6 Ways to Convert *Front Office Staff* into a Revenue Machine

AdvancedMD

For nearly every medical practice, clinical care is top priority. No compromises. And keep the money discussion separate. That's what great providers do.

Practice managers, on the other hand, deal with not only creating stellar overall patient experience, but also delivering acceptable financial results – the 'separate money discussion' that is at the center of their world. This typically involves balancing the cost and revenue sides of the practice in such a way as to ensure that the former doesn't overtake the latter. It's a tricky balancing act.

At a high level, administrators typically view the clinic as the revenue center, and pretty much everything else as a cost, with staff being one of the biggest cost components. But what if you could flip that? What if you could legitimately move front office staff from the cost to the revenue column? As unlikely as it may sound, that possibility has moved from mere wishful thinking to an achievable reality for many independent practices.

Those who pursue this strategy find that not only do revenues improve, so does staff engagement, creativity, productivity and longevity. Directly involving staff in increasing the value of their work can be highly empowering.

FUNDAMENTAL ABCs

Pulling off this conversion relies on three underlying fundamentals that must first be in place. These cannot be ignored. Many practices are frustrated with efforts to improve basic productivity, much less move to revenue generating status largely because they fail to understand these three key starting points.

AUTOMATED PROCESS INFRASTRUCTURE

The first essential step toward progress is to free staff from repetitive, often manual processes that can dominate their time and energy, leaving little room for more creative, revenue-focused work. Practice leaders who expect staff to significantly change their behaviors without providing the tools and infrastructure will find their efforts continually frustrated.

For most practices today, this shouldn't be a huge step. Commitment to updated, leading-edge practice automation systems that include solid workflow and process automation functionality accelerates the cost-to-revenue journey.

REVENUE GROWTH MINDSET

This point is the natural follow-on question to the first point. Higher levels of automation and productivity generally translate to lower costs and possibly lower staffing levels. However, before cutting staff or hours, a practice must clearly analyze the tradeoff between incremental cost reduction and the possibility of redeploying that resource to revenue generating activities that could potentially tip the scale the other direction.

LEADING-EDGE PATIENT-FACING TECHNOLOGIES & ANALYTICS

Recent technology introductions by leading-edge providers offer an affordable, practical path toward systematically enriching patient relationships and services, and streamlining the new patient acquisition process. Home-grown attempts at these activities usually prove to be cost prohibitive or overly complex and unwieldy.

A strong reporting and analytics capability is also key to helping identify opportunities and keep staff focused on highest value options.

With that foundation, let's jump into six practical how-tos for moving staff to the positive revenue side of the ledger.

6 WAYS TO CONVERT FRONT OFFICE STAFF INTO A MONEY MACHINE

Promote and Manage Online Reputation | Workflow Optimization | Manage No-shows | Lost Patient Follow-up
Actively Manage Screenings and Ancillary Service Opportunities | Personalized Prospecting

1 PROMOTE AND MANAGE ONLINE REPUTATION

Online experts confirm that these days more than 80% of all purchases begin with an online search. This includes checking online reviews and reputation before making a decision. This entrenched behavior applies to patients selecting and continuing with a physician. Managing your online reputation is crucial, and is a task that, supported with the right technology, capable staff can effectively manage and improve.

The best systems include features for soliciting online reviews as part of the patient workflow and managing the response. Soliciting and reminding patients to participate is an important starting point where the right staff involvement can make a huge difference.

Managing potential negative reviews is also important. While totally eliminating unfavorable reviews isn't an option, following up on them is essential. Search engine ranking algorithms modify the negative impact of unfavorable ratings if the company (or healthcare practice) reaches out and makes a concerted effort to resolve outstanding issues. This not only significantly improves online rankings but builds stronger patient/practice relationships that might otherwise be overlooked and left to fester.

2 WORKFLOW OPTIMIZATION

Observant staff that works directly with patients day-to-day can be a valuable resource in spotting areas of potential workflow improvement.

Giving them latitude and tools to improve how front office work gets done can yield hidden gains in efficiency and patient satisfaction. Additionally, involving them in the process significantly increases their engagement and commitment to successful implementation.

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3 MANAGE NO-SHOWS

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Leveraging automation at different levels is essential to staying efficient. This can include personalized, auto-generated text or email messages, regular no-show reports and lists with contact information, and staff workflow tasks with accountability feedback loops.

Also include appropriate KPIs for tracking effectiveness of selected methods and making necessary adjustments.

4 LOST PATIENT FOLLOW-UP

While patient turnover is a reality of practicing medicine, a little extra attention in this area may salvage a relationship, and at worst provide valuable feedback.

Analytics can be used to identify, for example, patients who haven't had a visit for a specified time period, patients who missed important follow up appointments, or patients with long overdue disputed charges.

A personal or personalized contact with these patients can open conversations for repairing a misunderstanding or possibly an unvoiced issue that could lead to reestablishing a relationship.

If that isn't possible, it's a prime opportunity for soliciting frank feedback. These conversations are almost always uncomfortable, because they can feel like a personal, unwarranted attack on particular staff and/or providers. However, they may help identify issues the practice is unaware of that can be addressed before additional patients are impacted.

5 ACTIVELY MANAGE SCREENINGS AND ANCILLARY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Utilizing the system's reporting and analytics capability, identify screening and ancillary services that are of highest value to the practice, or that complement other high-value procedures.

This is paired with reports on patients who are due for or could benefit from these services. From there, staff can contact identified patients utilizing personalized automated electronic communications or personal phone calls. The key is consistent follow up to missed calls or unanswered emails rather than a 'one-and-done' communication that checks the box but doesn't produce strong results.

6 PERSONALIZED PROSPECTING

This is a more targeted version of #5 and requires slightly deeper analysis. This involves identifying procedures or services that can benefit a particular segment of the patient population and targeting specific messages and invitations directly to them.

For example, a particular age group, diagnosis or even geographic area might be a strong match to benefit from a procedure or service, and staff can reach out with specific invitations and offers through the most efficient means for that patient.

An effective addition to this idea is to mention that if the offer isn’t a strong fit for the patient themselves, that they consider family or friends who might benefit and refer them for care.

BUILDING A LONG-TERM ASSET

Combining strong automation technology with creative and interactive staff involvement can over time build a motivated front office staff skilled in additional revenue generating activities that enhance their jobs and the practice bottom line.

With updated technology and staff mindset, you could create a revenue transformation in your practice that keeps giving and getting better.

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