



Why are some Practices Successful while other fail?

By Robert Wiehe, D.C.

Practice Management: Success or Struggle? Why do so many young D.C.'s find the going tough? Why are some practices successful while others fail? Do patient volume and consistent solvency determine a good practice? More importantly, what can you do if your practice is going down the tube?

These are some of the questions which I, and a small group of competent D.C.'s, have been working through over the last few years. We have discussed these issues primarily because, never before, in the history of chiropractic, have there been so many young doctors facing serious financial trouble.

First of all, know that the answer to this dilemma is not a powerful new advertising or marketing plan! Why not? Magazine ads and coupons guarantee they will bring in volumes of new patients' a month. Yes, they will for a few-months. But unless you have a balanced health delivery system that meets patients health needs, advertising will do more harm than good. How will it help to bring a few hundred new patients into a practice when they will not come again because the advertisements contradict the real atmosphere in the office?

The solution is not too difficult, but requires considerably more study and material than we can cover here. However, we can get you started.

There are three divisions of practice which are critical for success.

1. Philosophy: This study includes a written plan covering these subjects: defining your mission, goals, objectives, concepts of causes and their corrections of pain and disease, and attitudes of professional commitment. It is important for you to have a "firm foundation" of philosophy from which to build and work.

2. Effective office procedures and Mechanics of Delivery: It is beneficial to have a written outline of examination, diagnostic, and treatment procedures. Office procedures, fee structure, consistency of good outcomes, efficiency, money management, and overhead containment are items that need to be evaluated.

3. Professional demeanor: Personality, attitude, management skills, appearance, personal and public image, and professional demeanor are part of a successful practice.

Some of these are more important than others; nevertheless, they are all important and one must make a continued effort to improve in each of these areas. Are any of these hard to learn? No! However, they do require evaluation, study and focus. Some of these subjects are difficult to understand because, as humans, we find it difficult to change our minds about preconceived ideas, even though they are counter-productive.

For the ones who say "Ok, here I am, going broke and you said I shouldn't advertise until I get my act together and improve in all of these areas. How can I survive financially without heavy marketing or advertising?" The answer is quite simple. *Lower your fees.....*

We live in the Wal-Mart era. People would rather buy a \$7 hammer which breaks in six weeks than a good \$27 hammer one time. Patients will flock to a real "bargain doctor" who is less expensive, without advertising. Whatever the average fee is in your area, charge less. This will solve the volume problems until you can make adjustments based on the three points outlined above. Then, you can gradually return your fees to the average.

If you don't use our program, find another one. Be open minded. Don't cling to old ideas. Get a practice program that's right for you, not necessarily one of the sales programs built entirely on "Marketing Procedures".

Editors note: Wiehe and Assoc. offers a "Common Sense Program of Practice Development", consisting of five books, three audio tapes and a seminar. If you are interested in more information regarding these tools, please contact Dr. Wiehe at: Wiehe and Assoc. P.O. Box 586, West Plains, MO 65775. The CCA does not officially endorse this or any practice management