



The Value of Face-to-Face Meetings

■ P. JOANNE RAY

“Face-to-face communication is the broadest bandwidth communication you can have in professional life.”

— Harvard Business Review

With limited budgets, distance, and busy schedules acting as barriers, it is challenging to prioritize in-person educational and networking endeavors. Despite these challenges, the 308 paid attendees and 76 exhibiting companies who attended last month’s Urgent Care Fall Conference would surely concur with many business surveys that show in-person meetings are essential for developing new business and maintaining long-term business relationships and partnerships.

From skills learned and enhanced in the hands-on splinting and casting course to strategies learned from the speakers and each other regarding the role of internal marketing to improve patient experience to following the examples of how other centers are positioning themselves in the era of health care reform, these attendees were in the “right place.” The time invested translated to hands-on, relevant, and practical learning opportunities.

UCAOA onsite conferences help you meet the daily challenges you face as an urgent care provider or supporting vendor, while enhancing your ability to achieve ever higher levels of performance. Observing the conference attendees, I was reminded of the importance and unmatched value face-to-face interaction brings to preparing us to deal with the day-to-day pressures and challenges of our individual and collective commitment to urgent care. The valuable exchange of ideas, the new contacts and shared experiences, the follow up months down the road to further brainstorm, and the growth you’ll experience justify committing to a few days that will lead to personal and center improvement.

The 2009 *Harvard Business Review Report “Managing Across Distance in Today’s Economic Climate”* surveyed 2,300 sub-

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scribers and the outcomes support unflappable evidence of the value of in-person meetings:

- 69% said their companies had reduced their overall travel budgets. The average travel budget of executives surveyed shrank by 17%.
- Even with travel budgets being cut, 95% said face-to-face meetings are key to successful long-term relationships and to building strong relationships.
- 81% of executives surveyed said traveling to meet in person offers value beyond the meeting.
- Just 20% said they could achieve the same results with virtual meetings as they could with in-person meetings.

A 2009 Forbes Study provides a strong argument for the value of face-to-face meetings. It also supports my very own belief that in-person meetings go deeper than the “at your desk” webinars and virtual events. (*However, if you can’t get to a face-to-face meeting, at least purchasing access to the archived sessions from a conference will help further your education.*) Web-based conferences were preferred only for data-oriented presentations (44%) and information dissemination (43%), although they held less than a 10% margin over face-to-face meeting in those two areas.

Your next face-to-face major urgent care-specific meeting opportunity is just 4 months away. Reserve the time and set aside your personal or center budget now to join your colleagues March 17 to 20 in Las Vegas for the Spring National Urgent Care Convention. You’ll grow and create long-term relationships that will serve you for years to come. ■



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