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The Hearing Aid Test Drive:
A Whole-Practice Approach for the New Consumer
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- [Christy] At this time it is my pleasure to introduce our first presenter who will kick off the Hearing Aid Test Drive: A Whole-Practice Approach for the New Consumer. We welcome Will Diles, and Will, I'll hand over the mic to you at this point.

- [Will] Hello, everyone. Thanks so much for attending this webinar today. We are Pivot Hearing, and we started this company with one purpose and that is to stand with the independent hearing care practices because we believe that this produces the best outcome for patients. With this in mind, we have been rethinking a new approach that will better serve the patients coming through our doors today, and defend and successfully compete against growing retail choices in the market. We have spent the last three years developing and testing an approach in a six-office practice in Northern California, and we are here today to let you know how this has gone, and provide some encouragement that it's working. Okay, the learning outcomes for today's presentation are as follows. One, list characteristic differences between The Greatest Generation patients of the past and Baby Boomer patients that are beginning to enter the hearing aid market. Two, describe the steps in the Hearing Aid Test Drive counseling and fitting process. And three, overcome common reservations from patients to trying hearing aids. Okay, I'm gonna pass it off to Bill now.

- [Bill] Good morning, everybody, from California. This is Bill Diles. I'm an audiologist in the North Bay area of San Francisco and I'm joined by my son Will, as he was introduced, and Adam Jase. They're both hearing aid dispensers and they play critical roles in managing our practice, and these guys also help other practice owners with their businesses across the country and in Canada through Pivot Hearing, which is our practice development services group. So here's a little tidbit. As far as I know, and I've never really been challenged on this, but mine is the longest running family in the hearing aid industry. My grandfather started fitting hearing aids in 1934, in Billings, Montana. So that's 86 years ago, and now we're five generations of hearing care providers and that makes me the world's leading authority on my opinion. So I

purchased Kenwood Hearing Centers in 1981, in Santa Rosa, California, and with my wife Kris, who's also an audiologist, we've grown the business to six locations. And I'm excited to bring this new perspective today, 'cause you know, this is such a mature industry. Everything seems like it's been tried before, right? And it's kinda tough to figure out how we can differentiate and add unique value in this changing market, and I don't think it's by running ads that say, you know, looking for 30 people to test a new hearing aid, or hey, it could be earwax, right? I wanna talk about a new approach that's been really successful for us. So the Hearing Aid Test Drive, you know, I've always thought of myself as a cheerleader for better hearing, like what's possible here? What can I do to maximize a patient's hearing? I like to think out of the box, for example, let's send a technician to the house to loop a living room or install a Bluetooth TV device, or maybe we can loop our patient's church or maybe we can loop a movie theater, and just yesterday, we were at a theater that we looped a few years ago, and we're testing out different manufacturer Bluetooth TV boxes and we think we might have something here where there'll be a pairing station. So our patients can go into the theater, pair their hearing aids up to the box and then have the movie streaming, which would be an improvement over the loop that's in there, because of course that's a little better signal. So always testing things.

Maybe another way we like to kinda think out of the box, maybe we can make a temporary mold for a patient who needs a loan or offer spare hearing aids for a long trip. It's just, what can we do to enhance the patient experience, 'cause it's like, I've got a new patient sitting in front of me and this patient's about to spend thousands of dollars, and I think to myself, how often do I really spend four to \$6,000 in my personal life? It seems like never. Yet we're asking people to do this every day, right? And this is a major purchase. So how can I be sure that I'm giving them the best result? It's a big responsibility, for sure, and I love the way the Hearing Aid Test Drive addresses this question. And you're probably thinking, I already let people test drive hearing aids, this is a common practice and we all pretty much agree it's a good idea and most of us are bound by law to provide a 30-day trial. But what we're gonna talk today about is taking

this concept to a little bit of a deeper level. 'Cause this concept can really revolutionize the way you approach your patients. But you know, with like every good idea that comes along, we always ask the question first, is this good for the patient? And I can say emphatically, yes, this is good for the patient. So now that we're in the year 2020, I was thinking about my family history and how we have fit hearing aids in 10 decades. So that's quite a legacy, and over those decades, we've seen steady improvement in the hearing aid technology but the hearing aid market really hasn't changed much. We've been able to kinda sit back and just do what we do for decades. But lately, I think we all agree, things are changing rapidly, and for one, our patients are changing. You know, the Baby Boomers have finally arrived. Do you remember, like, I don't know, seven or eight years ago, we were all going, oh, the Baby Boomers, they're here now, here comes the age wave. And then it dawned on us, oh yeah, they're like any other generation, they're gonna wait seven years, just like anybody else. I'm a Boomer and I'm no different. But today they really are here, right? And so, how can we be sure that we're attracting this group to our practices? 'Cause we all know the best way to grow a business is to build a solid database of loyal patients, and the Hearing Aid Test Drive helps accomplish this, and we all know the value of increased patient referrals and the test drive process inspires your patients to not only write positive reviews but actually refer more patients, 'cause this is such a comfortable approach. So we're gonna be discussing the ins and outs here and how this is good, not just for your patients, but it's also good for your business.

- [Will] Okay, so people who have spent any time in this industry are probably aware, things certainly are different than they used to be. The traditional model of hearing aid delivery has seen fairly radical change over the past few years and I think it's safe to assume that these changes will continue on a similar trajectory in the future. These changes can be attributed to many things but I think perhaps the largest driver of change to the private practice market is the growth in the managed care sector. Managed care has become a major part of retail hearing aid sales with some estimates predicting that it will represent 35% of all units sold by the year 2021. Big box retail is

something independent practices have competed with for years, but the growth of this sector continues to outpace that of private practices, and online sales are also not a new phenomenon but it continues to be a challenge for practice owners, with advancements in technology, like remote fitting, self-testing, among others. We can only assume that online sales will continue to be something private practices will have to grapple with and compete with in the coming years. And something that is, it's highly speculative but still a bit concerning, is the recent legislation we have seen affecting the healthcare space. With the passage of the OTC bill in 2017, as well as the more recent piece of legislation working its way through congress, the Medicare Hearing Act of 2019. It's unclear how these bills will impact the traditional private practice model but it's certainly something to keep an eye on. What is most important here is that as practice owners, we need to look for ways to adapt in the face of these market forces and maintain a viable value proposition for today's patients.

Okay, in addition to some of the larger systemic challenges facing private practices, there are other headwinds worth mentioning. The marketplace is more cluttered, noisy, and competitive than ever. Practices must differentiate themselves in a clear and compelling way to stand out and attract new patients. We believe this differentiation should focus on private practice independence. Patient acquisition costs are high. Traditional advertising approaches are far less effective, if at all, than they used to be, and given the high cost of bringing patients in the door, it's critical to make the most of every opportunity you get. There are many reasons, some of which we just touched on, that appear to be contributing to downward pressure on retail pricing with high-end technology available at big box stores, as well as very low cost private label devices available through several managed care plans. This creates unique challenges for private practices which generally require higher margins to operate successful businesses. And patients today have more options than ever when it comes to deciding where to seek hearing healthcare treatment, and because of this, it's a safe assumption that patients are shopping around. This is likely leading to a higher incidence of tested not treat patients than in previous periods, and we believe this is

because practices are failing to meet the need of the new patient demographic. A final consideration here is the sometimes poor reputation of our industry. Many of us have competitors with less than scrupulous business practices, which can paint us all in a somewhat negative light. These dissatisfied patients can amplify their experiences easier than ever through review sites and social media. They can also, on the other hand, amplify their positive experience as well. Something to keep in mind. It's also common for patients to report that they have friends or loved ones with hearing aids in the drawer that they never wear and wasted a bunch of money on. So we need to approach patients in a different way to immediately address any concerns that they might bring with them to that initial appointment. And as mentioned, the demographics are changing and the Baby Boomers are here. They are much more active and we'll expect to have their needs met in all of the environments that they find themselves in. They do not recognize medical authority in the same way as previous generations, and will want to experience the benefit and efficacy of treatments before making any final decisions. They are going to do their due diligence, and the traditional method of making a strong recommendation for a particular hearing aid brand or model may not be persuasive to these patients. The Hearing Aid Test Drive creates a shared decision-making process between the patient and the provider, and this is a much better way to approach today's patients, and we believe we'll reduce the number of missed opportunities in the form of tested not treated patients. It's also very difficult, if not impossible, to gain the trust and confidence of these patients within the first appointment. How much can really be learned or conveyed within an hour? It will likely take more time than that, and Hearing Aid Test Drive is a way to build the relationship over an extended time horizon in a way that not only doesn't hurt your bottom line but helps it.

- [Bill] Okay so, I have a mentor, and he bought a little restaurant up in Reno, back in the '70s, and today he owns six casinos, has 5300 employees, he's just been a huge success and just a real down-to-earth guy, but he always has a saying for me and here are some of the examples, some things he's told me over the years. He says, "If you

run your business today "like you did yesterday, "you might not be around tomorrow." He's also constantly reminded me that there's no comfort zone in business, but I don't think we need to be reminded of that, right? We all experience that. Another one of his sayings is, "If owning a business were easy, everybody would have one." Or how about this one, "Your business is always crumbling beneath you." So he sounds like a negative guy, right? But he sure isn't, he's very positive, and one of my favorite things he's ever shared with me was the concept of positive fear. He said to me, he said, "I live in positive fear. "I believe I can stay one step ahead "of that train that'll run me over "if I take my eye off the ball." So we all know what happens when we lose sight of our customer, and when we lose sight of our business environment.

So we need to be smart, we need to be making data-driven decisions and we need to be willing to change our ways, and if you look at, for example, Blockbuster and Netflix, what happened? Blockbuster didn't pay attention to how the customer and the world of technology was changing and I think there are three examples we can learn from that. Number one, we can never forget what we're selling. You see, Blockbuster lost sight of providing convenient entertainment rather than renting DVDs. Number two, we need to be willing to adapt, and if we wait too long to make changes, we can miss the boat too. And finally, the customer-driven approach always wins. Put your patients in the center of your process and optimize their happiness. You know, it's not about you. And I think this is a good example for us to think about as we face the changes that are going on in our industry, 'cause change is inevitable. The test drive concept started for me back in the '90s. As some of you will remember, we had quite a jump in technology with products such as the ReSound BT2 and the MultiFocus and then DigiFocus and the Widex Senso. These were a big leap forward, and this is a copy of the ad we ran for the MultiFocus, and I remember that ad resulted in 200 appointments. Wouldn't that be nice if it worked like that today? But it had a positive message, improve your hearing automatically, and we've kinda taken from that the idea that all of our marketing should be positive, we carry that through to today. So I understand this ad is hanging at Oticon, in the Wall of Fame . But, you know, these products were far

superior to what we had before and we knew that if we could just get these hearing aids on the patients, I think if they could take them home and listen in their own environments that they were likely to purchase, even though at this time, a lot of you may recall, the retail price of hearing aids went from about 800 a piece to about 1700, for these types of products. We were surprised that, oh, the patients will pay that, they'll pay for better hearing. So I didn't want the patients leaving my office without these hearing aids on, but there was a real downside to this, it required a large inventory. That's a really costly way to do business. As you know, you put hearing aids on people and schedule your follow-up and then things come up and they miss their appointment.

Next thing you know, you've got invoices that are 60 days, 90 days, yikes. Manufacturer would call to bill, "We need \$40,000 by Friday," and , yeah, things could get out of hand. But even with this pressure on the business, I'm such an impatient person, I just couldn't resist fitting patients on the spot, 'cause we have kind of an informal mission statement and it's that everybody leaves our office hearing better than when they came in. Whether they're in for just a quick repair or something wrong or a new patient to our office, I want everyone leaving hearing better. So that was the '90s and that's when we started kinda dabbling with this whole test drive idea, but we jump ahead to 2011, when we discovered the Unitron Flex:trial, and wow, that was really a game changer for us 'cause now with just one device, patients could experience different levels of technology and it was just a really comfortable way to approach the patient that we started realizing we're really putting them in the driver seat. And like Will said, I don't think you can gain total trust because we're asking new patients to trust us and I just don't think you can gain total trust with somebody that you've only known for an hour. But what was interesting to us was that we were actually showing the patient that we trust them first. They would say things like, "Oh, you're gonna let me take these home?" And the patient trust us eventually because we trusted them first, and the whole mood of the fitting was relaxed 'cause the patient was now in the driver's seat, like I said. And so, not only is this a great patient benefit, there are lots of

business benefits because we weren't tying up inventory, cash flow was better, we were not having to pay for hearing aids before we sell them. And there are lots of business advantages, and we'll discuss that in a bit, but going back to the '90s for just a second, the technology was a lot better but we certainly hadn't done much in the way of feedback management. So it was really hard to fit open and we really needed a way to fit on the spot, so we developed kind of an instant mold technique, and over the years, we've perfected it and this picture here, you can see, we'll actually you can't see, the mold is so good. We make these little molds, we call 'em P-molds, 'cause they're actually purple, and for less than \$5 in less than five minutes, we can make a really good looking pair of ear molds. And this enables us to fit any patient same day, who walks in our door, with any type of hearing loss. It's really great thing. You know what? I'd be willing to bet that nobody in your market is doing this, but P-molds are really good 'cause they fit the experience now mentality of today's patient. You know, the test drive, it's not a new concept, and like I mentioned, we're talking about taking this to a new level.

So I talk to practices around the country and I hear it all the time, "Oh yeah, well we do that," and I go, hmm, I don't see that on your website. Well, I'm sure your patients love the concept when they're in your office, but what about the prospects who haven't met you yet and they're researching online? Wouldn't it be good if it were real clear from your website that you do offer a test drive? And not just a two-week trial. I mean, is a two-week trial really different? Is it really gonna differentiate your practice? Is it unique? Does it make sense to put such a short timeframe on your offer? I think today's customer, or consumer, understands that they do have a trial period, and we're talking about a major investment for the patient, so why put limits on that evaluation period? We wanna make sure that the patient's comfortable, and we wanna be reassuring as possible, even before they've met us, 'cause let's face it, people aren't rushing in, right? They're waiting seven years, and now that we have their attention, I think we should eliminate all obstacles. The test drive process really differentiates your practice, and we've learned over the years that patients really appreciate this process, to the

point where they're inclined to tell others and write Yelp reviews and Google reviews, and we finally realized this is really going well, we should make this the key message in all of our marketing. So for years, we've been advertising products, and when you think about it, you're advertising products that can be purchased at lots of different places. What was unique about your offer? But now we're communicating something completely valuable and unique, we're advertising us. The message is about Kenwood Hearing Centers, not the newest widget. The message to our market is we're the place who will find the optimal hearing solution for you. We're independent, we're brand neutral, and today's consumer really appreciates this. They don't wanna be sold one brand, they want choice. And again, there's another side benefit to this type of messaging and your competitors are, it's highly unlikely that your competitors are messaging this type of process. And it's also a bit of a defense against third parties.

We've had instances where patients come in, they have a third-party benefit, but they've heard so much about the test drive and read about it on our website, they're kinda reluctant to just pick a hearing aid from a list. And so, many have chosen to skip the third party and go directly with us so they can find the optimal solution. And you know, it's also kind of a defense against Costco. Anybody have Costco in their area? When someone says, "I can get so and so "this hearing aid at Costco, for this price," instead of going through a long defense of our practice and what you get when you come to us, I'd rather just ask the patient, now how do you know that's the best hearing aid for you? How do you know that's the optimal hearing aid for your brain? So it's kinda neat, it's kind of a defense against third parties and Costco, so I like that. What makes the Hearing Aid Test Drive different from a standard trial? You know, we're all well trained and we work with great products, we have proven clinical tools and we're confident we can offer pretty good solution right outta the gate, but even with our expertise, are we sure we've provided the optimal solution as the patient is leaving the office after the first visit? There's a missing element. It's the patient experience in their own unique environments. We can feel confident that we dialed in a nice fitting, on the initial visit, but so often, on the follow-up visit, we hear things like,

"Oh, my wife says I'm still "not hearing her, "I couldn't hear the pastor at church Sunday," and "Oh, I don't like this switch, it's hard to feel, "and that app is so confusing." So we ask ourselves, have we really found the optimal solution? Obviously not. Even with all our clinical tests, speech and noise and real ear measurements, and whatever else we do to verify and adjust a preference in the office, it could be that we're just on the wrong horse with this patient, meaning maybe we're using the wrong manufacturer. We need to stay really open minded. We have so many choices and we've chosen this particular device after only knowing the patient for an hour or so? Really, if you think about it, what are the odds that this is the optimal device? But there's good news. If you're independent, you're manufacturer agnostic, we can go in a different direction, no problem. So yet it's true that this fitting process can take a few extra weeks, and yes, it's more work, but I came up with the silver bullet to our industry and it's called hard work. But again, our patients are spending thousands of dollars searching for their best hearing solution. They deserve the best and we need to be sure that we're adding that value. You know, and at the end of the journey, your patient will feel more confident in his or her decision because there's been a real collaboration with the audiologist and trust has been built.

And if I may digress, I've heard many times, I'm not gonna fit this patient without a deposit or payment in full. They need to have some skin in the game. And I get that, but I kinda have a different take. You know, the typical patient waits seven years, and here they are, they're finally in our office. To me, that's plenty of skin. Do we really want that patient, that hearing aid candidate, to leave the office without hearing aids because they weren't comfortable enough to make a decision? We need to remove every obstacle we can, and may I digress further. We hear lots of talk in our industry about best practices, and I'm often left wondering, just what exactly are best practices? Most seem to say real ear measurements or speech and noise testing, and I checked out the ASHA Guidelines for their list of best practices, and here's what I didn't see on the list. Things like being available for same-day emergency appointments. Being available on a weekend. Having a healthy inventory of loner

devices. Making an instant mold so the patient doesn't have to go without while waiting for a mold from the lab, 'cause life's short. Going without hearing for a week? Not if you're one of our patients. But what about providing a technician who will come to the home to install a Bluetooth TV box, just what are best practices? I think we all answer that a little differently, but how about this one. Being independent and manufacture agnostic. Being independent and allowing patients to experience different levels of technology from different manufacturers before making this significant investment, I think that's a best practice. I think zero pressure is a best practice. Patient audiologist collaboration, that's a best practice. Do you ever sit down with a patient after the hearing test and make your strong recommendation only to hear, "You know, I need to go home "and discuss this with my spouse," or "I wanna go do some research." Great, well now they're leaving your office armed with your specific recommendation. They go online, they get confused about pricing, and if you were sitting with them at home, you could say, oh, they're gonna mail you the hearing aids, this isn't gonna work. But they're confused, right? They've left your office and now they're going online, or they've got that neighbor whispering in their ear telling 'em to go to Costco. We all know that neighbor or friend who loves to tell people how much money they can save, never considering the quality of the care they're getting.

But here's something I learned from Abbey Kirk of Unitron. She calls it a series of small yes's, and see, it's misspelled with the apostrophe but it just looks better, I said, we put the proper spelling underneath there. A series of small yes's. So instead of asking the patient to make the big decision on the first visit, which too often results in the patient leaving without hearing aids, not getting the chance to experience better hearing, and once they walk out your door, you may not see them again. They came in search of better hearing and didn't receive it, and that could be argued. You know, we wanna prevent this from happening, so we prefer to slow things down. And so, the series of small yes's goes like this, for example, I may test somebody, determine that they're a candidate and say something like, I have another 45 minutes, do you have some time? And you almost always get your first small yes. I say, would you like to

listen to what hearing aids sound like? We can put some on, and we'll put some music on and visit a little bit, and then you'll get your second small yes. So after you've fit the hearing aids, gotten them adjusted, we say something like, hey, would you like to take these home? You know, you can come back in a week and throw 'em at me if you want. Let's just see if you're even ready for amplification, and this way you can kinda get your family off your back and you can tell them, "Hey, I tried." But what I'm doing at this point in the process is I'm kind of unselling. I want the patient to kinda ask me for better hearing again. I want to see where their level of commitment is, but they'll almost always say yes to taking it home for a week, so that's your third small yes. And at this time I remind the patient, these are just demos, not for sale, and that is just so important to say because we're selling the better hearing journey, we're not selling the widget, and we're definitely not making any final recommendations today, because honestly, we don't really know what we're gonna end up with at this early stage of the journey, and I don't want the patient attaching to a brand, I want them attaching to our clinic and leaving with the confidence that we're gonna find the optimal solution.

- [Adam] Okay so, I'm gonna get started on some of the most important patient care benefits of this Hearing Aid Test Drive. So first there's really no pressure. It's hard for someone to just say no to a completely risk-free hearing aid test drive. So not only does this put less pressure on the patient, it also puts less pressure on the provider to like make a sale. I think it's really important because it sets up the entire interaction to be very easy for everyone involved and it always has the patient's best interests at heart, which of course it's really the whole point of all of this. So it's really easy to get started, very easy for the patient to get started with amplification, all they're really agreeing too initially is just to give hearing aids a try. And it's really easy for the practice to get started too, by utilizing demo hearing aids. As Bill had mentioned, this process establishes trust. So the fact that there's no deposit, no commitment for the patient to start, it's a wonderful thing. I can't tell you how many times I'm kind of wrapping it up after that first appointment and somebody says, "Okay well, how much of a deposit do I have to put down "or what do I have to sign?" And we would just say,

hey, just go ahead and take 'em, and come back and tell me how it is. They're always totally blown away by that. So you're really trusting the patient right up front, and by you trusting them, in turn, they turn around and they're gonna trust you. It empowers the patient and inspires confidence in their decision. So patients truly feel like they're a part of the decision-making process in this, because they are. So the only strong recommendation we're really making is just the benefit of amplification in general. So because of this, I mean you're practically gonna process zero returns, 'cause people are only buying once they've been experiencing it, they know what they're getting into, they've realized the benefits, they're comfortable with the price, and so on. And this builds the relationship before any financial transactions even take place. So I think it seems like, you know, once money changes hands, usually the whole dynamic changes at that point, especially if that's happening way too early in the process. So in addition to providing training and supporting providers on how to run this Hearing Aid Test Drive, Pivot's also created all the marketing materials you need to use this as a tool, to actually get new patients in the door.

So if you're still watching this presentation at this point and you're thinking, well, I already do a lot of this, I mean, that's fantastic, that's a great benefit for your patients, great benefit for your business too, but we talked to a lot of people and we generally never come across practices that are marketing that kind of process in an effective way. So to the right there we have one of our ads we've had really good success with, and I wanted to read you the specific words we actually put right in the ads themselves. Here's how it works. Make an appointment for an initial hearing evaluation. Number two, take home a state-of-the-art hearing aid with no commitment or deposit required. Number three, take your time evaluating which hearing aid suits you best. So when we first came up with this idea, and this was years ago, we were kind of nervous to put such a bold statement just right there in the advertising copy itself, 'cause we had the same kind of worries that many practices we talk to now have. Worries like, well won't the patients just take off with the hearing aids? Or will people ever feel the need to really commit and buy? Or don't I have to make that strong recommendation?

And we can tell you for running these ads for many years in practices all over North America, they're very effective in driving patients to your practice, and after doing thousands of test drives with no commitment or deposit required, we really haven't had anyone purposely rip us off or like purposely waste our time. And Will's gonna go into that a little further and discuss some of the concerns we hear from practices who were thinking about implementing this. So these are really not brand new or untested ideas, we've had success running them and they're proven to resonate with prospective patients. People call when they're ready to schedule the test drive, this is really kind of neat thing we didn't expect but, as Bill has also said, before we started running these kinds of ads, typically we were running just a straightforward product ad. And people would call in and the first thing they would say is, "well how much does it cost?" and then we'd give 'em the answer and then many times they'd hang up.

So once we started advertising in this way, people would just call in and they'd say, "Hey, I'd like to schedule the test drive." So obviously that makes it a lot easier for the people answering the phone. Also makes it easier when you actually finally see the patient. And once you start running these, you'll find that you're gonna be getting some really excellent patient reviews. This is one of my favorites, and I'm just gonna read it. Every person I met during my experience at Kenwood Hearing Center was extremely pleasant, patient and professional. I tried out several hearing aids before deciding on one and the result has been a positive life-changing experience. I highly recommend this company. So we've had tons of reviews like this, and they're not only five stars, but the review is where the patient actually, in the review, writes about the experience they had. We have some reviews where people even take it a step further and they say things like, well, I went to another practice and this is what they recommended and this is what it costs, and then I found Kenwood Hearing Centers and I was really amazed that I was able to try different hearing aids and I really feel like that made a huge difference in my success. So once adopted, the Hearing Aid Test Drive really becomes the most critical element in your practice value proposition, it becomes the most important differentiator from all your competitors, and it's the central communication of

your marketing. And as you can see, we put this everywhere, we put it right on our website, very clear. We have it in Google ads and different types of search ads, print-type creatives with different messages here. We have Facebook ads. So we have just a whole slew of things, the list goes on from here. But in summary, it really becomes the center piece of everything you do, including your whole image, your advertising, sales process, how you run your operations, and how you generate quality of referrals. So now I'm gonna get into the real nuts and bolts about how the process actually works in practice and how we train practices to run this in their offices. So when I go through this, this is mainly gonna be geared towards a new patient, new patient to your practice who has not worn hearing aids before, but this process, or like a streamline version of it, it really works for any situation. It works for existing patients, experienced hearing aid users, anybody who's looking for better hearing. So with this appointment map, you'll see it kinda goes from appointment to appointment, and we typically allow 90 minutes for that initial appointment, just 'cause that's when the most stuff is gonna be done, and then we do 45 minutes for followups, but this is totally just gonna vary, depending on how you work, depending on the practice. But one thing we do recommend is the timing between the appointments should be about four to seven days, and you only want it longer than a week if that's all that the patient's schedule is gonna allow.

So initial appointment. The goal of this appointment is really not to make a sale. It simply to get the patient started wearing hearing aids. So everything you do should be geared towards completing this goal and really not worrying too much about anything else. So because this whole process is consultative and it's extremely patient-centered, if you go through the whole thing and at any point someone decides not to move forward, you can just rest easy knowing that you did everything you could to try to help somebody. So even with this process, you're not gonna successfully treat every single person that walks in your door, but you certainly are gonna have a higher fitting ratio, which is gonna lead to more business and more happy patients. So let's get started. Initially, patient greeting, start off with questions, get somebody to start talking

about their hearing and go over their intake and hearing health history. And next, it's just proceeding right to the hearing test. We recommend that the time spent from that initial greeting to the hearing test, it's good to kinda keep that as short as comfortably possible, and the reason is, you don't wanna get bogged down with just tons of questions and conversation right up front, it's best to handle this when the patient is actually wearing the hearing aids, so they can get all their questions answered and experience amplification at the same time. And this also keeps the goal of fitting hearing aids in the first appointment on track. So then you're done with the hearing test, you're gonna review the test, of course, with them, and if the hearing loss warrants it, make a recommendation for amplification in general. But it's just general, we're not talking about specific hearing aids or brands or anything like that at this point.

And then we do like an explanation of the test drive. Something like this. Well, as far as trying hearing aids, we really make this as easy as possible for you. We're all about having you try different hearing aids in your environment so you can really experience what the benefits are. I can fit you with something today and you can take 'em home and try 'em out. Typically we have you come back in a week or so, you can tell me how it's going, and then we'll just take it from there. Does that sound good? So pretty simple. If everything's good, which for a lot of people, they're like, yeah, great, then proceed ahead, fit the hearing aids. And of course, at this point, a lot of times questions are gonna come up. So I've put a list here of just some of the most common ones that all of you get, all day, every day, but I wanted to just show you how easily they are answered by the test drive. So first question, do I really need hearing aids yet? Well according to your hearing test, yes, you'd benefit from hearing aids. But really the only way is, the only way to really know is by trying them out. This next question, it's so perfectly answered by the test drive that we actually use it as headline in our first ever, and arguably more successful, Hearing Aid Test Drive ad. The question is how do I know which hearing aid is right for me? And the answer is very simple, the only way to really know is to experience the benefits in your day-to-day life. Another question, how

much do they cost? Well there's wide ranges of prices, which start at this, it can go up to around this. So we have options for any hearing loss or budget. We really won't know what you need until you try something out. We've copied your insurance card at the front desk, so we'll check to see if there's any benefits or discounts available. But when you come back for your followup, I'll be able to give you more specific numbers. Initially we just recommend getting started with something so we can start figuring out what works. Well what are the differences in the price ranges? The differences are the features that the hearing aid is using to help you hear better. Higher-end devices typically are gonna make it easier for you to hear people talk in challenging environments with lots of background noise like restaurants. You can actually try out these different options through this test drive process, then you can get an idea of what these differences really mean and how much they might be worth to you. Well which hearing aid do you recommend? I'm recommending you try a pair of our behind-the-ear demos based off the results of your hearing test. Your hearing test, it's really just a starting point. Everyone's hearing is as unique as their fingerprint. We really won't know what to specifically recommend until you start wearing the devices in your environments and you come back and let me know how it's going. That gives us the ability to fine-tune them specifically to you so we can really figure out which hearing aid works the best with your brain.

And what if I try the hearing aids and don't wanna buy them? Hey, if for whatever reason it doesn't work out, just bring the hearing aids back and we can start up again, you know, whenever you're ready, no problem. So this is like a small sample of questions that you might get, but of course, there's many other ones and we've created the Pivot Patient Counseling Tool, which is a custom slideshow which we developed, and this could help patients understand what's going on and also help providers explain different topics such as ear anatomy, hearing loss itself, how you hear with your brain, links to cognitive decline, comparisons to vision loss, and of course, the Hearing Aid Test Drive. So throughout the first appointment, really try to only answer the questions you need to, to get the patient to put on hearing aids. Once

the hearing aids are on, then feel free to go into all this stuff, answer all the questions and cover all the topics necessary within that amount of time you have. But as I said before, if you could get to this point and they still aren't ready to try something, then they're just really not ready. You know, if you've taken away all the barriers for them to get started and they still don't wanna do it, then at least you know, you did everything you can. So once you get that go ahead, they're ready to wear hearing aids, then, of course, just fit the hearing aids, and you know, use your real ear, first fit, music sound files, just you know, whatever you do. The point of this whole webinar, it's not about how to fit the hearing aids and sell, but really just how to make it easier for you to get more people to treat their hearing loss. So before that first appointment's over, it's really important to set expectations for the follow-up appointment, for when they're gonna come back. This is really key.

The follow-up appointment needs to be thought of as part of the fitting process. So what this does, it helps ensure that the patient plans on coming back to your office with the expectation of continuing the Hearing Aid Test Drive, and not bringing the hearing aids back in a bag as something went wrong. So a couple of examples of ways to explain this to a patient before they leave. You know, you can say something like, well don't worry if it's not perfect. We don't know how to adjust the hearing aids until you have worn them in your environments and come back and give us feedback on how everything went. At your follow-up, we're gonna ask you how it's going, go over the data logging, fine-tune hearing aids, or try another option. The follow-up appointment is really exciting because that's when we really get to know you and your specific hearing loss so we can adjust the hearing aids to you. You can also say something like, remember, you're not making any decisions at this point. Even if you come back and love the hearing aids, I'll have you try another pair to get a comparison. So the first ones you wear might be amazing, but if you don't have anything to compare it to, how do we know that another option might not be even better? So a little side note on this, when we explain this to people, sometimes it seems just way over the top. People say, "Well, if somebody tries hearing aids, "they come back for

the follow-up and everything's great, "why not just wrap it up?" And that's totally fine, you can do that, but if you take that extra step and have them try out at least two different options, it's totally gonna ensure that the patient is never gonna return, and the fact that they were ready to pay and you said, "Hold on, let's take a little bit more time here "and just make sure we're doing everything right," I mean, it's gonna be extremely impressive to the patient, they're gonna trust you completely from that point on. So again, you don't have to do this but many of our members do, and if you choose to do it, I think it really benefits everyone involved and the patient's able to really get that full test drive experience. So then that's the initial appointment, after that, you're gonna schedule your follow-up appointment, four to seven days later. So the follow-up appointments are pretty straightforward. Obviously when they come in, ask them how everything went, and we recommend trying to hook up to those hearing aids kinda, like right away, 'cause you wanna just get 'em involved in the process, check the data logging, start making adjustments, you wanna get them involved right away so there's really no thought of them not continuing the test drive, just totally assume that's what's happening, and then where to go from there.

So if they had a really good week, that's great, then, as I said, I recommend trying another pair to get that comparison, or if you want, you can just wrap it up and proceed to the sale. If things were just okay, then probably best to move on to the next option. If it was a bad experience, then it'll just kinda depend on why that was. If you find out it was something real simple, that you know, it could be fixed, like they had an issue with the battery or something, I'd go ahead and address that issue and then have them go another four to seven days, 'cause you wanna make sure that they get a really solid test drive. If they did that and they wore 'em all day, everyday, and they're just not thrilled or it was bad, then go ahead and move on to the next option. So you're just gonna continue this process until you've found the best hearing aid for them, at a price that they can afford, and that's it. Then you're just gonna schedule up your regular clinic check appointments, and that's how the whole Hearing Aid Test Drive works.

- [Will] Okay so in discussing the Hearing Aid Test Drive with practice owners for many years, we've heard plenty of objections. A very common concern is the delay in collecting payment. I think this is a fair point and I can understand where you'd be coming from. We believe, and the data shows, that by incorporating this approach into your practice, though, you will actually increase your sales. And once you get this process up and running, you'll have many patients on trial at any given time. So any delay in collecting payment is only a temporary concern. Another benefit of not collecting payment upfront, as Adam mentioned, is that you are far less likely to process returns when someone's had the chance to go through the process and feel much more confident about their final decision.

Another common concern, as previously mentioned, is the fear of patients taking off with the hearing aids. This just simply doesn't happen very much, and if it does, it's not intentional theft, it's usually lost in a hospital or something like that. In a very rare event, though, that it does occur, it's been our experience that the manufacturers will have your back and replace products as needed. Perhaps the most common objection, and this is something Bill mentioned earlier but I think is worth repeating, is that patients won't have any skin in the game if they're walking out with hearing aids and not making a payment or deposit. The average patient waits seven years to do anything about their hearing loss, the fact that they've called your office, made an appointment and showed up, that's skin in the game, if you ask me. When you implement this program, it won't work if you don't have product on the shelf, obviously. The good news is that manufacturers are more willing than ever, it seems, to provide demos so that their products have an opportunity to compete with others in the Hearing Aid Test Drive. With several manufacturers allowing technology upgrades from within the fitting software, this can greatly reduce the number of units and models you'll need on the shelf. And if this sounds like a lot of work or more than is currently involved in your fittings, I suppose that's true. The high retail cost of hearing aids and the desire of patients to do their due diligence completely warrant whatever work is necessary. While this might take more time overall, it happens to reduce one step of the process

that I think many of us in this industry find particularly unpleasant and that's applying sales pressure. Pivot Hearing is here to help you with this every step of the way and you can have this up and running relatively quickly. Okay, so we're gonna go over some of the business benefits of the Hearing Aid Test Drive. This approach will reduce the frequency of tested not treated patients by not forcing them to make a buying decision at that first appointment. It also provides you with unique marketing messages that are proven to be attractive to new patients. The process has also been shown to increase ASP. We'll get into more on that a little later. When patients have time to evaluate different options, they tend to sell themselves on better technology where they might've opted for a lower cost option. Using manufacturer demos is very helpful for working capital. You are only ordering hearing aids when the patient has completed the Hearing Aid Test Drive and are highly unlikely to return. So this keeps your cash flow in a good and predictable place. Patients prefer this method and they're much more likely to tell a friend or leave you a good review online after having gone through the Hearing Aid Test Drive.

Okay, so the Hearing Aid Test Drive will impact your business in a number of ways but most importantly here is that it will result in more hearing aid trials. There are other positive impacts but fitting more patients with hearing devices is what really moves the needle, and in fact, the number of hearing aid trials that you have out at any given time is a KPI that we like to look at 'cause it's actually a pretty good indicator of the health of your practice once you get this process going. Okay, and perhaps where we've learned the most about the Hearing Aid Test Drive is in our own practice, Kenwood Hearing Centers. In 2011, we put it in place in all of our locations, completely redesigned our marketing to promote it, and as you can see, sales have grown fairly dramatically in the year since. A particularly successful example of how the Hearing Aid Test Drive can positively impact ASP was in a practice we work with in Oregon. In a short period of time, the ASP of this practice rose by over \$600, and the owner of the practice attributes this growth to the implementation of the Hearing Aid Test Drive. And another example of where this has worked well was in a practice that we work with in

Arkansas and the owner of this practice hired an audiologist right out of grad school, and in her first year, her sales were extremely low. Understandably, she didn't have the confidence or sales ability that you gained over years of working with patients, but after being introduced to the Hearing Aid Test Drive, her sales more than doubled in her second year on the job.

- [Bill] So in summary, the Hearing Aid Test Drive is just a great strategy for not only attracting but satisfying the demands of this new group of patients that are entering our markets, 'cause today's patients are insisting on playing a larger role in their own healthcare. And the Hearing Aid Test Drive really conveys to the patient that you are competent, that you're open-minded, and you're more than happy to let them co-pilot as you guys work together to find the ultimate hearing solution. The Hearing Aid Test Drive has been our approach to the patient through our marketing and our face-to-face interactions and we know it works well because it's done so well for our practice and you've seen that in our excellent results. This is also working well for other practices across the country and in Canada, and if you're interested in implementing this strategy in your practice, we've developed the tools and materials now that are proven to work. As we think about the new consumer in our markets, you know, why should they choose us over a competitor? It's not just because we offer excellent diagnostic skills, great clinical tools for verification and wonderful ever-improving hearing aid technology, I think it's because we're bringing the patient right into the center of the mix and that's the most important piece. This is what our patients want, and this is what they need, to make the best decision for their hearing care. So let's keep our eyes on the changing patient that we serve because we all know what happens when we take our eyes off the customer. Thanks a lot and we can take a few questions. Let's see. I see a question about the P-molds, and the question is, Christy asks, "Are P-molds mainly used for the temporary purposes, "like during a trial, "or can they be a permanent option as well?" They're used during the tryout, but P-molds will last, easily, up to six months. So they're really good and comfortable, and it's nice because you can make modifications right there in the office and make it comfortable. And some

people actually prefer the P-molds that we make over any molds we can get from a lab, so we have some who just come in every six months or so, or eight months, and just have new P-molds made. Like I said, they're only \$5. But typically, they're just made for the trial, and one thing I really like about that is that, you know, you've got a patient there and you're not sure if the patient's ready and they're not sure they're ready and you go ahead and order them molds, 'cause they need molds, and the patient returns the hearing aids and now you've kinda got that uncomfortable, you've been built for those molds and you have to charge the patient. Well here in California, we can't. We have a law that we have to, we can't keep any fees or any, even ear mold costs. So it's a nice comfortable way to ease somebody into a custom product without having to go to a lab. Let's see. There's a question that says, what duration do we block our schedule for the initial Hearing Aid Test Drive evaluation? Generally an hour and a half, I think that's what we do, that seems to give us plenty of time, yeah, to get the patient tested and fit and kinda dialed in to preference. Somebody else is asking "What is the average length," Bruce is asking, "What's the average length of time "a Hearing Aid Test Drive lasts?" I say it's anywhere between three weeks and up to six weeks. It can take a little longer than a typical trial period for some, but again, I like to just keep working with a patient to assure that they're really satisfied. We've been asked the question, I saw it earlier, about people taking off with the hearing aid, but that just really doesn't happen. It's really not a concern. There's another question coming. Test drive. Adjustment to the aids. Adam, do you see the question from Anne? How long does the typical test drive last when trying different aids, and are you more likely to make an adjustment to an aid at the change...

- [Adam] Sure.

- [Will] As to change the product? Go ahead, Adam, you wanna take that one?

- [Adam] Yeah so, typical test drive, about three to six weeks, and really, the question is asking, do you make an adjustment or do you switch to another product or how do

you kinda go from one appointment to the next? And I think it really is just gonna depend on the patient and how they're doing. So as I said, if they're doing wonderful with the first thing they try. I usually like to throw another thing in the mix, and a lot of our members do that too. So they have a couple options before they make that final decision. If you do that, then they're never gonna come back and say, "Oh, well you only had me try this one "and my friend had this," or whatever. But you know, if they're kind of so-so on it, then I would absolutely, well, I guess it just depends. Two weeks, by making an adjustment, if they're still not happy, I would definitely go on to the next option from that point. So as you start running it, you'll kinda get a feel for just when to make those judgment calls and when to keep it going and when to try to wrap it up 'cause you definitely don't want somebody stringing you along expecting to try every hearing aid option there is.

- [Will] Thanks, Adam. I see a question, do you as the provider select the most appropriate hearing aid to test drive? We typically start with a premium level hearing aids, that's for sure, because I like to say, if we're going to fail, I'd rather fail with a really good top-of-the-line product rather than starting low and wasting a lot of time. So we typically start with a high end and then let people experience different levels of technology, as they desire. Nancy has a question, "What is the acronym ASP?" That's Average Selling Price of the hearing aids. Okay well, I think that kinda wraps it up.

- [Christy] Thank you, Bill, Will and Adam, and also thank you to Chelsea for coordinating this presentation. We are gonna go ahead and wrap up the presentation today. We hope that you enjoyed this presentation. Also, if you're interested in taking their prior course from 2017, that's also on the On-Demand Course Library. Thank you so much, everyone, and have a great day.