

How to Kill Your Practice

Steven Visentin

Review these top ways we hold ourselves back in practice and ask: Are you making any of these practice-killing mistakes? Have you been making them for years? Find out if you are the "major subluxation" in your personal practice fulfillment and if so, decide right now to "adjust" your practice accordingly.

1. The Discount Doctor

[Graduating with over \\$100,000 in debt](#) after living as a poor student for years, it's no wonder many doctors have a poverty consciousness. Unfortunately, these attitudes can tank a practice. Their impoverished mindset influences their overall money behavior. Continued over the course of a career, it virtually guarantees failure.

Have you updated your fees in the last year? Are you shy when asking for your fee? Will you compromise your fee when dealing with people who can well afford it? If you cannot confront money issues in an unflinchingly business-like manner, you may be carrying a poverty consciousness dating back to your student days.



The best cure for this kind of poverty consciousness is to get kicked in the teeth a few times! That's right, extend credit to people who are not credit worthy. Give your care away to people who can afford it, and compromise your bills to rich but intimidating lawyers. Do this enough times and you may finally wake up. Your work has great value, and you deserve to be paid fairly for your unique talents, skills and years of study and sacrifice.

Lessons: Update your fees regularly. Don't be shy when asking patients to invest in their health. Be straightforward when doing business and accept your just rewards.

2. The Overmanaged Doctor

Would you go to a doctor who was told what to say and do by a business manager? As a profession, we have phenomenal training in the healing arts and very little in business management. Doctors chase after the secrets of practice building and discount their own common sense about what is best for their patients.

We become overmanaged when we add procedure after procedure to our practices that ultimately inhibits us from being ourselves. Check yourself for these symptoms of being over-managed:

- Do you ever discount your own ideas or intuition about patient care?
- Are you taking on the verbiage and tone of some charismatic leader?
- Are you obsessed with your statistics and not quality of service?

Just realizing that you may be overmanaged is a step in the right direction. While management can improve patient care, much of it is outdated and not applicable to you or the unique challenges you may be facing.

Lessons: Decide to never discount your "gut" about what is right for your patients and their care. Realize you are the greatest expert concerning your specific practice challenges. Develop your own unique practice style to be successful. Know that while measuring your results statistically is good, your success depends on providing quality care for each patient. And decide to put the heart back into art; less scripted, more spontaneous and uniquely yours.

3. The Needy Doctor

Unless you are a sociopath, you have a need to be liked. It's human nature to want to get along and be thought well of by others. But when this personal need interferes with the way you run your business, it can kill your practice. All too often, patient reports are watered down. Recommendations are based on what doctors think patients want to hear.

Are you guilty of not informing patients that [vertebral subluxation is serious](#) and leads to degenerative changes to the spine, nervous system, and vital organs? Do you ever refrain from offering the same quality care you would want for your loved ones or yourself?

When discussing care with patients, you are morally obligated to present the very best recommendations. This must be done in the right way without regard to what they might think of you. Ultimately, patients will forgive you for being forthright, but will condemn you forever for holding back information that compromises their health.

Lessons: Work to be respected, not necessarily liked by patients. Put your need to be accepted aside when discussing appropriate patient care. Communicate the seriousness of the patient's condition and what should be done about it in a way that's meaningful to them.

4. The Doctor With a "Staff Infection"

Doctors will hold onto staff long after they should. Why? They fear having to [hire and train new employees](#). They know if a new employee doesn't work out, all the money, time and effort that went into hiring and training this person will be wasted.

The measure of whether or not to fire depends on one question: Is there someone who could do the job a little better? If there is, you owe it to your patients to fire that employee.

Are all your team members enthusiastically helping you deliver the highest quality service possible? Is anyone passively resisting changes that will improve patient care? The moment you feel that someone else could do the job better, you must act. Find out how to fire them legally and do it. Everyone (including the fired staff member) will be better off for your action.

Lessons: There is never a convenient or easy time to fire someone. If you have a "staff infection," do something about it and soon. If you act quickly before "it spreads," the remaining team members will fall in line behind your effective leadership.

5. Doctor No-Drive

We have been told to [set specific, attainable goals](#), write them down, and create timelines for their achievement, but few of us do. This first step of becoming a dynamic, motivated individual is lost on many intelligent people.

We are so afraid of failure; we don't take the first step necessary to ensure success. Unconsciously, we imagine, *If I have no goals, then I can't fail to achieve them*. This leads to a lackluster life and practice with little rewards.

Have you established goals for yourself and your practice? Are they specific and important to you? Are they reasonable? Have you established a timeline for their accomplishment? If not, you will not reach your potential.

Dare to sit alone with a blank sheet of paper and pen. Write your heart's desire. The greats in every field have done this with outstanding results. Your mind is a goal-achieving wonder, but it must be given direction.

Lessons: While you risk failure when writing a goal, this essential step gets you more from life. Do it! Let yourself win.

6. Doctor Lard-Butt

Often, we'll attend seminars and get new information, learn exactly what to do, but then fail to act with urgency to implement the program. Why do we do it? How can intelligent people spend money time and energy to get the best information, and still not implement it?

Psychologists say it's "fear of success" or it's due to the fact that change can be scary. If we become successful, we might, for example, self-sabotage in the end, believing we don't deserve success.

Do you fail to act on ideas that would improve your practice? You must change this behavior immediately. Doctors who succeed always change and implement decisively. Decide to implement ideas that will allow you to excel. Consciously, put aside any fears these new changes might arouse.

Lessons: Action is a distinguishing factor of highly successful chiropractors. Everyone is afraid of change, but winners act on information that they know will improve patient care.

Don't Kill Your Practice

So, what will it take to move your practice ahead this year: improved money consciousness? The maturity to take charge of your practice? The courage to tell patients what they need to hear? The ability to fire subpar assistants? The audacity to set goals? The decision to act on knowledge gained? Whatever changes you decide to make, consider this: The longer you wait and put off what you know you must do, the more it will cost in the end. Go. Change. Develop. Grow, and never look back.

MARCH 2011