

How to Improve Practice Productivity



Organization is the key to increased efficiency.

BY PETER WISHNIE, DPM

Editor's Note: This article is excerpted from The Podiatry Practice Business Solution (Stonebrook Publishing) by Peter Wishnie, DPM by permission.

In order to be efficient and increase productivity, you need organizational systems that help you clear your mind—something you can easily follow that prevents you from forgetting anything important. What system do you have for ordering lab work, orthotics, and shoes? How do you know if the lab has received your request or lost your prescription? The number one reason why businesses fail is due to slow service. In today's world, we want and expect everything immediately. You can get almost anything you want

within twenty-four hours. Amazon Prime has spoiled us, and so have our phones and computers.

one for radiology testing such as MRIs and CT scans, and one for shoes. Every time you order any of

The purpose of being organized is to make sure you have a well-run, smoothly oiled machine—a practice in which everyone knows what to do and how to do it...

What that means to your practice is that if someone has to wait weeks for the orthotics you ordered for them and they're suffering in pain, they might not come back to you or write you a rave review. That's why you should maintain an Excel spreadsheet to track everything you order. You can have a tab for orthotics, one for blood work,

these items, your staff will track it. They'll record the order date, the patient's name, and the item ordered. When the order arrives, the front desk person will open the spreadsheet and record the item's arrival. Store the spreadsheet on your server, so everyone in the office can access it.

Continued on page 64

© Jon Anders Wilken | Dreamstime.com

Productivity (from page 63)

Twice a week, someone should check the spreadsheet to see which items have arrived and which have not. If there are any delays, your staff should call the lab to find out why. Then—and this is where you differentiate your business from everyone else’s—you call patients and explain why the product or test results are delayed and let them know that you’re on top of this. That is WOW! service. To be the best, you have to do what others won’t.

The purpose of being organized is to make sure you have a well-run, smoothly oiled machine—a practice in which everyone knows what to do and how to do it; a staff that communicates and works well together. You can only accomplish this if all your systems and protocols are written down. This is your office manual, the bible your staff will check when they aren’t sure what to do

decrease the patient’s waiting time because you get their information, such as their insurance and demographic information, over the phone. You need written phone scenarios for the following:

- How to answer the phone

ordered. Look at the purchase order form.

For example, let’s say you’re ordering walking boots, and the last time you ordered was two months ago. We have six boots in stock and ordered twelve last time. The

The goal is to have your office function in an optimum fashion even when you’re not there.

- How to make a new patient appointment
- How to reschedule patients
- How to handle cancellations
- How much an office visit costs

Inventory Systems

This is huge, because how you handle your inventory affects your bottom line. A lot of offices have

staff member wants to order another twelve boots. But why? In two months, we’ve only used six walking boots—three per month. Since we already have six, we’ll be good for another two months. In this case, you shouldn’t approve the order but revisit the situation in two weeks. This is how to keep your inventory under control.

After the purchase order has been approved, a copy of it goes to the bookkeeper. Maintain a separate bank account for supplies. This is when to move the total amount of the purchase order from the operating account to the supply account, which ensures that when you get the bill for the supplies, the funds are available. Unless there’s an emergency, the money in the supplies account can’t be used for anything else. In a busy practice, it’s the little things that can get left out, like checking the bathrooms several times a day for cleanliness, and inspecting the fire extinguishers, the oxygen tank, and the eyewash station, to name a few. Establish systems to stay organized and designate a person to be in charge of each one of them. A well-organized office is better for you, your staff, and especially your patients. **PM**

Establish systems to stay organized and designate a person to be in charge of each one of them.

A well-organized office is better for you, your staff, and especially your patients.

when you’re not around. The goal is to have your office function in an optimum fashion even when you’re not there.

Telephone Scenarios

If your phones aren’t being answered properly, there’s an excellent chance that you’re losing money. Your phone represents the first impression you make on the patient. No matter what the patient asks, your staff always needs to answer the question with another question, which is, “May I have your name, please?” The most beautiful sound for a person is the sound of his or her own name. It should be used throughout any conversation. This builds rapport and makes the patient comfortable. Your phone procedures help your office to be organized. With good phone procedures, you’ll

either too little or too much inventory. Having too little is costly because you won’t have the products to sell, plus you’re not optimizing your patients’ care. Having too much means you’ve stocked a certain item for more than forty-five days, and your capital is literally being stored in a closet instead of being used for something else, such as marketing or paying an outstanding bill. Designate a specific person to take inventory every week or two. How you handle your inventory affects your bottom line.

Each order form is for a specific vendor. The staff member writes the vendor’s name at the top and lists every item he/she will purchase from that company. She writes down the number of items she’s ordering, the number of items already in stock, and the date of the last



Dr. Wishnie is the owner of Family Foot & Ankle Specialists, Piscataway and Hillsborough, New Jersey and is a practice management consultant with Top Practices.