

# Findings

## What This Man Can Teach You About Your Practice



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# 8 Habits Health Care Practices Can Learn from the Navy SEALs

## New Ideas

Healthcare practices can adopt certain behaviors from the military to help not only boost the morale of the office, but also create a more engaged working environment. Follow these eight habits for your practice to operate at the optimal level:

### 1. Be loyal.

A cohesive team is an effective team. Loyalty to the team starts at the top. Loyalty is about leading by example, providing your team unconditional support, and never throwing a team member under the bus. Members of your team will be loyal to your practice if they feel they are being appreciated and each member of the team has each other's back. When leadership is loyal to the team, the team is loyal to the leadership.

### 2. Put others before yourself.

An effective team member works to make every member of the team better. Go to work every day with the intention to make your team better and offer help to those who need it. People who become overworked and overtired are not productive members of your team. The success of the practice should be a priority for all employees. When you see a team member struggling, ask "how" you can help. Don't simply tell them what to do.



### 3. Be reflective.

Frontal assault may not be the right solution. Understanding what works for you and what doesn't is often underappreciated in the workplace. You're expected to do things according to the way of the practice and that's fine, but you should reflect on how your behavior and adaptability affect your overall performance. Realistically examine failures to find better methods for future challenges. Learn from success and from failure.

### 4. Be organized.

Simplify your battlefield. Organization = Focus  
Some people innately have this ability to be organized, while some have to work at it a bit more. You have to find a process that works for you. If writing out a list the night before of what you have to get done the next day is helpful to you then do it. Your practice is an "organization". Whether you're a physician, nurse or medical assistant, you have to find a way to better organize your daily responsibilities.

### 5. Assume you don't know enough.

A SEAL team practices daily because there is always more to know. Any effective team member understands that training is never complete. Those who assume they know everything will only be a detriment to your practice. You can learn equally from the experience of the old hand or the fresh ideas of a new team member. Treat every experience as an opportunity to learn and improve. Those who spend time inside and outside of the workplace developing their knowledge and skills will provide the momentum for their team's progress.

### 6. Be detail-oriented.

Don't forget the ammo. A SEAL operation succeeds because every element is in place and on time.

## Findings

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Each plan is reviewed again and again to ensure that every possible contingency has been planned for, along with the unexpected event.

Attention to detail is not only important for a medical practice but it is also imperative for patient care. A single procedure conducted without careful attention to detail can have catastrophic results; from a contaminated test sample to a missing surgical instrument.

If all members of a team are obsessed with detail, the chance for error falls exponentially. Don't ask yourself "what" you are going to do today to be successful; ask "how" you are going to accomplish it.

## 7. Never get comfortable.

If you assume your attack plan is perfect because it has worked before, you've forgotten that the enemy is not planning to fail again. They are trying to get better and more effective.



Complacency is the enemy in a medical practice. If you get too comfortable this is when mistakes will happen. Approach everyday with integrity, responsibility and the same intensity and focus that you brought to your first experiences in a practice. This approach will ensure that you are continually maximizing your potential, which will positively impact your team.

## 8. Be Adaptable

Tactics change. Weaponry changes. A battlefield is a fluid place. You may be confronted by a weapon or tactic you have never before encountered.

Working in a hospital or medical practices is fast-paced and ever changing. You may encounter a patient or medical situation you have never seen before. It's perhaps unlikely that you will ever see a case of Ebola, but if you do, you will need to be adaptable; right now. Having the ability to adapt to changes will make a more well-rounded and dependable employee.



## That Sounds Hard

You may be wondering how you could ever have a relaxed life if you maintain all of these habits.

Relaxation means to become less tense and less anxious. If you enjoy what you do and form good habits, you increase your confidence and abilities.



SEALS enter each engagement with a quiet confidence. They succeed in part because they believe that their training, habits, and team have prepared them to succeed. They go into each engagement confident in their ability to succeed.

That's a reasonably good definition of what relaxation is really about.

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There are always better ways to manage your practice and the people that work for you. Patients may not realize a lot more goes into an appointment than just seeing the physician. You make an appointment to see your physician, the front desk books it after looking at their schedule and finds a time to fit you in, your chart is put out the night before so when you check-in the next morning you're not waiting around for hours. Then, you see your physician; he/she might take notes or there might be a scribe in the room who is taking notes and documenting the encounter. You leave with a diagnosis that either requires a follow up appointment or doesn't and you go on your way. This is how every visit should be; quick, attentive and (hopefully) painless. What patients don't realize is it may take a practice years to perfect a seamless visit.



We've all been to that one doctor's office that just doesn't have it together, and you either leave thankful that you don't have to go back anytime soon or you look for another office that better suits your needs. Practices that are getting it right follow protocols to decrease the possibility of making mistakes and wasting time. Lean strategies for healthcare only work if every member of the team is complying.

Training employees starts with your hiring process. The onboarding process is incredibly important and should never be overlooked. When hiring someone for a practice you might have contacts or recruiters that can

connect you with potential candidates. Although this is a reliable way to ensure you are getting quality candidates it does not mean you can skip the references or the background check. Unfortunately, candidates can lie about previous employment and even their education and you do not want to leave any stones unturned when hiring a new employee.

Once everything checks out you must give the new employee a start date, leaving enough time to relocate if you are hiring an employee who is moving to your geography. You might have to discuss what start date works best for you and for them. On the day your new employee starts, you want to wow them with just how efficient your office is. Have information ready for them that will answer common questions, give them an employee handbook so they understand the protocols of the practice.

Next, you must train them in the style that is specific to your office so they can meet the needs of your patients. The training process may take anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. Never underestimate the power of shadowing and training. Pairing your new employee with a seasoned employee is one of the most valuable things you can do to strengthen the bond between employees and create a culture of competence throughout the practice.

Changes only work if everyone is on board. Newly hired employees as well as long-standing employees need to be "part of the program". In a perfect world you would have had all your compliance checks and balances worked out before you opened your practice, but that is not realistic. Having everything work flawlessly from the start just isn't possible, especially when a practice has so many moving parts. Policies have to be adaptable to the changing times, as do your employees. It would be nice to have a one-size-fits-all way to know if work is getting done properly, but in healthcare that is nearly impossible. Healthcare policies change continuously. Generalized compliance program don't work. There are too many loop holes or blind spots for employees to navigate.

You can organize your compliance program by department and elect a member from each department to be the "go-to" person for questions about compliance. That person would also conduct evaluations and share their notes with the practice manager. The safety and health of patients should be of the utmost importance. Making sure employees are complying will only benefit the longevity of your practice.

# Events



**April 28-30, 2016**  
**NERVES**  
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200 N Columbus Dr  
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**May 20-22, 2016**  
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## Is Your Practice Firing on all Eight Cylinders?



Many doctors don't know why their practice isn't doing well and are forced to guess what's wrong. They are so busy with day-to-day responsibilities that they do not have time to monitor all aspects of their business, but they need to be confident that they are on track for success. High functioning practices accomplish more in less time, have better work/life balance and have reduced overhead. You may think this is impossible to attain, but it really isn't. Start by planning and designing the team necessary to meet the needs of your patients. Identify success and failure through the use of data and evidence; locate solutions by thinking like leaders in other fields that are high risk and high failure; and demonstrate plans to overcome a culture of resistance. Meeting with your staff regularly will help you better understand what the practice needs and how employees can follow through.

### **Productive interactions**

Knowing if your staff is informed, prepared and proactive depends requires examining how engaged your people feel throughout the work day. Rather than criticizing your team for short-comings, make every interaction an opportunity to learn and grow as a team. Even though you're a physician running a practice that does not mean you can't look at your staff as a team. Just as athletes work together to win a game, you can work with your team to create a highly efficient and positive work environment.

### **Optimizing the care team**

What does optimization look like? Optimization in a practice means you have clinical efficiency, billing efficiency,

quality and safety all working together simultaneously. How do you know physicians are optimized? How do you measure physician productivity? There is no one correct way to assess optimization and productivity. That all depends on what works for your practice.

Ask yourself: How can you make good use of the team you already have? Match the work to licensure and capability. It might sound simple but for many practices optimizing the medical staff can prove difficult for a myriad of reasons. Physicians and staff should all share the same goal: providing quality care for all patients.

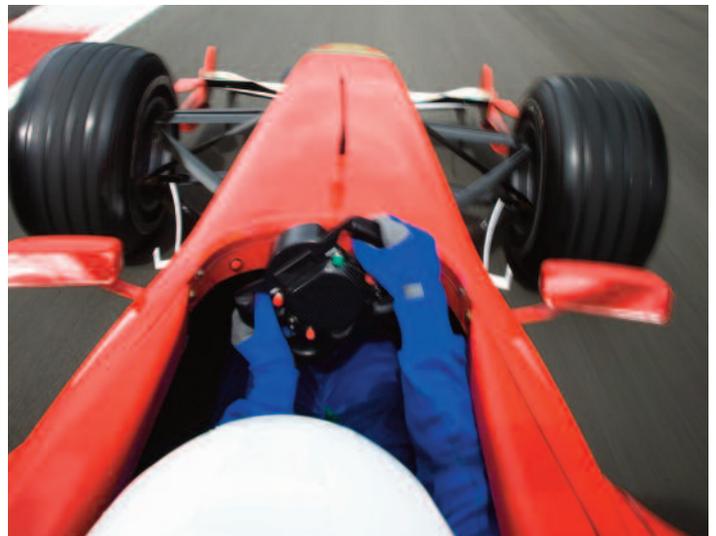
### **Interruptions and distractions**

Limiting interruptions and distractions is difficult for any practice; especially difficult for large, multispecialty practices. Have a chain of command set in place. There should be a manager for the front desk, the nurses and even the physicians. When problems arise there will be a designated person to go to who will be responsible for finding a solution. Similarly, smaller practices should adopt a comparable protocol.

### **Define and develop team as a unit**

Assess your current team; what are the current roles and responsibilities of team members? Every employee that works in the practice should have a clearly defined role with its own responsibilities. When looking to hire someone don't list all the problems that your current practice has and act as if the new hire is going to be a cure-all. Putting someone on a pedestal before they are even on the payroll is tricky, it makes you look bad and it causes hostility between employees.

Medical practices always have room for improvement but don't knock down people who have been working for you for years. For example, asking your MA's to also handle



front desk duties with no prior training will not work. If you want certain members of your team to handle more than just their own job duties, cross-training is a valid solution. However, you should not spring this on staff members after they have been hired.

There has to be communication about cross-training and the reasons it is important for your practice during the interview process. Practices can become inundated and back-logged with patients very quickly, especially if there is little to no organization. Know your practice. Know what works and what does not work for you and your staff. You will save yourself the headache of having to train people on the job or fire people for not living up to standards you did not communicate in the first place.



## Compliance and Risk Management

You may have not planned your practice around compliance and risk management, but you know what they say? If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Compliance programs are new to many private practices. What does a compliance program mean for your practice? The program is intended to be a series of checks and balances that ensure the practice is meeting standards. Why do you/ I need a compliance program?

A compliance program can prove to anyone that practitioners are making a reasonable attempt to comply with all regulatory requirements and have established the

necessary procedures to do so. One reason why you might need a compliance program is to ensure staff applies the appropriate billing guidelines correctly. Medical documentation is important from a financial point of view. If a healthcare provider forgets to write something down in a patient's chart, whether in regards to treatment, surgery, or a minor procedure, the facility will not be paid for it. Without documentation there is no proof that a patient received any services. Documentation and easy access to medical records are the gateway to patient confidentiality. If standards of care are being met then there will be thorough documentation. An important aspect of documentation comes from setting a standard for employees to follow including:

### Work Performance

Break down work performance into three sub-categories: expectations, reviews and insubordination. Your expectations can apply to work performance reviews. Are employees meeting the expectations you have set for them? Based on your reviews you will know who is going above and beyond and who is underperforming.

### Discipline Policy

A discipline policy can start with a broad statement: "The Company reserves the right to..." Then, list actions that are considered unacceptable both inside and outside the office. Your employees must know that they are representing the company even when they are not on your turf. Have employees sign and confirm that they are aware of what your employment policies are.

Communicating checks and balances to your employees fosters a trust and competency that employees will appreciate. Be certain that employees know you are using the information to promote compliance and not micromanaging their every move.

# SpineSearch Sightings



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