



Business Support & Development

Getting to the Nitty-Gritty

LAST MONTH I described how Paula had felt that all the issues in her business, and life, were like a plate of spaghetti, and she didn't know how to unravel it. This is

very common, so in the last few weeks we have focussed on setting a strong foundation to allow her to get the most from the three elements of business support: the coaching, the practice management software and the telephone answering service.

What became clear was that Paula had many roles to fill: osteopath, administrator, marketing manager, wife and mother, as well as being involved in community groups and other things outside of work and home. The volume of tasks and emails associated with all of them seemed to be growing exponentially - but the time available to handle them was the same or smaller!

Paula has tackled this head-on, by breaking her time down into chunks, and then planning what she will do in each of these slots. This has allowed her to prioritise some treatment time - to keep the revenue coming in - and to corral some of the other activities into specific periods, helping her become more efficient. Paula found that this exercise, when she started, was "really liberating", but that in practice, she quickly got bogged down and the trivia started to take over again.

So, we focused on what was working. It had really helped her to schedule the important tasks that she needed to remember: the monthly exercise of sorting paperwork for her bookkeeper, so that she has up-to-date information on how the clinic is performing; and the writing of the articles for the local magazine, which help generate patients and referrals. With chunks of time set aside, she now knows these will be done on time, most times.

The picture is not all perfect, however. The reality is that the



Kyle Lunn [TM2]



Leo Meyer [Ideal Receptionist]



James Butler is Director of Painless Practice, providing assistance to osteopaths who want to develop their practice to meet current challenges - through one-to-one support, CPD training and published materials. James co-authored the BOA's Business Development Handbook and speaks widely on practice building techniques. Throughout 2010 he will be using his regular column to recount the progress of our competition winner.

volume of email and other admin tasks was too much, and this was hard to keep contained within specific slots. It transpired that part of the problem was the pressure Paula felt to reply very quickly to emails "because people expect it". Yet these emails were rarely truly urgent, and even more rarely were they life or death. So Paula has now set herself a standard on response times that works for her - and allows her to deal with emails in time slots she has set aside. She now feels more comfortable and she can manage her time better.

- Where are you operating to someone else's agenda?
- Do you allow Other People's Emergencies to rule your diary?

As an osteopath, you will face times when an acute patient really needs seeing immediately, but this is actually the exception, not the norm. What boundaries can you set around your time to allow you to be more productive? Can you condense tasks into specific slots to make you more focused? Working at a desk a lot of the day, I found a huge increase in productivity when I reduced the frequency that my email downloads new messages. When you are doing your admin tasks, would the same help you?

- How can you take greater control of your tasks and your time?
- What are the important actions you need to guarantee time for?
- If you have too much on your plate, what can you start saying no to?

Planning Marketing? Who Does That?

One of the reasons Paula entered the competition was to focus on what was known to work in building her practice. Until now, much of her marketing was like that of so many osteopaths: unfocussed, unmeasured, uncoordinated activity - based on sound principles and good ideas, but not in the context of an overall plan.

That's all going to change. Paula has some homework to focus on some quick wins - starting with increasing referrals. Cheap and easy with a quick return, this activity is a perfect place to start, while we focus on what she needs to do in the longer term. Our focus will not be to spend more, but to spend more wisely - evaluating what works already, where the fertile soil is, and how activity can be managed within the reality of Paula's time pressures.

- What overall plan do you have for marketing your own clinic?
- What activities work best at bringing in new patients for you?
- How can you increase referrals in your practice, without significant cost?

Watch this space for how Paula tackles it!

To see how you can benefit from modern practice management software, first class virtual receptionists, or practice development coaching, keep an eye out for

James' regular column in OT during 2010, or visit www.insideTM2.com, www.idealreceptionist.co.uk or www.painlesspractice.com

© Painless Ltd 2010

EMU OIL - a natural alternative



- widely known in the southern hemisphere for its anti-inflammatory properties
- encouraging results from recent research into the use of Emu Oil on symptoms of arthritis

Medico Emu Oil Xtra

- finest quality, premium grade
- extra refined to food grade
- can be used topically, for massage or taken orally
- available in 114ml and 218ml

NEW PRODUCT - Emu Aloe Cream with Glucosamine - please ask for details

Baugh Dell Ltd. Tel/Fax: 01403-752016
 FREEPOST SEA10482, PO Box 17, BILLINGSHURST, RH14 0BR
 e-mail: info@baughdell.co.uk