

A Round Peg in a Square Hole

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I recently received a call from a distraught, very frustrated doctor about an employee: He gave this report:

"She isn't doing her job. She places the patient on therapy but never talks to them. She never asks the patient:

- Are you comfortable?
- Are you exercising every day?
- How is your lower back?

She never volunteers to assist the patient:

- Take my arm and let me assist you off the table.
- Let me help you up the steps.
- Hold on, stand up slowly, lean on me. You're doing great.

She never encourages the patient:

- We are so proud of your progress.
- You are doing so much better.
- You have come a long way.

She never asks for referrals:

- You've had such great results with chiropractic. Who do you know that has headaches, sinus problems, low back pain, or allergies?"

Upon investigation and psychological testing, we discovered that this employee was not a "people person." She had a very credible background in bookkeeping and computer technology. Her greatest strength was in numbers, statistics, and analyzing the percentages of patient visits and income in all areas of insurance, major medical, workers compensation, personal injury and cash. She was persistent and professional in:

- chasing down late payments from patients;
- calling attorneys and insurance companies and asking in a nice but firm manner, "Where is our money?";
- sending out delinquent account notices, inquiries, and tracers to insurance companies and attorneys.

This employee was analytical and skilled in the detail of numbers, statistics and analysis. She was very uncomfortable and did not care for the nurturing, touching aspect of working with sick patients.

My recommendation to the doctor was to give this employee the tools needed to do the job for which she is best trained and suited: insurance verification, billing, and collections. Give her a private office with a door, a computer, desk, files, filing cabinet, calculator, phone and a comfortable chair. Let this employee do her job undisturbed.

We also suggested that the employee keep a daily insurance log of tasks and duties accomplished; that the doctor regularly review the accomplishments and the jobs she has done well. Give praise!

Congratulations, doctor, you have just placed a very valuable employee in the correct job position (round peg in a round hole). You will begin to see an increase in collections and great employee satisfaction.

As a therapist, I suggest a warm, caring, people-oriented employee with a rock solid, steadfast understanding of chiropractic and a firm belief in the philosophy and the need for continued care: someone that will encourage the "down" patient and celebrate with the "up" patient as they progress from sickness into wellness; someone that will praise and encourage the patient for:

- following the doctor's orders;
- doing their exercises;
- keeping their appointments;
- attending health care workshops;
- patient orientation.

And celebrate their victories:

- You're looking great.
- You're walking better.
- Isn't it wonderful that you can play golf again, work in the garden, dance, go fishing, etc.

Also, ask for referrals, tell twin stories about other success with chiropractic, and using outlined dialogue, tell about doctor's great results with certain conditions.

With careful screening and testing, you can fit the right employee in the right position, allowing all of your valued, quality employees to grow with the practice rather than becoming a misfit.

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