

Findings

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SpineSearchTM

Widening the Corridor of Success:

How to Overcome



Office Barriers

As an employer you will find yourself in situations that could take a toll on your business. We've all been there and had inconsistent employees or trouble with office management. It can be frustrating and even emotional to deal with, but there are ways to stop these behaviors from costing you time and money in the long-run.



Findings

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Are you managing employees in an effective way?

Are you mirroring the type of conduct you'd like your employees to have? Does your office look presentable and welcoming? Employers forget sometimes that they must take a look at themselves, their office and their employees for the business to thrive. There are five barriers that employers must recognize so that they won't damage your business in the future:

Communication

Communicating may seem like the easiest thing to do and yet it is often one of the main reasons employers have high turn-over and a fledging business. Communication from a business stand-point means a lot more than just making sure your employees are doing their jobs. Hiding behind emails is one way communication becomes muddled.

Yes, we live in a technologically advanced world and it's easy to send out emails without physically checking-in with someone. Don't allow this to take over your business. Face-to-face communication is extremely important. Have weekly meetings and check-in with your staff. You'd be surprised how many important questions can go unanswered when you are not taking the time to meet regularly.

Physical Barriers

If your office is closed off and everyone is working separately from each other it creates a divide amongst coworkers. Dark and dingy offices do not create a welcoming environment. Spend money on paint and artwork to hang on the walls. Some offices don't have very many windows and lighting is important to keep people moving throughout the day. You'd be surprised how small improvements can lead to big payoffs in the future.

Do not underestimate the power of décor.

Micro Managing

Unhappiness with an employee could lead to micro-managing and this will ultimately lead to a hostile work environment. Instead of picking apart every little thing an employee is doing wrong, have a meeting to discuss your concerns. There could be

underlying reasons for poor performance that you are not aware of. You may also be able to get a better handle on the situation if you are expressing what needs to change in a direct manner. Nit-picking will only cause frustration and put a barrier between you and your employees.

Having to Always be Right

Many employees have trouble admitting when they are wrong or have made a mistake. This can happen out of fear or inexperience. Being able to self-evaluate is important in any line of work. Employers also need to be understanding and accept that mistakes do happen and people learn from them. Employees are much more likely to accept when they are wrong if their boss makes it a teachable moment rather than criticizing them. There are some mistakes that will hurt your business and if it happens constantly further action might be needed, but don't jump the gun and reprimand for every little thing.



Passive Aggressive Behavior

There are two scenarios here that are both surefire ways to make any business suffer: If you are a passive aggressive boss, then you are the one standing in your own way. If your employees are passive aggressive towards you or each other, then something needs to change immediately. As a boss or manager your job is to create an office culture that is conducive to communication. When an employee is passive aggressive it needs to be handled at the onset; letting that behavior slide will only



teach people that it is ok. Think about it: would you want to come to a workplace where your boss or coworkers are being uncommunicative and snide towards each other? Do not tolerate behaviors that will only tear your business down.



Having the ability to change what's not working for your business comes from knowing what could potentially go wrong. Be aware of barriers that can negatively impact your business. There are plenty of ways to fix problems and make your business succeed.

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You Can't

MANAGE

What You Don't

MEASURE

Managing effectively is reliant upon understanding how your business is performing. Knowing if your employees are performing up to par or if the business is bringing in revenue does not just happen overnight. Whether you are looking to measure job performance, finances or compliance it is never too late to start. As a business owner establishing the protocols to measure these aspects of your company should be put into place as soon as possible.

Your business may be in need of organizational change. Starting with the hiring process you can use performance metrics to define job responsibilities and communicate expectations. Using software to measure the incoming and outgoing calls in the office can help you stay on top of how quickly the phones are being answered and if people are being transferred to the correct employee. You can tell a lot about the business by how well the telephone communication is working.

The office atmosphere is an important factor for long-term success. High employee retention rates and productivity are signs that there is effective management in place.



PROGRESSES

Metrics are not able to tell an employer how to fix a problem, they can highlight where improvements are needed but coming up with ways to mend the problem comes from the employer. Metrics alone cannot make employees work harder or more efficiently, but they are great for seeing what is working well and what is not.

Using metrics as a way to balance your business can have lasting effects if you are using them properly. Evaluation of job performance and management is crucial.

How are you going to evaluate current systems you have in place? Compliance is one way to assess how well your metrics are working. Do the employees and employers comply with financial and personal metrics?

When people are not compliant there might be a lack of motivation. Management's responsibility is to help people reach specific goals. Find out what motivates people to work while keeping in line with performance criteria you have in place.

Managers have to stay on top of how well their business is functioning. Measuring job performance, financial gains and losses and job specific responsibilities will make it difficult for outliers to slip through the cracks. Metrics allow you to be in control over daily operations and reach long-term goals.

Evaluation of job performance and management is crucial. How are you going to evaluate current systems you have in place?

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Your Front Desk Staff Are

Your Flight Navigators

Can your front desk be a profit center for your practice?

Yes, but there are instances where physicians may not know what is happening out in the waiting room while they are taking care of patients. Any practice will have some bumps in the road with employees, but physicians must be conscious about checking in with every member of their team. When there is a lack of communication between the physician and staff, patients will feel the negative impact. How well the front desk operates could make or break your practice. The front desk is the first in line to a patient's access to care making it one of many important elements in patient satisfaction. The front desk staff are the navigators of your practice and staying in tune with them to see how the practice is operating on a day to day basis not only keeps patients happy but helps retain them as well.

First impressions count—When a patient walks into the waiting room they are either walking into a warm and inviting environment or a stark and cold one. How you present your practice to the patients starts way before you see them in the exam room. For the receptionist a patient's visit starts with the same, and sometimes monotonous, procedures like asking for insurance information, paperwork and answering questions.

Receptionists may also be responsible for answering the phones as well, adding extra stress to an already busy schedule.

Even though there might be high call volume and patients in the waiting room, this is not an excuse for the front desk to act exasperated by patients. If the practice is large, this might be a good time to suggest hiring candidates specifically for phone triage. If the practice is small, create a way to delegate responsibilities at the front desk. Instead of having all receptionists answer the phones make it only one or two people's job. If the office runs smoothly patients are much more likely to feel comfortable about the capabilities of the physician.

Some physicians may not feel like their staff is a direct reflection of them and this is a common mistake.



You might value patient satisfaction as a physician, but if the front desk is doing a mediocre job patients will think that you must not care as well. Patients are much more likely to return to an office where receptionists, medical assistants, nurses and physicians work well with one another. If a patient is frustrated after dealing with disgruntled employees this will take away from important time spent with the physician. What can be done to remedy this?

For starters, physicians need to be aware of what's going on in every aspect of their practice. Having weekly staff meetings where you discuss proper protocols for face-to-face and telephone communications with patients are a must. You'd be surprised by how many practices do not take the time to do this and it shows.



Schedule one day a week where staff is able to come in 15-20mins before the days begins and use that time to have a meeting. This should be something that is understood by both current and prospective employees. You need people who want to be a part of a team and who respect that you are staying on top of what goes on in the office.

Another way to ensure the practice is functioning well is by having a formal orientation for new employees making sure there is a set time for training at the start of employment. Training could take two weeks or possibly more depending on the job responsibilities. During this time period new employees should have ample time to learn what is expected of them from them professionally and how to carry out job responsibilities in an effective and timely manner.

Following-up with patients means much more than the physician calling after the original appointment. It means

staying on top of follow-up appointments and referrals. It also means keeping in touch with patients. Receptionists should be responsible for collecting both phone numbers and emails to reach patients.

Technology is much more advanced than it was even a decade ago and using it to your advantage will be beneficial. Sending out e-newsletters introducing new physicians to your patients or services your office has to offer is one way of keeping patients in the loop. Healthcare is a service industry so take the time to make sure your staff is cultivating long-term patient relationships.

If your practice is being managed properly then learning and professional development will be valued. All employees, whether they are receptionists, medical assistants, nurses or physicians, should undergo training for how to respond and engage with patients. The waiting room might just be the start of a patient's visit, but it says a lot about how the office runs on a daily basis. If there are major issues in the waiting room physicians are unaware of that makes the patient think that there is very little communication between the physicians and the receptionists.

When all employees are on the same page regarding how to care for patients then you will see the organization flow from check-in, treatment and follow-up.

Patient Access through Innovation and Technology

Technology has rapidly infiltrated our lives and changed how we communicate and the same goes for healthcare. Technology has progressed and made visits to the physician's office more efficient. For better access to care medical practices have to utilize technology more so now than ever. If your practice has not yet taken the steps to increase patient access to care than now is the best time to do so.

The advent of Electronic Health Records (EHR) has changed visits for patients exponentially. The physician is able to pull up the patient's chart without sifting through a stack of papers.

The face-to-face time the physician is important and how the time is utilized is even more important. Patients like convenience and feeling like they are valued so making the time they spend with you worthwhile will increase the likelihood that the patient will continue to come to your office rather than looking elsewhere for care. Technology has given physicians the opportunity to connect with patients on many levels. EHR's are a good way to incorporate technology in a way that is helpful to you and your patients.

For most patients their visit is over the second they step out of the office, but there are ways to keep patients engaged in-between visits. Having an online presence will make a big difference. Some patients may like the option of scheduling their appointments online; others might like to receive emails or texts confirming appointments. Another way to have an active presence in patient lives is by sending out an e-newsletter with interesting articles that relate to your patient demographics.

Increasing patients' access to care and utilizing technology are closely linked. Use technology to your advantage and stay in touch with patients' in-between visits.



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