

Extreme Makeover

Summer is the time for family reunions. People you have never met before come from every state in the union. Each family brings their own version of macaroni salad, different types of jello and you cannot forget the desserts. Family picture albums are spread across the tables with the history of your family displayed in chronochrome. The family similarity is astonishing even though you have never met these people you recognize similar traits in each of them.

You have Aunt Clara's eyes, and your chin looks just like Uncle Harry. Unfortunately, you have Grandpa Charlie's hairline and pear shaped posture. You really didn't have a choice of what you were going to look like. It was in your genes, Right? Wrong! Medical marvels have taken the guess work out of it. Now you can have the eyes of Betty Davis, the chin of Jack Palance and the posterior of.... Well whomever you choose.

Yes, its true. You don't have to live with what you were given by genetics. You can change. Extreme makeovers are all the rage. If your house is run down we will rebuild it in 72 hours with a bigger and better version. If you are in need of a personal makeover, we will perform liposuction, plastic surgery, dental implants and provide a new wardrobe.

How does your business look? Is it time for some dental implants to improve your smile? Is Liposuction needed to get rid of some fat so the bottom end looks a little better. Is plastic surgery needed to completely transform the face of your business. If the answers to these questions are yes, then maybe its time to perform an "extreme makeover" on your business and rebuild the ugly duckling into a swan. Surgery is not something you head into without tools or resources so to help you make that change here are some ideas to help you perform the needed surgery:

- **Workshops, professional meetings and conferences** are sources of makeover ideas. Spend time with organizations that promote the learning of best practices as well as innovative ideas. Go with the intent of bringing home tools and tactics that can improve your business. Don't try to download the entire meeting on your employees when you get back. Take the items that you feel you can implement and provide positive change. Small changes give some of the most positive results.
- **Books and Trade Magazines** are a resource for makeover ideas that you can internalize. Trade Magazines present topical subjects that can give direction for further investigation. Books are another resource that I find necessary. One of my favorites is "Good to Great, Why some companies make the leap and other don't" ~ by James C Collins. A pleasurable read in discovering the common traits that challenged many of the conventional notions of corporate success and led disciplined individuals to success. A meaningful change with measureable results is a combination of time, physical and emotional mental energy. Always remember that mental energy should not be neglected when evaluating change.

- **Fellow Providers** are an excellent resource for makeover ideas. Think of a provider you deeply respect. What qualities about this company are things that you want or need in your company? Make a list of those qualities and set yourself on a path for making the changes necessary to accomplish that change. If you are not competing for the same business area I would suggest that you request to make a visit to that provider or have them come visit you. Problems that may be presenting themselves in your office may have already been solved in theirs.
- **Benchmarking** can lead to a makeover. Organizations can benefit from comparing practices with peers. Comparing, opens communication and the opportunity for change. Be careful to compare yourself to like providers that perform the same types of service in the same types of environments. When used in conjunction with visits to other providers, this can provide useful information on how you can improve yourself.
- **Consultants.** Our industry has been provided with a multitude of professional consultants. There are experts in billing, process, intake and financial management to name a few. Consultants have seen some of the best and worst practices in the industry. It is their business to stay in touch with the best practices of this industry and advise you on how to utilize them.
- **Technology.** One of the most significant changes you can make to your business is the automation or elimination of manual processes. The word technology is loosely defined as the use of tools to accomplish a necessary task. Determine the process that you want to automate and search for a tool to accomplish that task. There are several tools on the market today that provide you high return on your investment. The process of billing and denial processing was improved with the use of electronic billing and denial and reimbursement solutions. Chasing paper documents and documentation hassles were solved with Document Imaging solutions and now even the process itself can be managed virtually. The ability to have a dashboard of all the activities within your business and know where the bottlenecks are occurring is now possible with Workflow solutions. I always caution to not implement technology on top of flawed processes, all you get is a fast mistake. Remember to improve your processes before you implement a new software.
- **Personnel testing.** The understanding that one of your largest expenses and your largest attributes are your people. It is extremely important that you maximize this asset as much as possible. First by getting the right people working in your business. Second by having them doing the right things in your business and third by educating them so they progress within your business. This can be accomplished by personality testing prior to employment. Several different simple tests can help you align an employee's skill set with the occupation that they are being asked to perform. Giving a task to someone whose skill set does not match, is like putting a bowling ball in a tub of water and then being disappointed that it didn't float.

These are just some of the ideas that will give you inspiration to make that leap into the great darkness that is tomorrow. The HME industry is in the midst of a period of great change. In

tandem with the accelerated growth of the Medicare population, financial instability of the Medicare program and the economic slowdown is creating an increasingly harsh business environment. Everything is compounded by such factors as the sharp price increases in energy and other resources. Moreover, a shadow over the future of our country is being cast by the aging of American society, the massive fiscal deficit and public distrust in the governmental system.

Despite these difficult circumstances, it is incumbent upon us to fulfill the destiny that was set upon us, to provide sustainable growth and create a future for this industry. Providers need to realize the potential that exists within their business.

It is precisely during times of adversity that opportunities arise. So I ask this question of providers, "Are you tired of your current situation? Do you need a makeover?" If so, start with some simple tasks as described above.

Remember liposuction, plastic surgery, dental implants and new clothes can make an ugly duckling look like a swan, but the person remains the same on the inside. Lack of discipline, ignorance and bad habits will cause the "fat" to return and eliminate the good looks over time. Providers that solely rely on external alterations or well-meant initiatives rarely achieve sustained improvement. So make sure you make the internal changes to compliment the external changes as well. Otherwise that \$4000.00 posterior will end up looking like Grandpa Charlie again.

Be well talk soon.