

# Make or Break

■ LOU ELLEN HORWITZ, MA

This month I'm going to do something I almost never do in my column—talk about a UCA product. But let's begin by considering success and failure. When you look closely at who's truly controlling the success or failure of an urgent care center, on a daily basis, who do you think that is?

Many people would say it's our providers, who are often the ones that dominate the visit in the eyes of patients and control much of the documentation that influences reimbursement. Or you might say it's our senior leaders or executives who choose sites, negotiate contracts, form partnerships, build brands, and establish culture. I also hear that it's our front desk team who really controls success or failure, because they are the first and last people our patients see.

I would argue that all of these are wrong, and that by misinterpreting who really makes or breaks a center and thereby investing our resources in the wrong places, we are missing a huge opportunity for improvement.

The people I believe are truly in control of not only the success of a center or two, but ultimately the success of all operations, are your center managers. And I also believe we have been doing them a disservice that I'd like to help rectify.

Center managers tend to be promoted from within, train on the job, and learn through trials by fire. Most organizations don't have formal training programs for managers—either initially or ongoing—and many managers are asked to handle quite a bit more than they are ready for. It's just the nature of our lean staffing model; the fact that they succeed at all is a tribute to how good these folks are and how truly outstanding they could be if we gave them a bit more investment and support.

I've met a lot of center managers. They are some of the smartest, hardest-working people in our industry. They usually don't have management experience, however, so they fall prey to "rookie mistakes" and loneliness from being promoted past their peers. They may live in fear that someone will discover

they aren't understanding 100% of what we are asking them to do. And the people they report to are so busy with their own responsibilities of growth or marketing or analysis or performance that they can't truly mentor these managers, which is why an unfortunate number of them fail or voluntarily "return to the floor." We can do better than this.

UCA hasn't focused efforts on these essential members of your team until now, and I'm excited to tell you about what we've put together.

It's called UCBX ("urgent care box") because it's a monthly package of small bites of professional development that will *incrementally* improve the knowledge and performance of your urgent care managers. Why incrementally? Because that's how we actually learn and grow—little by little. We learn something, try it out, try it again if we get it wrong, and slowly it becomes part of our repertoire. The next month we can try a few more new things, and the next month, and the next month, and before you know it we are performing at new levels.

Why small bites? Because we know what their day is like. And by "day" I mean the 12 hours, 7 days/week that they are "on" handling scheduling, callouts, meetings, interviews, patient complaints, and supply orders, traveling between clinics, solving problems, coaching staff, and oh yes, reinventing workflows and all daily practices because of pandemics.

Is there a better time to start investing more in these amazing team members? I don't think so, and I hope you will check out UCBX then sign them up. Did I mention we also made it affordable? And if you'd like to discuss a group discount, just ask us. We're on a bit of a national mission with this initiative!

Finally, we do have some more exciting news for all of our Members. We're migrating almost 200 hours of medical and management lectures onto a private YouTube channel and are making them available to UCA/CUCM Members for *free*. This will greatly increase the educational resources at your fingertips, and we hope you enjoy this new benefit. Watch your email for the go-live announcement and how to access, and of course, if you're not a member yet, what better time to join us?

(PS: We've gotten lots of questions lately about the 2021 Convention. We've moved it this year to October 9-13, still in New Orleans, so be sure to save the dates!) ■



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