

Considerations in Choosing a Practice Management Firm

Periodically the Christian Chiropractors Association (CCA) is contacted by a doctor who is looking for help choosing or working with a practice management firm. It is important to understand that the CCA does NOT endorse any particular practice management firm. Each practitioner must make their own decisions regarding their practice. This information is offered simply for consideration.

The Practice Management Firm's Background

An understanding of a company's past often gives insight as to how they will function in the future. A good practice management firm will have withstood the test of time and have solid operating principles.

Questions to ask the Practice Management Firm:

- What is your Mission Statement?
- How long have you been in business?
- How many clients do you have?
- How many coaches do you have?
- Are your coaches currently in practice, or how long did they practice?
- Have you had, or do you currently have, any lawsuits against the firm?
- Does the company have an extensive knowledge of the chiropractic profession?
- Has the company been a strong supporter of the chiropractic profession?
- Since methods utilized in big-city practices may not work well in smaller-sized markets, does the firm have successful practice experience in a similarly-sized (population) town as mine?

Measuring Success

The goal should be more efficient patient care, higher quality care provided, and improved business practices, not just the "bottom line" of how much money a chiropractor can gross.

Questions to ask the Practice Management Firm:

- How does the firm measure my progress or success?
- Does the management firm focus on business principles that produce long-term growth, or does the firm place a greater emphasis on short-term strategies involving insurance billing, product promotion, marketing schemes, or technique change?
- Will the management firm be willing to help you grow by working within your philosophy of practice? For example, if you practice a pain management-based model of care, will the firm insist you convert to a subluxation-based model of care? Or, if you prefer a cash practice model, will you be required to convert a model which accepts all insurances?

Training and Resources

While certain good business principles are universal, a quality practice management firm should have the ability to offer customized instruction to its clients.

Questions to ask the Practice Management Firm:

- Is the advice being offered a set of universal one-size-fits-all principles, or is it a customized approach based upon my situation, location, and personality?
- What media is used to convey training - live seminars, webinars, video, phone, print?
- Am I assigned an individual coach?
- Is there a limit to the frequency or duration of any coaching calls?
- Do classes offered at seminars qualify for continuing education credits in my state?
- Does the advice offered benefit both my practice and the chiropractic profession in general?

Ethics

You have to be willing to do what the firm asks you to do. It is good to occasionally be taken outside your comfort zone, for that's often how one grows. However, you should not be asked to compromise your ethics.

Questions to ask the Practice Management Firm:

- How will you encourage me to do what I need to do to grow my practice?
- What happens if I don't grow as you think I should?
- What happens if you recommend a tactic that I don't want to do for ethical reasons?

Program Cost

Often one seeks the help of a practice management firm because the doctor is financially struggling. Enlisting the services of a firm may then become another expense in an already tight budget. Make your financial decisions wisely and have your legal counsel review any contract before you sign it.

Questions to ask the Practice Management Firm:

- Is my cost a flat pre-set fee, a percentage of revenue, based on volume growth, or another formula?
- Do I need to sign a contract?
- How long is the initial contract (1 year, 2 year...)?
- After an initial contract period has ended, do you offer "lifetime" programs at a reduced rate?
- Do you have national seminars in addition to individual coaching? If so, is it an additional expense?
- Are there any hidden fees not mentioned in the company's marketing material?
- Does the management firm offer the option to pay only if growth occurs, or do they get paid no matter what happens?
- Does the firm require a good deal of cash up front to attend a seminar or to join their group?

Faith-Based Considerations

As Christians, we seek to live out our faith in all facets of our life, including our vocation.

Questions to ask the Practice Management Firm and yourself:

- Are the firm's teachings in alignment with Biblically-based, Christian principles?
- Does the firm overtly or covertly support Scientology principles, New Age philosophies, or other non-Christian religions?
- Has the firm worked with other Christian practitioners in the past who would be willing to share their experience with me? Will the firm share names of active practitioners using their services?

Before Taking The Next Step

Realize that once you sign on as a client of a Practice Management Firm, if you are not willing to follow their advice, you will only be wasting your time and finances, as well as raising the frustration levels of everyone involved.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What is my primary goal?
- What level of collections or patient visits would I consider to be successful/sufficient 1-2 yrs after joining a practice management firm?
- What do I believe to be the largest barrier RIGHT NOW in keeping me from achieving the desired goal? Do I need the help of others to break through that barrier?
- Am I willing to change the way I practice?
- Am I motivated enough to do what is asked of me?
- Am I ready to implement whatever is ethical/moral/legal to the best of my ability even if it falls outside my comfort zone?