



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Scrutiny

■ LOU ELLEN HORWITZ, MA

Recently at UCAOA, we spent a week with two auditors crawling merrily through all of our financial transactions for the most recent fiscal year.

Don't worry, they were here at our invitation so that we can assure all of our members that their funds are being well taken care of and managed to the highest ethical standards possible. It was actually something we were looking forward to and enjoyed quite a bit. As we went through the process, I was enormously proud of the staff for all of their diligent handling of all of the funds entrusted to us.

I wanted to make sure that you were aware of it, too. We take our responsibility to you very seriously.

That said, I will admit that I ate a lot more candy while they were here than I usually do! Even when you feel good about what you are doing, to have an outside expert come in and critique it is unnerving. There is a combination of feelings—pride, fear, defensiveness, inquisitiveness—that is exhausting by the end of every day.

My most interesting takeaway from this experience, however, was not of a fiscal nature. It is about feedback. If you have been through an audit (or an accreditation survey!), you know that, generally, there are a lot more questions asked than there is feedback offered during the visit. That was a real challenge for the staff early on. They were plagued by “Was my answer okay?” anxiety.

This translates so easily into the urgent care manager's role.

If you are not offering feedback, your people are wondering how they are doing. Whether or not you are an effusive person by nature does not matter; you need to find a way to give *regular* feedback to your employees.

You know this, but it can be hard to remember when everything is moving very quickly.

Where the surprises came for us was experimenting with

“If you aren't getting the feedback you need, ask for it.”

our own role in the process. By the second day, we started discussing among the staff whether we could ask questions back to the auditors or not.

Were they not giving us feedback because they were trained to withhold comment until the final report, or is it expressly forbidden?

Was it possible we were not being proactive enough in seeking feedback, and they would answer questions if we got brave enough to ask them?

We decided to give it a try and see what happened.

As you have probably guessed (or this would be a pretty boring storyline), we were able to get a wonderful amount of feedback when we asked them for it.

This translates directly to the urgent care employee's role. If you aren't getting the feedback you need, *ask for it*. Worst case: you are no better off than you were before, but in all likelihood what you hear will help you develop a much better and more informative relationship with your boss. Something as simple as “Was that what you wanted?” or “Did I do what you were looking for there?” can be a signal to a reticent superior that they are not giving back enough information on your performance right then and there (where it can be most helpful to you!).

Although there are “organizational norms” about whose job is what, working together in the real world is a two-way street. Take this column as an advisement to at least lift a couple of fingers from the steering wheel more often and salute your fellow drivers.

Better yet, honk your horn! You'll probably get someone's attention. ■



Lou Ellen Horwitz is executive director of the Urgent Care Association of America. She may be contacted at lhorwitz@ucaoa.org.