians and building lasting relationships. Getting started can be daunting, especially because today's physicians experience high stress and workloads, yet making a difference through sharing input and building professional leadership skills is appealing and motivating.

For more information about engaging and building relationship with referring physicians, please see the following resources:

[Embracing your Evolving Role in Referring Physician Engagement](#)

[SMART Physician Relations Benchmarking Tool – Free Online Survey and PDF Report](#)

[Engaging Physician Alumni for Increased Referrals, Reputation and Resources](#)

About Endeavor Management

Endeavor Management is a management consulting firm that leads clients to achieve real value from their strategic transformational initiatives. We serve as a catalyst by providing the energy to maintain the dual perspective of running the business while changing the business through the application of key leadership principles and business strategy.

In 2012, Gelb Consulting became an Endeavor Management Company. Our combined experience (Gelb founded in 1965) offers clients unique capabilities to focus their strategic initiatives with a thorough understanding of customer needs to drive marketing strategies, build trusted brands, deliver exceptional customer experiences and launch new products. Our experienced consultants and analysts use advanced marketing research techniques to identify customer needs and spot high potential market opportunities.

The firm's 40 year heritage has produced a substantial portfolio of proven methodologies, enabling Endeavor consultants to deliver top-tier transformational strategies, operational excellence, organizational change management, leadership development and decision support. Endeavor's deep operational insight and broad industry experience enables our team to quickly understand the dynamics of client companies and markets.

Endeavor strives to collaborate effectively at all levels of the client organization to deliver targeted outcomes and achieve real results. Our collaborative approach also enables clients to build capabilities within their own organizations to sustain enduring relationships.

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