

# How I Learned to Love AFIX

## A Framework for Achieving Buy-in

### Principles for Effectively Gaining Buy-in

Buy-in is the enthusiastic support and engagement of, not merely compliance with, the AFIX process. The most logical, best researched and widely documented strategies to improve vaccination practices are unlikely to succeed unless there is buy-in from the providers. Providers are barraged with auditors, consultants, patient advocates, safety committees, licensing agencies and enforcers of local ordinances. You can either compete for attention within this pool of 'regulators' or you can be valuable allies in helping the provider accomplish a mutual goal: providing all recommended vaccinations for all eligible children.

You are both an ambassador of public health and a sales representative for the VFC/AFIX program. The core to eliciting buy-in is simple in concept but challenging to execute. The guiding principles are to gain trust by:

- Asking questions
- Listening to understand (active listening)
- Honestly answering hard questions
- Identifying potential benefits *to that provider*
  - Features are common - benefits are personal and specific
  - Be specific
  - Use the 'link phrases' such as 'which means that.....'
- **Not** relying on logic; paint a picture
- Being professional at all times
  - Don't worry about being liked –**be respected**

### Ineffective Buy-in Practices

- Focus on programmatic requirements rather than the benefits of AFIX partnership
- Talk in jargon (e.g. VFC, VMBIP, AFIX) rather than simple everyday language
- Provide information impersonally by fax/mail/email
- Imply superior knowledge
- Identify which of their peers (aka competitors) are participating.

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## Frequent questions/challenges in eliciting Buy-in

Roughly speaking, questions and challenges fall into two categories: those that ask for clarification about the risks/rewards and resource requirements for participating in AFIX and those that will be used to explain why they cannot participate. Each provides an opportunity to “sell” the AFIX partnership. The motivation of the questioner/challenger requires different strategies, so use your judgement and check your intuition by assessing whether the response you received fits your presumption of motivation. Finally, your best sales technique is your reputation.

### **1. We don't have the time** (money, staff, or other resources)

This is one of the most pressing issues in provider offices. It is often synonymous with one of two inter-related issues: patient throughput or provider productivity. Acknowledge the point and sympathize, and ask about the challenges of being expected to do so much with so little. Based on what is said during the conversation, it is possible to articulate the specific potential benefits in the time-savings and productivity gains attributable to switching ineffective vaccination strategies with effective ones. Effective solutions do not necessarily require a lot of time, and it may be important to help the office understand this.

### **2. Our rates are already good**

This may or not be true *but* improving vaccination practices isn't simply about having high coverage rates. It is about improving vaccination services, regardless of your rate, which means developing strategies to see more patients, with fewer missed opportunities to vaccinate, improving patient and staff satisfaction and reducing waste.

### **3. We are very interested, but I have a meeting soon; could you send some information?**

Agree to send information BUT also request a better time to talk directly with the provider about the benefits of an AFIX partnership.

### **4. We are already audited on our coverage rates by.....**

Very likely true but you are not an auditor. You are offering a partnership in which you will work with the provider in improving their practice with the outcome being improved coverage rates, happier patients and staff, less waste and better productivity.

### **5. What does this cost**

Everything has a cost, even if not in direct dollar expenditures. Be explicit about the optimal commitment and explain why and what the expected benefit will be. Be specific!

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### **6. We already have a QI committee looking into this**

Since your intention is to help that provider improve vaccination practices, having an existing QI committee is a benefit. Ask to present to and participate in the QI meeting as an ad hoc member.