



WHITE PAPER

Becoming a Successful Practice Manager

The charismatic practice manager starts out by knowing her job and the staff assigned to her, and by planning, setting priorities, and meeting deadlines. But she also is able to communicate what her goals are for the practice and takes the time to explain why certain tasks are required, where the practice is headed, and how it is going to get there. Accomplishing the mission within the capabilities of the practice and the resources allowed, while maintaining high morale, is the goal of every practice manager. An astute practice manager can become a high achiever by applying basic management and leadership principles to the practice of which she is a part. The manager begins this process by becoming as professional in her duties as she can. Here are five aspects of this process:

1. Knowing the job

The basis of successful leadership is making things happen through people, but first a practice manager must know her job. The team she is working with will give her some slack when she is new to the practice, but that slack is rapidly used up if she does not seek to learn all she can about the practice operations. In the long run, staff will care only whether she knows what she is doing, especially in difficult tasks.

2. Planning

Accomplishing the mission requires planning and monitoring. Planning is the development of action steps needed to achieve an objective or goal. The Ability to plan is closely related to the other skills required of practice managers, such as anticipating requirements, establishing priorities, and meeting deadlines. The plan should be flexible enough to handle the changes that inevitably will occur.

3. Implementation

Once the plan is set, the practice manager has to consider priorities and prepare to meet deadlines, because she will never have the luxury of working on only one task at a time. A physician practice is much too dynamic an organization to permit single task operations, and the practice manager has to learn how to keep several balls in the air simultaneously. It is a skill that starts with a plan, just like organizing homework and professional responsibilities at school. Last-minute preparations rarely camouflage the lack of a routine approach to tasks. A methodical daily effort will produce well-qualified and motivated team members as well as an efficient practice. Crisis management and its negative impact on morale must be averted wherever possible.

4. Monitoring progress

A good plan must continually be monitored. There is a military adage that "you get what you inspect, not what you expect." Practice managers should never just assume that a plan is working. Rather, managers must monitor effectiveness by following up on it by becoming personally involved.

5. Motivation

Mission accomplishment and high morale occur in tandem. In other words, good practice managers get the job done and maintain high morale. The ability to get others to respond is a primary leadership requisite. The least a practice manager can learn to do is to delegate effectively. The ability to inspire others to perform is more difficult.

A practice manager must apply fundamental principles of administration and leadership as she learns how to accomplish tasks with her staff. Effective practice management is the ability to influence people so that they willingly and enthusiastically strive toward the achievement of practice goals. Hard work and high morale are compatible and good practice managers can inspire and direct their people under both normal and adverse conditions.

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P.O. Box 1465

Valrico, FL 33595

www.abisallc.com

info@abisallc.com