

Management Consulting

Noel Lloyd, DC

Editor's note: This column is authored by members of the Society of Chiropractic Management Consultants (SCMC), a group formed in 1991 to provide a forum for management consultants to share information and to establish a code of business conduct and standards.

The Practice of Your Dreams

What comes to mind when I say the practice of your dreams? After deciding to become a chiropractor in my early teens, the practice of my dreams was fashioned over several years. My dreams kept me focused through the difficult times until I actually saw their fulfillment.

I remember one warm night in Davenport, Iowa when the influence of strong chiropractic philosophy and a longing to make a difference in people's lives were remodeling my dreams. I had been challenged by a motivational speaker to dream big dreams and dare great things. It was several years later when I actually felt I was living that dream.

It is true that there were several levels that I enjoyed along the way, like the first patient I helped and having my own office; the list is a long one. But the first time I was doing what I had dreamed of and feeling how I wanted to feel about my practice happened on a busy Friday afternoon in November. Outside it was dark, rainy, and cold. Inside it was warm and rather noisy, as I remember. I was happily going from adjusting room to adjusting room seeing patient after patient. Most of them were responding well to care, as chiropractic patients usually do, and one mother in her early 30s was thanking me for helping her shy and awkward 13-year-old son with a bed-wetting problem. I told her that it was my pleasure.

I felt so good about his response to my care that I remember thinking that I might have felt better about it than she did. As I turned to leave the room, her son thanked me in a barely audible voice with averted eyes and an outstretched hand. His offered handshake was uncharacteristically brave for him. I shook his hand and said, "Thank you."

I don't remember too many specifics about that time beyond that young man's appreciation, but I do remember I was succeeding. I was helping my patients and there were a lot of them. I was loving chiropractic, my patients, and my practice, and I was taking home a good income as well.

But what about today?

Some say your dream practice is in big trouble. Chiropractors with 30 years of experience and students alike are asking if the practice of their dreams is still out there. The answer is a resounding yes.

I'm not saying that things aren't different, and even tougher. We all know they are, but listen to this. A recent Washington state poll on chiropractic revealed that over half the population of Washington state would see a chiropractor, but don't. That is up significantly from the time I took my first survey. Chances are good that the numbers could be as high or higher in your state.

Even though we suffer bad press at times, the public perception of chiropractic is as high as it has ever been. These conditions are excellent for the practice of anyone's dreams who knows how to approach it; today, approach is everything. And if you are feeling picked on, we are not the only profession or business that has had to come to grips with that reality.

But how about that dream practice? Where is it?

First, let's define the practice of your dreams as the ability to see as many patients as your technique allows and your heart desires. Now let's do that using procedures that patients, staff, and chiropractors enjoy so the stress is low. And finally, achieving financial success even in these troubled and uncertain times.

Now let's talk about the right approach. A young client of mine came to me seeking advice. He was straight out of a short associateship where he learned a tremendous amount about technique but nothing about starting and building a practice. He told me that he wanted to be successful (help a lot of people, enjoy chiropractic, and make a good living), but he needed a coach and he would do anything I told him to do as long as it was honest and ethical.

We set out to find a town, a marketing plan (remember, with no chiropractic patients there is no chiropractic practice), an office procedure, and a structure for solving problems and increasing growth. Within eight months he had the largest practice in his area and was living out the practice he had dreamed about for years.

What he told me during one phone call was almost heart breaking. One of his classmates was failing miserably in practice. Nothing he was doing was working and the ensuing fear and bitterness brought about by the inability to meet his financial obligations was becoming debilitating.

My client had tried to explain to his friend that he needed a coach, someone who could inspire him to action, someone who knew what to do and how to do it, and to order his action steps to meet specific needs: like attracting new patients, educating those patients to complete care programs and refer, someone who knew how to deal with diminished insurance coverage, etc.

This story has a happy ending. The young chiropractor ended up with a consultant in his area who is helping him. He is working hard and is succeeding.

Many years ago I was a management client and benefitted tremendously. That is how I reached the practice of my dreams. Today when I picture the job of a chiropractic management consultant, I see men and women who have chosen to give their lives to chiropractic, seeing as many sick people as their technique and desire dictate, using procedures that are enjoyable for everyone while succeeding financially.

Do you need some help? Do you need a coach for your practice?

If so, seek a management consultant that works for you, someone who can not only meet your needs, but is in harmony with your own philosophy, style and ethics. The practice of your dreams may depend on it.

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About the author: Dr. Noel Lloyd, DC, president of the Society of Chiropractic Management Consultants and one of its founding members, is president and founder of Five Star Management, a

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Dr. Lloyd, who resides in Redmond, Washington, is a graduate of Palmer College. He is a member of the ICA and the United Chiropractors of Washington. He is the author of the national back injury prevention program "Back Smart," and has authored articles in the chiropractic publications the Beacon, Share Magazine, and the Calif. Chiropractic Journal. He is the past host of the "Dial-a-Doctor" radio talk show on KGNW in Seattle.

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