

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Where do we go from here? What direction are we going? Will we be profitable this year? So what is your answer to that question? Do you have a focal point? Where are you leading your business? The answer to this question is there for you to answer and should not be left to chance.

It reminds me of a story that a close friend from Dallas tells. He and his grandsons leave the house with the intention of heading for their favorite playground. He will look at his grandsons; take a coin from his pocket and say, "Heads we turn left. Tails we turn right."

They walk to the end of the driveway and flip a coin. If it comes up heads, they turn left and begin walking. Tails they go in the opposite direction. At each intersection they stop, flip a coin and turn left or right. They walk and talk a lot but rarely make it to the playground.

The goal of their coin-flipping trip through the neighborhood has a purpose. My friend wants his grandsons to learn three important lessons of a successful life:

1. When simply left to chance, rarely do you reach your desired goal or destination.
2. When you leave a decision to chance, you have no control of the outcome.
3. It's far better to rely on wisdom than chance when you stand at a crossroad.

Louis Pasteur said "Chance favors the prepared mind." Running your business should not be a game of chance. Are you prepared to make the decisions necessary to keep your business successful?

- Do I expand into other markets?
- Do I outsource my billing?
- Do I purchase different software?
- Are my employees trained well enough?
- How can I grow my business?
- How will National Competitive Bidding affect me?

Leadership groups are striving hard to prepare you for answering these difficult questions, but that is as far as they can go, preparing. The tough part "the decisions" are up to you.

So instead of using my friend's method of reaching the playground by flipping a coin at important crossroads, why don't you use some of the things that successful people rely on when charting their path to the future of success.

1. Talk to people who've experienced the same question. Seek people who have knowledge, experience, wisdom and discernment. Ask "Which way did you choose and why?" The odds are good that person will say, "I've been down that road. Let me tell you what happens!"

2. Think about the consequences of decisions before they happen. Ask what-if. What if I outsourced my billing? What if Medicare stopped paying for this service? Use these scenarios to prepare your business and yourself for these decisions.
3. Remain optimistic. Negative thoughts lead people to do nothing or make poor choices. Optimists look up. Pessimists look down. If you look down, you won't see where you are going.
4. Consider all options even though it may not seem possible. Success is not logical. Following a crowd is logical and instinctive but often leads to destruction. Don't dismiss the illogical choice ...remember the road less traveled. I am reminded of the statement that when surrounded by man eating alligator's in a swamp, it is hard to believe that your main objective is to drain the swamp.
5. Pay attention to the signs of the industry. Much like highway intersections, businesses have directional signs if we'll simply pay attention. You can't read signs if you're going too fast. Read the trade magazines, listen to what consultants say, what are your competitors doing and saying.
6. Listen to your organizational leaders. Organizational leaders hear the voices of hundreds of providers from across the country. They use this information to find educational opportunities or businesses to partner with that will help you solve the questions that are being asked.

It is time for you to think about where you are standing. What does tomorrow look like for you? If you don't like the view then you should think about how you are going to change it. Don't settle for a game of chance to determine your future. Take action, take charge, find a focal point and work toward that reference point. Focus on the future and make it a bright one.

Be well talk soon,

Douglas Stallbaumer