

30. How to Pick a Coach for Your Practice

A friend of mine is an Ironman triathlete. He has four different coaches for this event: one for biking, one for running, and two for swimming. I asked him if all that was necessary, and he gave me the best answer I could think of:

“All the guys who are hitting the times I want to hit have at least three coaches. I’ve improved by twenty percent in each area since I’ve been coached, and I’m not in this thing alone.”

There really isn’t any question in athletics about the value of coaches – all serious athletes hire coaches. Period. So why is there any controversy in chiropractic about using coaches or consultants? I’ve met plenty of good doctors who were stuck at a fraction of their potential just because they couldn’t or wouldn’t get some help. Their reasons for putting up with years of disappointment and mediocrity are varied, but most often translate into “I just didn’t know who to trust.”

By contrast, many doctors have become experts at using practice coaches. When asked why, their answers are roughly the same as the athletes:

“Most successful doctors I know use or have used coaches. I’m helping more people, having more fun, and making more money than ever before. And I’m not in this thing alone.”

Do coaches cost you money or make you money? I teach clients to compute their return on investment (ROI) from the fees they spend on consulting. A low ROI for my clients is an eleven to one return. That begs the question: If you could double or triple your practice, cut the stress in half (which will double your fun), and get eleven dollars in exchange for every dollar spent in the process, wouldn’t you try? Of course you would, but how do you choose a practice coach who’s right for you?

For the doctor who’s ready to make a change and wants to choose the best practice coach for them, the following is a short list of things to look for in a coach or consultant:

1. Choose a coach who is doing what you want to do.

Today's market is different than it was five years ago. If a coach doesn't have their own clinics, and isn't doing well in today's market, you may be left with systems and programs that are outdated, or worse, just don't work. If you are looking for help attracting new patients, how does the coach do with marketing their own offices? If you want to develop associates, does your coach know how?

2. Don't settle for being just one of the herd.

Big shows in big rooms with lots of people and inspirational music may be entertaining, but who's looking out for you, personally? If you're passed off to a junior employee (sometimes not even a chiropractor) instead of being known and guided by one of the principle teachers, that could be a problem. Think of it like this: do you want your children in a classroom with 166 other students, or sixteen?

3. Get specific answers to specific problems.

Some consultants say they'll work on your headspace, and you'll figure out the rest. How does that work? If you need new patients, you need specific, step-by-step procedures that you can copy in your practice in order to produce new patients. Some groups seem to miss the point of systems: there's a right and wrong way to do everything in and out of the office, so find a group that has tested and polished the "right way" solutions to your problems so you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Isn't that what you're paying them for?

4. Insist on the Golden Rule.

Some doctors have come to me with questions about the ethics of certain groups. Here's my answer: If a group teaches you to do a hard sell instead of educate and lead patients, that's a red flag. Here's the test: If you would have any hesitation about sending your friends and family to a doctor using that group's systems, they aren't for you. Remember, if you're going to love your

practice as long as you're in it, you need to treat patients with love and respect and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

5. Insist on good value.

Price out your coaching options; with some groups, the fees are huge. Others are so low you wonder how they can provide the service they promise – the answer is that frequently they can't.

I'm also not comfortable with paying a percentage of your practice's income increase as a fee. In my view, that punishes you for your success. I like knowing what things will cost up front. Instead, run the math, see how much it will cost to learn and implement a solid, proven program, and then work your tail off to increase your ROI and make it a great bargain.

6. Look for a personal resonance with the leader and group.

The principle consultant's message should click in your head, heart, and gut. You should look forward to being coached by that person and embrace their mission. Surround yourself with people who are in it to help people, have fun, and be successful, and then do it in that order.

7. When you're ready to get a coach, give it everything you've got.

Being the right client is as important as finding the right coach. Decide that you'll be the best client that your coach ever had, and determine to be the client that hears his coach say "You're kidding? You did all that already?"