



OPTIMIZE YOUR CA

Help Your Team Succeed: 6 Steps

Kim Klapp

Editor's Note: This is the first installment in a new series designed to help chiropractors optimize their teams and in so doing, their practices, with particular emphasis on the role of the CA.

Chiropractic assistants are often overwhelmed and stressed out when attempting to juggle the jillions of duties and responsibilities of the practice. What chiropractors neglect to realize is that their practice can either be in stress mode or growth mode, but these two states are mutually exclusive. The problem is that stress repels patients, which is obviously not a practice goal.

Doctor, imagine if you were to give your chiropractic assistant a mound of puzzle pieces, with the request that she or he put the puzzle together. What would make that task easier? Of course: having the box! It's critical to help your CA(s) envision what the big picture should look like. Yet how many times are chiropractic assistants just handed a bunch of duties, tasks and procedures without also receiving the big picture?



Fabulous CAs are amazingly detail-oriented; they are great at dotting those I's and crossing those T's. However, the critical step that is missed in most practices is starting with the *why*. To quote B.J. Palmer, "Get the big idea and all else follows." Yet all too often, rather than being grounded in the purpose of chiropractic and in the vision of the practice, CAs are myopically focused on what do and how to do it. Clarity is an absolute necessity to help your team succeed.

Step #1: Clarify Chiropractic

Start with clarifying chiropractic for your team. It's not enough for them to understand it; they need to be able to clearly tell others what chiropractic is. When I speak live at chiropractic seminars and ask for an explanation of what chiropractors do, only a few CAs are willing to share, even in that safe environment. So, ask each team member individually how they explain what chiropractors do ... to clients, friends and family, and strangers in the community. Equip them with a simplified statement; mine is, "Chiropractic restores the brain-body connection, which enables natural healing and optimal function."

Step #2: Clarify Your Vision & Mission

The next aspect is to clarify your vision and your practice mission. These statements serve as your north star and keep your team headed in the right direction. It's their yardstick, gauge or gold standard, if you will. We read the Doctor's Vision, Practice Mission and CA Mission aloud at every team huddle before we unlock the door so all team members are clear on their purpose. After all, the bigger their *why*, the higher they'll fly.

Step #3: Clarify Your Core Values

The core values of our practice include respect, integrity and exceptional service. What are *your* core values? If your team understands that respecting your patients' time is one of your core values, they can help minimize unnecessary waiting and increase your practice capacity.

Step #4: Clarify Your Objectives

Clarify your objectives for your patients, which are usually not as clear to your team as your numeric practice goals. In our practice, our objective is to help our patients maintain a nerve function score as close to 100 as possible. Understand that the clearer your CAs are on your clinical objectives, the more they can hone their communication and patient education accordingly, which equates to increased patient compliance.

Step #5: Clarify the CA's Role

Now it's time to help your CAs understand their role in your practice. While CAs have those jillion tasks to juggle, doctors need to clarify that the main role of a CA is to get new patients into the office and to get them back according to the doctor's recommendations. In a nutshell: get patients in; get them back.

However, beyond that, I believe the ultimate goal of a CA is to build as many win-win relationships as possible between the practice and the community. That's a much bigger vision than what a CA does inside your office. Why? Because we understand that from an etimological perspective, doctor doesn't mean healer, it means *teacher*. A chiropractic assistant is really a teaching assistant. So, we need to help empower CAs to expand the vision of what they do - not only as the gatekeeper of the practice, but also in the role they play outside the office.

Step #6: Clarify Your Priorities

Sometimes improvisation is necessary; you can't see everything coming - the crystal ball takes time off. However, the surprises are easier for your team to manage if the doctor has decided what takes priority in your office and has communicated it to the team in advance. Most of the problems come up because your team is forced to guess how the doctor would want something handled, and ESP just doesn't work.

- Clarify what the #1 priority is in your practice. Ours is always the patient's experience, which makes it easy for our team to remember to focus 100 percent of their attention on the patient, rather than on the computer or their co-workers, and maintain a positive attitude. It also helps them to prevent any issue from snowballing into an angry patient or negative online review.
- When it comes to patient visits, determine which scenarios take precedence and communicate that to your team. For example, if your CA has to choose who to devote attention to - the patient on the phone or the one in the office - who takes priority? Another example is prioritizing a new patient vs. an established patient. Decide in advance, and explain why to help your team gain clarity on practice priorities.
- Finally, when it comes to determining which of those jillion duties takes priority, it always comes back to whichever duties are in alignment with the role of a CA. In other words, duties that bring a new patient into the office or back to the office according to the doctor's recommendations take priority.

Clarity Leads to Results

"People respond to a lightning rod message that will give meaning to their work. The clearer the purpose, the better the results will be."— Customer Bliss

Clarity creates ease in running your practice, and helps you and your team make decisions that are congruent with your chiropractic philosophy, vision, practice mission, objectives, goals and priorities. It's that important - and that simple.

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