Delegating “Vacuum Tasks”



Cindy Pezza, PMAC, President and CEO Pinnacle Practice Achievement

Physicians often find themselves bogged down with daily chores that interfere with the efficiencies and productivity of their practices and their overall well-being. These could be anything from completing chart notes and searching for outside testing or lab results to keeping track of inventory and ordering of supplies in the office. On a recent webinar discussing the benefits of utilizing virtual assistants and scribes, the term “vacuum tasks” was born and the concept moved me to investigate further.

In life, no matter what your position as a business owner, manager, employee, consultant, pet owner, home economist (politically correct term for homemaker) we all have daily “to dos” that seem to suck the life out of us. These are what I now understand to be “vacuum tasks” and I am writing today to shed some light on the ways in which you can free yourself from them, improve the quality of your life as well as the success of your business.

The world around us is changing at a rapid pace and we have the ability to connect with people, and services more conveniently than ever. We can sit on our couches on a rainy Saturday afternoon and stream an episode of Longmire (I highly recommend) on Netflix. While we are half-watching and listening to a recap from the last episode, we take out our phones (always within arms-reach) and check the arrival date of the auto shipped dog food we have set up through Chewy.com. Good news, it will be here tomorrow, and the puppies won’t have to starve! We then open the Amazon app and order paper towels and dishwashing liquid (since no one wrote it on the grocery list). In the meantime, you notice that your Echo (Alexa; shhhh. . . don’t say it out loud, she is always listening) is blinking yellow (alerting you that Fed-ex just delivered your new coffee warmer (cool. . . I forgot about that), quickly check your emails to see that your new business cards have been shipped from Vistaprint and should arrive by Tuesday. Wait, what is that faint noise? Oh, it’s your robot vacuum (set to run at 2:00 p.m. today) picking up the dog hair and even getting under the furniture (like you never do). You sigh to yourself and wonder why it took you so long to buy one! Nothing better than the magic of technology matched with innovative cleaning tools (or maybe that’s just me).

Now you are ready to focus on Walt Longmire in action and before you know it you are three episodes in and are everyone is getting hungry. With no desire to cook and only two more episodes until the end of the season, you reach for your phone again and open the Door Dash app. They bring you almost anything you want, even if the restaurant doesn’t deliver! On Sunday you feel a twinge of guilt for sitting on the couch all day Saturday but, it was raining, and you did accomplish quite a bit. To ease your guilt and loosen up those stiff muscles, you log in, grab your mat and do a power flow yoga class through the workouts on-demand service that your local studio is now offering as part of your monthly membership (on autopay of course). Wow, what has become of us?!

I will tell you what, we have (or have the ability to be) masters of efficiency when it comes to managing and outsourcing our daily practices. Why then can we become so caught up in the vacuum tasks that plague our lives in business?

If you made notes throughout the clinic day (I like the app Evernote for this kind of thing) of *your* vacuum tasks, what would it look like? How much more enjoyable would treating patients be and how many changes could be made to improve the health of your practice if you took the menial, time-consuming tasks that you and your current staff are bogged down with and learned to delegate proficiently? Would incorporating a virtual assistant (to perform eligibility and benefit checks, answer overflow calls, call back the patients who require more time or attention, contact surgery patients to see how they are feeling) or a virtual scribe (to assist in the documentation and compliance requirements of every patient encounter) be the key to reducing stress, increasing cash flow and allowing you to dramatically improve the level of care provided to patients? After working with practices who have invested the time, developed the structured systems and protocols required to incorporate virtual assistants in a multitude of capacities and have seen better results than ever anticipated, I strongly believe the answer is YES!

The solution to improving any deficiency is to first uncover the cause. Before we implement a resolution plan we must drill down to the root of the problem. Sadly, one of the largest problems in a medical practice is the inability of doctors to simply be doctors without also taking on the role of transcriptionists, compliance officers, and micro-managers. Evolutions in healthcare have done a great detriment to the patient experience as well as the health and well-being of physicians and their practices. You do not have to be in practice very long to feel the effects of increased compliance and documentation demands, decreased reimbursements, or the general sense of disgruntlement from patients who are caught in the middle. Yikes. . .

Ready for some good news? If you are ready to make a true paradigm shift and possess the motivation and mindfulness required to improve every aspect of your practice and your life, it is not only possible, it is attainable at a higher level than you could have imagined. It all begins by making your vacuum task list and developing a plan to breathe freely once again!

For more information on incorporating high level virtual assistants and scribes into your practice visit <http://bottleneckmedical.com> and to begin developing structured systems and protocols in order to improve your practice visit <http://pinnaclepa.com> or email cindy@pinnaclepa.com. Cheers to your success!