

While researching some facts for this month's article I came across an interesting 'key finding' cited for a "2006 EMR Perceptions" report. It stated *'The overwhelming majority of physicians (90 percent), indicate that it is important to buy the product directly from the vendor, as opposed to a third-party reseller. Reasons most cited involved: better pricing, support and relationship.'* To say the least, I was stunned, since I dare say almost every physician I have spoken with over the years, whether they are one of our customers, a prospect, or simply a friend, has told me that one of their biggest concerns was the ability to have local support. They want a live body to come to their office and look at their problems, they don't want to leave a message and wait for a call back, or talk with a tech support person in Iowa or India who has no idea how their office is set up. I have come across doctors who try to play the price game of the reseller versus the direct sales force however, most reputable vendors institute consistent pricing levels both internally and externally. I have also encountered many less than scrupulous resellers who disappear once the sale is complete and the check is in their hand. So I decided to address this perception from the impartial, if only slightly defensive, reseller perspective.

Can you get a better price from the EMR vendor internal sales force versus their external reseller network? The simple answer is: No, and in truth it is very likely the opposite is true. Our contracts with EMR vendors state that we must sell product A at the same price as every other reseller and every one of their internal sales people. But, I can offer you additional services at no extra charge (can you say Value Added) that a salesperson in Boston or Cincinnati cannot. For instance: additional training, template development, being onsite when the lab interface is set up, downloading your software upgrades, forms development, etc. One word of caution though - get any additional services in writing and be specific so there will be no confusion as to whether the obligation is actually met.

Will you get better support from the EMR vendor directly than through a reseller? This is definitely up for debate, and probably has more to do with the vendor criteria for accepting resellers. Some EMR vendors want as many resellers as possible and will sign up almost any company as long as they pay a yearly fee. Other vendors are very particular about the process and have assigned territories or a lengthy process that includes extensive learning of the product before they will let you become a reseller. The question to ask is 'Where will my software support come from?'. Some resellers, are support certified by different vendors and can provide your first line of support, others are just sales certified and will refer you back to the EMR vendor for every support call. The good news for the customer is that if I (as the reseller) provide first line support and you have an emergency while I am out of the office, I can ask the vendor provide support for me at no additional charge to you. It is important to know where your support will come from; dissatisfaction occurs is when this is not communicated clearly.

Will you have a better relationship with your EMR vendor if you purchase direct? The physicians I have talked with say no. I speculate that this is because as a reseller I have a smaller number of clients and when you call me I know who you are, where you are, and what the inside of your office looks like. I don't have to type your name into a computer system to pull up your account. I can tell you what is going on with your EMR vendor, when the next release will be out, what the issues were with the last release, when your 2007 codes will be available, etc. I can also tell you how Dr. So-and-so is using the templates and give you some pointers you might want to consider.

What it comes down to is whether or not the reseller you are dealing with believes in the 'Value Added' part of the title Value Added Reseller. It is a good idea to contact any resellers' current



---

customers to get an idea of the level of support provided. As with any contractual obligation, it is also a good idea to get any promises in writing.

**Medical Data Services**  
**877-297-8400**

*"More Experience. More Installations. More Value to You."*