



# Urgent Care Without a Paddle



Economy getting you down. Feeling like you're up the veritable creek. Whether you're an owner, manager, or practitioner, if you're not feeling the heat, you should be.

That's not to say you should get out of the kitchen; just be a better chef.

There has never been a crisis in history that did not create great opportunity for those who know how to find it. During a crisis of any kind, two classes of people settle into their familiar camps:

- The "woe-is-me" camp: "Why does it have to be so hard?" "Why did this happen to me?"

The woe-is-me camp spends a lot of time thinking and talking about their unforeseen lot, and doing very little about it. Wallowing in self pity has never proven an effective strategy for surviving a crisis.

- The "more-for-me" camp: While everyone else is wallowing, these wily folks are out looking for grub. The wise raccoon who finds his favorite dumpster emptied doesn't lie around and cry his raccoon eyes out. He heads straight out for the next great find. Often, he is surprised when he finds an even better treasure out there than his beloved dumpster. Having been satisfied, he had just never bothered looking.

While the woe-is-me camp commiserates, the more-for-me camp innovates. After all, the only effective way to respond to such circumstances is to think of a better mousetrap, a different approach, a new angle.

Crises inevitably cause paradigm shifts. Within every paradigm shift is a new way of doing things successfully. If you want to come out on top, you've got to think innovatively. "Respond" instead of "react" to the new paradigm.

So, back in our urgent care canoe, how can we respond? It should be noted that urgent care has always been a responsive industry. Our very being was born out of a "response" to an inefficient, inconvenient, impersonal, and expensive healthcare system.

In the current crisis, urgent care is positioned well to adapt to the new healthcare paradigm: less insured, more patient responsibility, less money, less time.

1. Be more efficient. Utilize innovative shortcuts. Rethink how staff is utilized. Learn time management.

2. Be more friendly. Be empathetic. Resist the urge to judge. Nothing slows down an encounter more than lack of trust; lapses in the aforementioned three are trust destroyers.

*"Status quo will not work anymore."*

3. Cater to *everyone*. It's not the time to be picky about who "deserves" your care.
4. Build relationships with your colleagues—with specialists, primary care, hospitals, EDs.

The cheapest and most effective form of marketing is to build a personal relationship, then follow through with your promises of great care, great service, and great communication.

5. Rally your staff. A canoe with one paddler is a wayward vessel. Make sure your staff recognizes the importance of exceptional service and follow-through. They should have a vested interest in supporting the practice, if for no other reason than job security.

Go the extra mile by encouraging them to be part of something special in uncertain times. Everyone wants to be a winner. Engage them in the pursuit of innovative ways to secure the practice—not out of fear, rather out of commitment to excellence.

6. Challenge the norm. Status quo will not work anymore. Everyone must be ready to work smarter, not just harder.
7. Identify competitors' weaknesses and move quickly to exploit them.
8. Finally, don't just sit in your canoe; paddle, paddle, paddle! ■

Lee A. Resnick, MD  
Editor-in-Chief  
*JUCM*, *The Journal of Urgent Care Medicine*  
President, UCAOA