

Secret Sauce

■ Lou Ellen Horwitz, MA

Amazon. Dollar General. Berkshire Hathaway. JPMorgan Chase. Walgreens. Walmart (*insert echo here*).

It's been an interesting few years watching these giants try to do what you do.

The biggest tragedy of all of this is the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been spent by these folks that could have been saved if someone on their end had simply picked up the phone and talked to one of us. No one called the Urgent Care Association (UCA), and if they did call one of you, they sure didn't listen to what you said.

What is it about hubris that makes people so willfully ignorant? I only have a bit of insider intelligence that hubris was a large part of these downfalls, but with incredible amounts of funding and otherwise smart and successful people involved, what else could it be? Urgent Care lived through the same set of circumstances and challenges with much less funding, and we are still here.

Becker's Health IT sought insights into the Walmart Health failure exclusively from hospital executives and no one else. These executives said that the reason Walmart exited is that the retail giant had a choice and health systems do not. Or that Walmart didn't understand the math, but I'm guessing they *did* take a look at that ahead of time. Or that they didn't have extensive enough relationships with the right partners who knew about medicine. And on and on.

What Makes Urgent Care Special?

The more interesting and important question for us is, what do we have that all of these otherwise successful companies do not? Perhaps it's that necessity is the mother of invention. Once you have more appropriate

reimbursement that solves all of your problems will you stop innovating? Of course not. That's not how Urgent Care people seem to be made. You are really quite special.

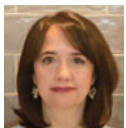
The UCA Board has recently been having conversations about what makes UCA special. It's the last part of our multiyear deep dive on why UCA is here and what our role is in Urgent Care. We sorted out our core purpose several years ago: to ensure both the advancement and the long-term success of Urgent Care. Our strategic planning work (our "what") will always drive from that purpose. What we've been thinking about lately is who we all are and what makes us special—what is typically termed "the values conversation."

By the time you read this, we'll be close to wrapping that up and sharing it with you all polished and shiny via email and the website, but the messy middle we're in as I'm writing this now is a fascinating part of the work.

If you've ever been through a process like this, you know that it starts pretty generically with words like "excellence" and "passion," but when you poke at those words over and over and ask—very specifically—what they mean *here*, it's exciting to see what is discarded and what emerges. It starts to slowly reveal the heart of why Urgent Care is still in this very challenging sector of healthcare delivery when others have not been able to pull it off. It starts to reveal the things that we believe and embrace that seem to be making all the difference.

My hope, expectation, and belief is that when we get down to the few things that make UCA special, it will align almost perfectly with what makes Urgent Care special. After all, "we" are you. I can't wait to see how it turns out and to share it with you.

I want to close by teeing up a few happenings for the fall season! All of our Chapters are having their regional conferences this fall: September 22-24—the North East Regional Urgent Care Association (neruca.org); October 24-26—the Southeast Regional Urgent Care Association (seruca.org); and November 6-8—the California Urgent Care Association (for the whole Western region, caluca.org). Hope to see you there! ■



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