Dynamic Chiropractic

YOUR PRACTICE / BUSINESS

Take Time to Make Time, Part 1

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"Everyone wants more time. We never seem to have enough, yet we have all the time there is. Everyone has the same number of hours each day. The problem is not a shortage of time but how we choose to spend the time. The use of time is the result of our habits. Good habits bring good results, poor habits bring poor results. Since habits control 80 percent to 90 percent of everything we do, try to make the following time-management techniques a part of your everyday routine."

While attending a chiropractic management seminar in the early '80s I was given a daily planner called a "Success Journal" (now called the "Winner's Journal-Action Planner") from John Carls, DC, and Pam Carls. Inside it, I found a wonderful article called "Time Management Tips" which began with the above quote.

The two-part article provides 12 time-management techniques. Pam Carls has given me permission to share them with you. In some cases, I have altered them slightly and made some personal comments based on my observations and experience working with chiropractors. Here are the first five tips:

Set goals: These are the foundation of time management. Remember to set them in the following areas of your life: work, family, financial, health, social, leisure, spiritual and self-development.

Create an action plan. For each goal, create an action plan that includes the steps required to reach the goal and a target date for achieving the goal,. Break large projects down to smaller units, which are easier to handle.

Create a daily priority list. Ask yourself, "How important is this activity toward reaching a goal?" "Which activity will give the highest payoff?" Assign each item a value, such as "A" for high value, "B" for medium value and "C" for low value. When you attend a meeting or seminar, make a to-do list and when you get back to your office, assign these values to the items on your list. You will experience much greater productivity.

Take action: Start with the "A" tasks. If you have three "A" tasks, assign each of them a number to indicate the order of importance and complete them in that order. For example: A-1 Send out Medicare claims, A-2 Return phone calls, and A-3 Complete filing.

Delegate: Multiply your efforts through other people. Before delegating, you will need to define the objective of the task and select the person most qualified to do the task. Be sure to give them sufficient authority, information and equipment to complete the task. Finally, set up a system to monitor the progress and results at periodic intervals.

Because there are so many tasks that must be completed during the course of your business day, I recommend that you implement a "Team Communications Binder." This binder is a tool used by all team members to communicate in writing with each other. It can communicate a specific task that needs to be completed by a specific individual or group, or communicate information of which your team or a specific individual should be aware. It creates a paper trail that clearly states who needs to complete the task and the priority. The following are some examples of entries that you might find in the binder:

> *Task details*: When a specific task needs to be done, the person assigning the task would indicate the following items in the log: the date the task request is made, what the task is (be specific) and who is being assigned the task.
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> *Priority*: A = urgent-complete ASAP; B = important but not urgent, complete within five business days; C = needs to be done at your earliest convenience. Indicate when and by whom it is to be completed. The person who is assigned the task will date and initial the entry indicating when they read it, and date and initial it again when it is completed (e.g., "1/1/2009 to Lisa from Sherry. Please attach an update form to all active patient treatment cards. Priority A. Must be completed by 1/3/2009. LB 1/4/2009.")
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> *Team communication*: An example of this would be "1/2/2009 to the entire team from Dr. Smith. The last person to leave the office needs to check to make sure the front and back doors are locked. Priority A." This request doesn't not have a deadline for completion, but all team members need to initial that they have read and understand it.

It is recommended that all team members check the binder and read all entries on a daily basis (when they first arrive for work, when they return from breaks and before they leave for the day). This will ensure that everyone knows what is going on in the office throughout the day and creates an action plan that will result in a more efficient office.

If you would like a sample of the "Team Communication Log," please send your request to lisa_bilodeau@hotmail.com with "TCL" in the subject box. Part 2 of this article will address how to better manage telephone calls, meetings, paperwork, clutter, use of prime time, and combining and completing tasks.