



The Medicine Bag Book on Motivation in the Workplace

By Tina Del Buono, PMAC

Top Practices

“The Virtual Practice Management Institute”

www.Toppractices.com/VPMI

Table of Contents

Practical Practice Management

www.gotopppm.com

Introduction.....	2
5 Steps to Open Communication Development (OCD).....	3
Face-to-Face Time is a Win-Win Motivational Tool.....	5
Motivating by Recognizing Success.....	7
Employee Recognition Doesn't Have to Have a Big Price Tag.....	8
Patients, Check, Doctor, Check, Medical Assistant, Check.....	10
Seeing the Big Picture.....	12
Consistent Feedback Feeds Motivation.....	14
Walk the Talk Earning Respect.....	16
Building Trust in the Workplace.....	17
Employee Growth by Training.....	19
Hitting the Mark on Goal Expectations.....	20

"Desire is the starting point of all achievement, not a hope, not a wish, but a keen pulsating desire which transcends everything."

~Napoleon Hill~

Keeping Motivation Alive in the Workplace



To arrive at our offices each day with the desire to do our best takes motivation. There are three primary reasons that we lose motivation;

1. Lack of confidence
2. Lack of focus
3. Lack of direction

Motivation is about making a positive difference in our life and those we come in contact with each day. What

motivates each person will be different, it is finding what I call “your happy thought” that gets you going and will keep you going in difficult times. This book has ideas and stories designed to give insight into what it takes to keep motivation alive in the workplace. It is a collective effort on each person’s part to keep it going as one person alone cannot do it. Motivation requires a balance of evaluation, communication and desire to create the best work environment for yourself and those you work with.

“The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.”

~Vince Lombardi



5-Steps to “Open Communication Development” (OCD)

All too often we think there is too much chatter in the office between staff members and also many times with our patients/clients too. I know for a fact that our doctor will hear laughter and interaction

and wonder if the staff is getting their job done. Yes, we are getting our duties done and more, we are cultivating an open line of communication between us, staff members, and with the patients that we serve. According to ToolingU (at www.toolingu.com) the definition of “open communication” is “the element of a good team in which the free exchange of ideas and objections is encouraged.” In order to get to the place where office staff, management and physicians/business owners can have this open communication, you need to start out with what I call “baby talk steps.” Because they are simple first steps you can take to begin “open communication development” (OCD) in your office.

1. Take time to communicate: We are so rushed these days, with all that we have to accomplish at work and at home. It is essential that we take those extra few minutes each day to ask those we work with how their day is going, and what is going on at home. It is important to get a little personal (within the boundaries of each person’s comfort zone). Trying to get to know your co-workers better is a way of showing that you care about them and that is more than just work and this starts to create a bond between work-mates.

2. Listening is just as valuable of a skill as talking: Take those extra moments to listen, what exactly are your co-workers saying? Ask questions, and “listen between the lines” to what is being said. Develop your skills of understanding, this means that you need to be quite, and seek understanding as to where your co-worker may be coming from. Do not assume that you know, it is better to ask for clarification so you really know what is being said.

3. If you are a manager, supervisor or business owner you need to enlist ideas that your staff members may have that could help run your business better. These are the frontline people who are dealing with your patients each day; they know (because they hear) what your patients want. Take the time to listen and then implement their ideas, not only will it help your business, but it will make your staff feel that you value them and their input to the practice.



4. By listening to your staff and taking action on their ideas you are showing them that your idea of communication “is not a hierarchy” but it is open to all people who work there. They “staff members” will be more open to giving their thoughts and also talking to you “the physician” about issues that cause them concern, and this is good, remember you are working together for a common cause.

5. Finally take the time to celebrate together, whether it is because the office saw more new patients this month than last, collected more money or just because it is Friday, take time to enjoy each other’s company as co-workers and friends. Remember you spend more time at work each week than you do at home, your co-workers are people who you need to develop good relationships with.

Dealing with OCD is a good thing, as “Open Communication Development” can only make our workplace better and life is too short to work in an unpleasant environment.

”

“Skill in the art of communication is crucial to a leader’s success. He can accomplish nothing unless he can communicate effectively.”

~Author Unknown

Face-to-Face Time is a Win-Win Motivational Tool

With the way technology is today it is much easier to text, e-mail, or chat on-line, than taking the time to meet face-to-face or even over the phone. It is becoming more prevalent these days to use these types of communication in the office setting. There are pros and cons to this and they need to be taken into consideration when you choose to use alternative methods of communication. Here is an example of a pro for texting we have found for our



office; we have two physicians that work out of our office, but they also work in other facilities during the work week. When we need to get a message to them right away we have found that they can look at their phone when a text comes in much easier than if we paged them and they had to stop and call us back. We can let them know if it is urgent or not, and we have discussed that when we send a message to them this way that they are to do a quick respond to us so we know that they have received

the message and are taking care of the issue. Texting has worked for this type of situation for us, but we would not use it if the situation was not simple and needed more communication, we would text and ask that the physician call the office as soon as they had a moment so we could give further explanation. E-mailing also works well for communicating information to each other, but it has its limits as well, and the biggest limitation is being able to communicate the emotion of the message and this is a big part of what communication is about. There is really nothing that can compare with face-to-face communication. Researchers have discovered that in actual face-to-face contact the success of communication is broken down into three components, word, and tone of voice, a gestures or body language. Communication is what makes us human and we work with humans so we should want to communicate with them in a meaningful way, which would be face-to-face, this way they can hear our voice, see our body language, feel the emotion in what we are saying, nothing can really take the place of this. Let me share a short story regarding this; we had purchased a new medical software and there was this nice man who helped us with every problem we encountered, he was just great and over the years he became, a friend, but without a face.



About 7 years later we were at a conference and were walking by a booth that our software company was at and I heard his voice, it was amazing. I went up and asked if he was (our rep) and he said my name, we were so excited to meet after so many years of e-mail and phone calls. I can tell you that those couple of days getting to talk to him face-to-face told me more of

who he was than what the past 7 years did with e-mails and calls. I had the opportunity to see him, look in his eyes, hear the tone of his voice along with his facial expressions, see the emotion in his body language as we talked, these are the communication tools that we naturally have that tell each of us so much about who we are communicating with and what is being communicated. As co-workers in a medical practice we need to take the time to invest in face-to-face communication, it is the clearest form of communication that we have. Good leaders find the time to make the connections with their co-workers and have face-to-face communication about daily office issues and personal interactions that grow relationships, which in turn create fewer turnovers in staff. It is the element of being human with one another that is meaningful to everyone in the workplace. Tomorrow when you are at work, think about how you can make a human connection with those you work with and talk with them face-to-face even if it is just for a few moments, you will definitely feel better for it and so with those you took the time to talk to.

“To give real service you must add something which cannot be bought or measured with money, and that is sincerity and integrity.”

~Douglas Adams

Motivating By Recognizing Success

Recognizing employee's success in the office is an important factor in building their self-confidence in their job and also is a big motivator to encourage work habits in the right direction that will make them successful at their career and enhance your practice. As employers or management we all too often can find the short-comings and mistakes that employees make and focus more on these than their successes, which probably happen more often, but go unnoticed. It is expected that they accomplish their job duties successfully so there is no real reward for doing so. Smart employers know that by recognizing success and acknowledging their employees for these, they are creating "*excitement and*



motivation" in their employees that will pay off *ten-fold* to the practice. By catching employees "doing good" up and beyond what is expected and rewarding them for it, makes them realize that they are appreciated and they will want to try to perform in a way that will have a positive effect on the practice and on them. For example; several months ago one of our employees realized that there were referrals of patients that had not called to make an appointment yet, but had been referred to the office by their primary physician. She took it upon her own to pull all of these referrals and call them to have them schedule appointments. I had been watching and listening to her do this throughout the day and when she was done she mentioned that the

schedule was now filled for the following week and seemed quite excited about it. I asked her what made her make the calls without being asked and she said "well we had some openings next week and I knew that we had these referrals that had not called for an appointment, so I decided that if their primary doctor thought it was important for them to be seen that they sent a referral to us, that I should call them to make sure they get an appointment." I was so excited that she took it upon her own to do something that was positive for our practice. I told her how great it was that she acted on her own to do something to add to our patient schedule the following week and that it showed that she was thinking about what was good for all of us by doing so. She was very happy that she had acted in a positive way for the practice also.

But I didn't let it stop there, I not only told the doctor so he could thank her and tell her that her actions were appreciated, but I went out and purchased a \$25 Visa card and gave it to her the next day with a hand written card thanking her again for seeing a need and figuring out how to fill it. Now this is not something that happens every day, but I have recognized success in employee actions and rewarded it in multiple ways, such as a thank you card, flowers, Starbucks card, lunch, etc. It has made a difference in our staff because they know we not only are watching and listening to them, but we appreciate what they do and this motivates everyone in the office to do the best job they can to provide the best patient service and care each day. Take the time to look for success and then recognize it in some way, it will make a difference.

Employee recognition doesn't have to have a big price tag



Many employers think that employee recognition involves spending money, when actually the best recognition you can give them is free. Start with saying good morning to each of your employees and not just a "morning", but a "good morning Cindy how are you doing this morning?" Then take the time to listen to Cindy's response and maybe add "are the kids getting back into the school routine after the holidays?" You get the idea, take a moment to actually communicate with your employees on a personal level, this type of connection is like mortar that seals the stones together. Giving employees a sense of pride about the work they do makes them feel like they really have a purpose for being in your business. Make sure you recognize when a good task is done and then let them know how much you appreciate what they do and why. Ask for help with a project or problem, singling them out to assist you. When you do this it says volumes to your employee that you trust them to help you get a project done. Don't forget to thank them once they have completed it for you because that is the frosting on the cake for them. This one costs a little money, but not much, pick up a bag of bagels with cream cheese on your way to the office in the morning and then take 5-10 minutes to just shoot the breeze about whatever comes up. This idea works great on a Friday and then the topic would be "what is everyone doing for the weekend."

It is a casual approach and it just seems that people will open up better when there is food involved. Thank your employee's everyday as they are leaving the office for a good days work, and if it is a Holiday weekend you might surprise them by letting them lock-up and leave 1/2 hour early. All of these ideas are small, but done consistently mean so much to your staff, they will remember what you have done and how much you really do appreciate them by caring and money just cannot buy that.



“Appreciation is a wonderful thing: It makes what is excellent in other belong to us as well” ~ Voltair



**Patients...check...Doctor...check
...Medical Assistant...check...
relationships....priceless!**

We go to work every day for many different reasons, I hope one of them is that you really enjoy what you do each day enough to look forward to coming back to work the next day. Working in the medical field is not always easy or fun, as with most jobs it has its downsides. Even so,

the question we need to ask ourselves is “can we see through the difficult tasks and times enough to know that they are only momentary?” Being a Medical Assistant is a really wonderful career, we get the opportunity to work alongside our doctors to help make our patients feel better. We have the privilege to assist our physicians to make their job easier and we have the opportunity to assist our patients to help them with whatever their needs are while they are under our physicians care. This alone can be very rewarding each day, but when we are thanked by our physicians and the patients we care for the reward is “*SUPER-SIZED*” for us, and this what happened today in our office for **one** of our assistants. As I said, medical assistants have such wonderful opportunities to help people in need when they present to the office, and today Julie (one of our Certified Assistants) was thanked in a special way for all of the kindness and care she has been showing a patient over the past couple of years. Apparently, when Julie was helping this patient at her last appointment she mentioned that the Fall was her favorite time of year, as she was a Fall baby and just loved this season, so today when this patient showed up for her appointment she had a beautiful present for Julie as a Fall/Birthday gift for her. If you cannot see by Julie’s face in the picture....she was really *WOWed* by this patient’s kindness and generosity towards her.

Julie loves what she does and it comes through to the patients she serves, they feel her caring and it kindles relationships that will continue to grow through the years. Building relationships with our patients can only happen when the people who work in the medical practice really want to be there, enjoy and have a passion for what they are doing. Just as an aside, this patient also brought a box of chocolates for the rest of the office staff so we also knew that she appreciated all of us too. Moments like this make us all realize that Medical Assisting is a great career and we are so glad we have the opportunity to make a positive influence on the patients that come to our office for care by our physicians.



“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”

~ John F. Kennedy

Seeing the Big Picture

It happens every day in offices all over the world, where people come to work to complete the tasks that they were hired to do. Not that this is wrong, but what's missing is that they have tunnel vision about what it is that they are doing.

Possibly they do not understand *why* they are doing it or *how* it affects the bigger picture, they are only seeing a small dot (where they are) on the bigger map, which is blurred. Working in a medical office or any office where you work with people should not be like working on an assembly line where you are producing widgets. Everything we do is connected in one way or another to completing a bigger picture. This story speaks perfectly to seeing the big picture it is called "The Stonecutters".



There is a man who sees three stone cutters working and wants to find out what it is that they are doing. He asks the first man "What are you doing?" and the man answers "I am cutting stone!" With no real answer the man goes to the second stonecutter and asks the same question. This man answers "I am cutting a block of stone to make sure it is square and its dimensions are uniform so it fits exactly right with the other stones in the wall." The man was a little bit closer to finding out what they were doing, but what they were working on was still unclear. The man then went to the third man, who seemed the happiest of them all and asked "What are you doing?" The man smiled at him and said "I am building a cathedral!" Even though each of the men were doing the same task each saw

what they were doing a bit differently.

As business owners and managers we need to make sure that we and our staff have a good understanding of what we are doing collectively, "*The Big Picture*."

It is not that the front office person *just* answers the phone and schedules appointments; they are the “Director of First Impressions” that can make the difference on how your patients/clients see you and your office as a whole. Even if our job tasks do not have us come in direct contact with the patients/clients themselves, what we are doing supports those who do and we come in contact with our co-workers every day. Spend time together as teams talking about what it is that you do together helping each other see the significance of what they do and how it connects to the Bigger Picture for the good of those you serve. Knowing the ultimate vision of what you are collectively working together for, inspires each person. It is a big world out there and we can have a positive influence with each encounter we have each day.



“Know what you want to do, hold the thought firmly, and do every day what should be done, and every sunset will see you that much nearer to your goal.”

~Elbert Hubbard

Consistent Feedback, Feeds Motivation

We all would like to have employees that are motivated each day to not only do their job tasks to the best of their ability, but to also strive to learn new things and take initiative to see what needs to be done and do it without asking. You may call this type of personality the “self-starter” and wished that each employee that you have, had this type of motivation. There are certain personalities that are natural self-motivated types and they are constantly looking for ways to make their place of employment a better one. As we know not everyone is this way, but there are certain things that employers and managers can do each day that will bring out the best in each person we work with. One of the best motivators of employees is consistent feedback about how they are doing each day at work. Now this doesn’t mean that each day you need to make a list of what each employee has done and tell them how well they did with each task. What it does mean is that you, the employer or manager, need to be *engaged* with each employee so that you periodically can give them affirmation of how they are doing. Everyone needs and likes to hear that they are doing their job well and what exactly it is that they are doing well at or have gone above the call of duty for.



That saying “catch someone doing something good” instead of “doing something incorrect” is a great way to let your employees know that you are watching and listening to them and care enough to let them know when you “catch them doing something good.” This is a great habit for all management personal to practice on a daily basis. Far too many times we wait until it is review time and then make a list for each employee on what they are doing well at and not so well at and this is the only time employees hear it. How can someone measure how they are doing if they only get a review and feedback once a year? Why not do this each day and your employees will always know where they stand how they are doing in your eyes. Consistent feedback will also cause your employees to feel more connected to you and their job.

Also by giving consistent feedback to your employees you are creating the opportunity for honest conversation, the more they feel that connection with you the more they may open up and be more willing to give input at office meetings and help with solutions to problems that come up. It is an investment in your employees that will cause them to rise up and excel no matter what their personality type is, try it and watch how you and your employees will benefit.



What is the recipe for successful achievement? To my mind there are just four essential ingredients: Choose a career you love, give it the best there is in you, seize your opportunities, and be a member of the team.

~Benjamin F. Fairless



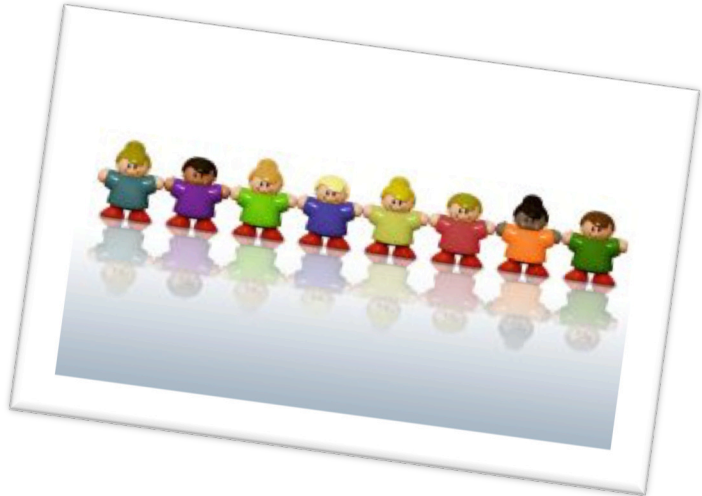
Walking the Talk, Earning Respect from Your Employees

One of the biggest mistakes an employer can make is thinking that because they own the business that all of the people they hire to work for them should respect them because they are the business owner. Listed below are six good tips on what you can do to earn respect from your employees.

1. Respect just doesn't happen because you are the employer. Realize that you are human like your employees and have strengths and faults like they do. By not thinking more highly of whom you are because you own the business, you will be able to relate to your employees on a more level playing field and they will respond to you better.
2. Understand that respect is a two-way street. In order for you to get it, you must (with a capital "M") give it to your employees. Take the first steps from the beginning to show them respect for who they are as fellow human beings.
3. Employees have real value and they are not just there to a job. Their input and opinions must be listened to and taken into consideration. Try to run your business without them, where would you be?
4. Employers need to "jump in the trenches" every now and then with their employees and work together with them side-by-side on a task or project. Working together builds bonds especially when each person is an equal. Employees enjoy working with their "bosses" when there is a common goal to be accomplished. And don't forget to celebrate when the project is finished! A bit of socializing is really good mortar in building strong relationships.
5. Take an interest in your employees. Know their full names, if they married, know their spouses and children's names. Know what they like to do for fun and what their special interests are. Take a few minutes each week to make face-to-face contact with them and catch up on what is going on in their life.
6. Most importantly above all, be true to your words. If you expect a certain standard to be kept by your employees, make sure you are also keeping the same standard for yourself. Lead by your actions and walk the talk. Remember you are the leader and your employees are watching you. Be a leader that they can respect.

Building Trust in the Workplace

Trust, like respect, has to be earned over a period of time. In the workplace that can be difficult because when someone is hired to do a job you need to place immediate trust in them that they will be able to do it. In the medical field physicians can be placed at risk by their employees making errors that may put their patients at risk, so trust is an essential element in physician / employee relationships. Here are three definitions of what trust is;



- (1) Trust is assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something.
- (2) Trust; one in which confidence is placed.
- (3) Trust means being able to predict what other people will do and what situations will occur.

If we can surround ourselves with people we trust, then we can create a safe and good environment in which to work. These three definitions all sound wonderful, but how do we develop “trust” with those we work with since it is an essential factor that needs to be in the workplace? There are several stepping stones to building trust between employers and employees and between co-workers, this will not happen overnight, trust is earned over time. The five trust building steps below have been proven over time to develop that bond of trust between people in the workplace setting.

- (1) Be honest, sounds logical and easy, but I can tell you that I have had employees lie right to my face and I know it and they for some reason think that just because they say it, that it is true and I should believe them when evidence proves differently. Be honest at all costs, as it is better to have been honest when you have done something wrong than to have lied and then later been found out. Repairing this type of damage with an employer or co-worker is very hard.

(2) Try to consistently use good judgment; do not talk about those you work with unless it is in an uplifting way. Bad mouthing someone or gossip will be found out and is looked down upon. Think before you act, that extra 10 seconds of thought may save your reputation.

(3) Be dependable, show up for work each day on time. Do the work that is expected of you and then some. Under promise and over deliver, doing this says a lot about the type of person you are.

(4) Take the time to listen to others and value them for who they are. Support your employer and co-workers 100% and employers do the same for your employees. Work together to find ways that you can help one another to do a better job each day for the patients you serve.

(5) Employers make sure you ask your employees for feedback on office systems and then when you get it, use it, and let them know how it was beneficial to you.

Take the time to thank each other each day for a good days work. These steps may sound simple, but it is truly amazing how many people will tell you that they do not happen in their place of employment. It does take time to build the bond of trust, but it is hard for me to imagine working day in and out in an environment that it does not exist.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best; *“Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly and they will show themselves great.”* Tomorrow is a new day; make sure you are taking the steps to build the bonds of trust with those you work with.



“Remember your team is only as strong as its weakest link”

Employee Growth by Training



Is employee continued training worth the investment? This sounds like a no-brainer question with the answer being “of course.” But this is not always the case when it comes to time, effort and money that an employer has to contribute. Statistics show that more employees are now looking to invest back into their jobs and this trend is on the upswing for people to want to grow with their companies rather than look for new employment. The National Society of Human Resources Management found in a

retention survey that 59 percent of employees polled said that meaningful work makes a job better, and they defined “meaningful” as; a workplace with a learning culture and the opportunity for challenge and growth in their job. Here are just a few of the well documented benefits to be gained from continuing education and training for your staff;

1. Increased job satisfaction and morale amongst staff members.
2. Increased employee motivation.
3. Increased efficiencies in processes resulting in overall financial gain.
4. Reduced employee turnover, resulting in reduced recruiting and training costs.
5. Enhanced office image and patient satisfaction and loyalty.

Today is the age of instant information and many times patients have already done the research on their health issues, treatments, technology and products and your office staff needs to be more knowledgeable than they are when questions are posed to them by your patients. Patient service is often provided in brief interactions that may only last a few minutes, but the impact could last a lifetime. On the average medical assistants (either clinical or administrative) spend three times the amount of time with the patient than the doctor does, what impact are your assistants making? Medical assistants of today play a key role in the advancement of the medical practice as a whole. Continued training for medical staff is necessary to keep the medical practice standards high and in enhancing quality patient care and increases employee morale to do the best they can each day at work

Hitting the Mark on Goal Expectations

When I was a young girl my mother would have chores that each of my siblings and I needed to complete each Saturday morning while she was at the beauty shop getting her hair done. She would write out the list with each of our names by the chores that we were to do. When I was real young I had to take out the trash, fold some clothes, and pick up my room. My sister who was older got to clean the bathrooms, I couldn't wait until I was old enough to do this "glorious job." Then the day came when I graduated to cleaning the bathrooms, now my mother was a smart woman and she took time to show me, in detail, what needed to be done and how she expected it to look when it was done and I knew that my job would be inspected when she got home. I

really wanted to please my mom so I tried really hard to get it all right the first time, but I did miss a few things and when she got home she did not have any problems letting me know what was not done to her expectations, she set a standard and it needed to be upheld. Over time I was able to get those bathrooms clean and pass the inspection with flying colors, but even though I could do a good job, she still would



look it over to make sure I did not slack off. My mother was creating in me good work habits that I would be able to take with me through my whole life and I thank her for this. So what does this have to do with working in a medical office? Well, office management needs to work in the same way that my mother did with me when it comes to performance expectations with our office staff. We need to not only communicate clearly what the job expectations are, but we need to demonstrate how we expect them to be done. Have training sheets with itemized tasks and goals for each employee to be able to review and work from. Also make sure you take time to show them how each task is to be done to meet the employers expectation, just saying "clean the treatment room" does not cut it because their idea of what clean is could be totally different from what your idea is. By having directions and inspections for each task you can ensure that the job is done correctly.

Employees will be happier because they will know what is expected from them and management will be happier because the standard has been set and taught. Another good reason for having tasks and directions written is that it makes it much easier for review when something does fall through the cracks, you just have the staff member get out their training sheet and there it is in black and white, no ifs, ands or buts about it, making the goal expectations easy, allowing for a bulls eye to be hit every time.



Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do.

~Pope John XXIII