



Chiropractic Assistants: How to Get Them to Put the Pedal to the Metal

*Chiropractic assistants (CAs) can drive a practice forward like nothing else. Get them pumped and your practice will be humming. Neglect them, and your practice could come to a virtual standstill. So, how do you keep a CA's foot on the accelerator? **By Kevin Wilson***

Practices vary and with them, so do the functions of the CAs. Some are office managers, some hold the front desk, some do collections, some perform tests and consultations, while some do it all. Regardless of their functions, I've found that what drives CAs is the same thing that drives most of us through good times and bad—"purpose." By that I mean, having and following some useful purpose in work and in life. That's what keeps our motors running.

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Have you ever had a chiropractic assistant who didn't "believe in" chiropractic? Chances are, this CA didn't really care if patients showed up for adjustments or not. Chances are, this CA was there just for a paycheck. Don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with making money—we all want to drive nice cars and have nice

homes. But employees who are working only for a paycheck are working only for themselves, not the practice. There's really no sense in trying to motivate

them because their purpose is to benefit themselves, not others. My advice is let them move on to greener pastures, as they inevitably do.

Of course, there's a big difference between a CA who does not "believe in" chiropractic and one who simply doesn't understand it. For staff who are willing, and have a purpose to

help others, it's worth putting in the time to educate them. We have one chiropractic client who has new CAs complete a series of simple orientation steps the first day on the job. For instance, one orientation step is for the new CA to find the appointment book and see what the doctor's schedule is. The new CA is also directed to find the staff member in the office who answers insurance

questions; to locate all the exits from the building; to find the bathroom key, and the bathroom—you get the idea. Then the new CA watches two videos on chiropractic and answers questions about them, including reactions to the content. This is all on the first day, and the training continues from there.

Educated CAs not only recognize the importance of getting patients to keep their appointments, they make sure they do. And more importantly, they know what information to be alert for in dealing with patients such as details about the patient's life or well-being that should be passed on to the doctor.

Playing the Game

Did you ever take a long road trip with your family when you were a kid? Chances are you sat in the back, sandwiched between your brothers or sisters (and the dog), and played "I Spy." "I Spy" is a guessing game where one person sees an object and says, "I spy something beginning with C" and the others have to guess what it is. Fun or not, I Spy was one way to relieve the tedium.

I don't mean to compare working in a chiropractic office to being on a long car trip, I'm just illustrating a point. Playing a game is much more engaging, and way more fun, than not playing a game. And playing a game that involves the practice meeting certain goals—such as reaching a certain number of patient visits or referrals or



collections—can get your CAs and the whole practice involved.

You probably didn't get any prizes

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when you won a round of I Spy as a kid. For grown-up games to work, there's got to be a reward or bonus of some kind. One chiropractic client of ours runs a weekly game for the staff and gives free lunches or half-hour massages. Her biggest game yet was based on reaching practice-wide goals for collections and new patient visits, among other things. The prize for the CAs, who worked in Chicago, was a three-day, all-expenses-paid trip to Disneyworld in Florida. The game was going strong, but as the deadline drew near, the CAs were still short on the number of patient visits and started to give up. Their chiropractor, who really wanted them to win, snuck into her office and called in some patients on her own. The patients came and the CAs won their game and trip to Florida. The chiropractor won a bigger, more enjoyable practice.

Now, what do you do if the CA is also your spouse? Well, obviously, in most marriages, the doctor's income is shared by the spouse (especially in California, well known to divorced movie stars and music industry

moguls as a "community property" state). Nonetheless, your spouse still needs a game to add some spice to the job. One client of ours gets with his CA-wife and they decide on something they both want, like a new computer network, and play the game for that prize.

As you might expect, a married chiropractor and CA are likely to talk about the practice at home more than is advisable. The doctor and his CA-wife mentioned above, drive to and from the practice in separate cars so they have time to "decompress" on the way home. This short 10-minute ride, with each driving alone in their own car, helps them partition off their work from married life.

Making a Difference

Just like most of us, CAs have to feel they are making a difference in the practice and the patients' lives. One chiropractic client of ours asks patients to write testimonials which she then reads to the CAs at office meetings to keep them pumped.

The CAs offer a vital conduit to the patients. They pick up and pass on vital tidbits of information from patients which the doctor may not otherwise discover. The CAs also provide valuable observations from an exterior pair of eyes. Of course, you know all of this already. My point is be sure to let your CAs know, too.

Hire CAs who want to help others, train them, give them games to play with rewards, let them know of a job well done and your CAs will put their pedals to the medal for you and your practice.

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