

## The System Is the Solution

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I have studied Michael Gerber's *The E-Myth* extensively over the past couple of years. My original purpose was to help create a more efficient, and ultimately more profitable, chiropractic office. One of the points that proved particularly valuable to me was the concept of taking a given problem and developing a system that solves the problem. This system can then be reused again in the future when that problem, or a similar problem, arises. Ultimately, problems tend to be recurring, and developing systems to save time is valuable and worthwhile.

In today's chiropractic offices, DCs are either running a cash practice or running a managed care practice, with the doctor trying to make the office run as efficiently as possible. Both of these office setups offer unique challenges, and both have advantages and disadvantages. There are many things in your office that can be "cookie cutter" and repeatable with an efficient system, allowing you more time to see more patients. One example I often give in my teachings involves sending letters to the family physician or referring physician for your patients. If a medical doctor refers one of his or her patients to your office for an evaluation and treatment, you typically will want to send a letter explaining your findings and treatment plan. This also serves as a way of thanking them for their referral. You can send a letter to the patient's family physician or another treating doctor even if no referral was made; just ask the patient if they want you to send a letter. The patient is normally appreciative of your collaboration.

Having either a computer that generates the report or a dictated report for the file can work. Simply print out an extra copy on your letterhead and send a copy to the referring physician. This creates good communication and good will, and also increases referrals to your practice. It requires very little extra work. By the way, these letters need to speak a language the physician will understand. Explaining that you are reducing cord pressure on the medulla oblongata, thereby restoring normal innate flow, will only serve to confuse them. Speak in terms they will understand and make sure your message is that you are there to help.

Another example would be your system for training your assistants. This is an ongoing challenge in most offices. Putting together a training manual with job descriptions and even videotaped training sessions can save enormous time and money. What we did in our office was have chiropractic assistants write down every job description and the duties involved, in detail, for all the various jobs. I reviewed their input, and then we made any changes needed. Next, we put together a manual. Now, when a new employee is hired or an existing CA needs to learn a new job, we start with the manual training.

It requires more time initially to set up systems, which is why setting up systems is often avoided. Some doctors of chiropractic have a standard treatment protocol and do the same thing on every patient, every time they come into the office. This is not what I am talking about. The individual patient deserves a good and thorough examination leading to an individualized treatment plan. On the other hand, having an assistant who systematically makes sure the rooms are set up properly for your treatment and makes the patients less stressed will help build your practice.

You will need to take time to work *on* your practice, not just *in* your practice. This means you will

need to step back, evaluate and be open to suggestions, especially from your staff. Make changes based on long-term success, not just "fly by the seat of your pants" decision-making. The offices that will be successful in the future need to be outstanding clinically and will need to be run like well-oiled machines. The days of blatant overcharging are behind us and the strong, smart and efficient will survive and thrive.

Many chiropractic consultants talk about removing capacity blocks to allow growth of your practice. There are many capacity blocks in a typical chiropractic office. Setting up systems is a great way to eliminate these capacity blocks. The "system is the solution" concept means looking at the big picture and then systematizing the smaller parts.

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