



Hints for working with a practice management firm

Define your objective.

Defining your objective for hiring a practice management firm is the best way to receive the assistance you need. Creating a written objective will be even more helpful. The process of writing your objective will help clarify and refine it. As you proceed through the process of finding, hiring and working with a practice management firm keep refining your written objective. This will help keep you on track and help improve your practice. Here are some questions that may assist you in defining your objective:

- Are you looking for one-time project or ongoing products and/or services?
- What are you expecting to come out of working with a practice management firm? A report, improved cash flow, more customers, better relations with your clients or employees, increased skills for your employees, etc.
- How are you going to measure that you have reached your objective?
- What is the scope and scale of your objective?
- In what time frame do you want to achieve your objective?
- What is the estimated payoff of meeting your objective?
- What is your budget for meeting your objective?
- What are your underlying assumptions?
- Is your practice ready to pursue the objective?

Finding the right firm

Perform your own due diligence before hiring a firm. Here are some questions that may assist you with finding the right firm:

- Ask for the firm's list of references that have worked on objectives similar to yours?
- What do the firm's references say about the work it has done?
- Was the work similar to what is needed to meet your objective?
- Is the firm's style / personality compatible with your practice?
- How long has the firm been in business?
- Look into the firm's Better Business Bureau record for complaints
- Check the firm's [Dunn and Bradstreet rating](#)
- What are the firm's vendor relationships? How will these relationships influence the firm's work with your practice? Does the firm receive any financial benefits from specific vendors?
- Will the firm's products and services complement your practice's strengths and weaknesses?
- What evidence do you have the firm has the experience and expertise to meet your objective?
- Why is the firm interested in working with your practice?
- What is the professional experience of the persons from the firm who will be assisting your practice?



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- Has the firm published or presented anything that indicates it can help meet your objective?
- Will the firm be a quick fix or provide long term results?

Hiring the firm

Utilizing outside resources can provide an efficient way to improve your practice. A key to successfully using an outside resource is for all involved to clearly understand the expectations. Here are some questions that may assist you in hiring a practice management firm:

- Can the firm provide a written description of what it is going to provide your firm?
- Can the firm provide a written plan with time frames for how it will help to meet your objective?
- Is the firm NOT listed in the HHS Office of Inspector General's List of Excluded Individuals/Entities?
- What and how is the firm going charge for its products or services?
- What additional cost will be involved? Travel? Shipping?
- Is there a minimum charge unit? For example, a one-hour minimum.
- When the initial objective is achieved, what are the possible next steps and a rough estimate of their cost?
- How and with what frequency will you receive progress reports?
- What written reports will you receive on the progress?
- To accomplish your objective, what time and resources does your practice need to commit?
- What tasks should the practice delegate to the firm?
- What have you not told the firm that is relevant to the objective?
- Can your budget handle the cost of using the firm to meet your objective?
- Have you discussed the financial risk in meeting your objective?
- What additional cost could be incurred to meet your objective?
- Is the firm's cost similar to other firms you have investigated? If not, why?
- Do you and the firm have the appropriate contracts and confidentiality agreements in place?
- Have both parties clearly communicated their expectations?
- To whom in your organization is the firm to report?
- Does this person have sufficient authority to allow the firm to help you meet your objective?
- Have you informed your practice members and staff about the firm and what it is helping your practice achieve?
- Is the firm set up to handle turnover or incapacitation of key persons working on your objective?
- Do you need to restrict the firm from working with your competitors?
- When you are done using the firm, who will own and have the rights to use any data or reports that are generated?
- What intangibles will the firm bring to your practice?



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Working with the firm

Here are some questions that may assist you in working with the firm you have hired:

- Are you letting their professionals handle what you hired them to do?
- Is the firm asking your practice to perform functions that it should be performing?
- Are there any changes in expectations? Are the changes and their impact being communicated?
- Are you getting both the good and the bad news?

Other resources

Alguire P. Choosing a Consultant. American College of Physicians (ACP) Online.
<http://www.acponline.org/counseling/consultant.htm>

Terry K. Can a MSO help you? Medical Economics. November 3, 2006.
<http://www.memag.com/memag/article/articleDetail.jsp?id=382217>

Tolkoff M. 3 advisers every practice needs. Medical Economics. October 6, 2006.
<http://www.memag.com/memag/article/articleDetail.jsp?id=376054>