



Peak News

Newsletter of the Pikes Peak Chapter of the Professional Association of Health Care Office Management, Colorado Springs, CO

Volume 8, Issue 1

January/February 2009



HOW PREPARED ARE YOU FOR THE LOSS OF YOUR JOB?

By Rudy Drautz, CMM

In these days when our economy has plummeted and our strategic planning efforts take a different focus, how prepared are you as the Practice/Office Manager for the possibility of a job loss?

No matter how long you have been in the health care business or how long you have been with a particular practice, there is no guarantee that your position is safe. You may think that this cannot happen; however, in recent months one of our own experienced this firsthand. Our colleague is graciously sharing her experience, and what she has learned from it, so that you can be better prepared should you lose your job as an Office/Practice Manager.

In our experience and training we know the importance of policies and procedures, job descriptions, written performance reviews, etc. How many of us have actually made sure that we use these same items to protect ourselves? Yes, many of you have been in the business for more than ten years and have worked for the same wonderful people who just think that you are the best! We become so devoted to our job that we do not give any consideration to our position being threatened.

Here are some suggestions that our colleague has provided for consideration: Do you have a current viable contract? Is your job description current and specific? Do you receive a written annual performance review?

- Do you have a written contract with your group?
- Do you have a detailed job description and is it current?
- Do you receive annual performance appraisals and are they documented in writing?

Does the contract address how many hours you are expected to work on average per week at your current rate of pay; does the contract address what your upper limit is before you are to receive additional compensation? Many office managers easily work 55 or more hours per week. What should you do if your owner asks you to begin working more hours? Are your other benefits spelled out in the contract [i.e. how much paid time off [pto] are you to receive, are you entitled to reimbursement for professional

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HOW PREPARED ARE YOU FOR JOB LOSS?

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training and memberships in professional organizations and are you allowed time to get the training]? Does your contract address expectations should either party decide to end the contract; if not you will want to ensure that you have at least the same benefits that your employees receive if they are terminated [even for cause].

Use the contract to address those tools which you believe are needed to help the practice succeed. Often the issue of strategic planning gets little to no support from physicians but is vital in helping to determine the direction of the practice.

Do you have a current job description which fully addresses your responsibilities [avoid too many phrases like “performs other duties as assigned”] and is it updated after input from you to determine if there are too many duties for one person to do? Be sure to protect yourself when it becomes obvious that you have too many responsibilities for you to do successfully. The tendency is to take on more responsibilities rather than hire another person or delegate more responsibilities to an already stretched staff. More and more, office managers are finding that their responsibilities have grown so large that they need to have others assist with the administration of their office. The position of operations manager is becoming a normal part of some mid-sized and large medical offices.

Often the annual performance for the office manager tends to be a verbal exchange of information which is seldom documented in writing. These documents are vital for your protection in the event that you are asked to leave your position.

In conclusion, just as you are dedicated to doing everything you can to make your practice a fun and successful business, be sure to also focus on the safeguards that you need to ensure your current and future success.

Finally, thanks to our colleague who has graciously allowed an interview in order that we can be better prepared for the possibility of job loss.

THE AWARD GOES TO DEBBIE!

By Rudy Drautz, CMM

The goal of the Pikes Peak Chapter of The Professional Association of Health Care Office Management is to prepare managers and supervisors in medical practices to be more effectively leaders.

Over our eight years of existence the PP PAHCOM Executive Committee has spent much time ensuring that the training and support provided is current and meaningful. The committee meets each month to discuss items of interest to our membership. This includes recruiting members and corporate sponsors as well as listening to the needs and concerns of our membership. The Executive Committee includes Janet Burch, President, Steve Johanns, President-elect, Kathy Bosche, Secretary, Susan Ogden, Membership Coordinator, Lori Trivelli, Treasurer, and Corporate Sponsor Liaison, Rudy Drautz.

Our chapter is blessed with many willing members who see the need to contribute towards making our chapter even better. One such member is Debbie Carlson, CMM. Debbie is one of many very capable chapter volunteers who has accepted the additional task of helping with membership renewals. Most recently, Debbie shouldered an increased workload during Susan Ogden's leave of absence. Debbie assists with the important task of contacting existing members who are due for renewal, as well as potential new members, and confirms the benefits our association provides.

Debbie, together with Chris Hall, CMM and Bridget Pieffer, CMM, is one of the three founders of the Breakfast Club group which meets the third Friday of each month. Breakfast Club provides a venue for frank discussions of real life issues confronting managers. Just this month (February) the group engaged in a meeting with contacts from local trade schools and accrediting agencies for medical assistants. With this two-year effort, productive dialogue continues to grow and potential employers, students, and trade schools benefit.

Our thanks to Debbie and to all of our volunteers for their valuable contributions.



The Benefits of a Practice Website

A website is not just a device to attract new patients. While this is a valuable side-effect of getting your practice on the internet, a well-designed practice website serves as a wide-ranging communications tool, providing information to your patients and referring physicians, saving significant time for your front-office staff, and even providing a channel for your patients to communicate with your office.

A website can be an invaluable way to provide information about your practice to your patients and referring doctors' offices. Your office locations with maps and directions, office hours, insurance information, billing policies and more - all can be presented on your site and easily changed whenever desired. Every time a visitor to your site obtains this type of information, it's one less phone call to your front office staff.

It's often very difficult to provide detailed information to a patient who has just been diagnosed with a disease or condition - the comprehension rate at that time is usually very low. By referring such patients to your website once they get home and have a chance to relax, they can get the desired information in detail, along with the ability to share it with a spouse or other partner in their healthcare. As a result, the number of phone requests for information to your providers should reduce substantially after the patients have left your office.

In the same vein, the ability to post pre- and post-operative instructions on your site allows your patients to have 24/7 access to these documents, which should result in improved adherence to your requirements, and again, less phone calls.

Patient Forms are real time-savers. You really don't want the first impression a new patient has of your office to be sitting with a clipboard in your reception area trying to quickly remember all of the information you're asking for. It's so much nicer for both of you to have them walk in with a completed set of forms - they can do it at their leisure, where all the info is available, and you can get them moved through the office as soon as you're ready.

There are several types of patient forms available - the simplest is the standard PDF form that the patient downloads, prints, fills out and brings to their appointment. The next option is PDF forms that can be filled out on-line, printed and brought to your office, providing you with perfectly legible information. Perhaps the best option may be forms that can be filled out on-line and e-mailed directly to your office, which can arrive before the patient does (and can often be loaded directly into your EMR system with a little help from your IT people). There are some HIPAA issues with this approach, since e-mail is never really secure, but some practices opt for this approach anyway. One additional benefit of having PDF forms on your website is that you can print blank forms directly from the site, eliminating the need to use an outside printer and never run out of stock.

One of the more recent uses of the Internet for medical practices is the Patient Communications feature, in which patients may make or cancel appointments, request prescription refills, get lab results, ask billing questions or even request consultations with the physicians and staff (E-visits) through your website. There are several third-party providers who are offering this service,

many of which can be incorporated directly into your site. You don't need any software or hardware, or any change to your existing workflow. These programs are usually secure, private, safe and fully HIPAA-compliant.

One of the leading programs offers on-line colleague messaging, e-referrals, results distribution with hospitals and referrers, and even patient Personal Health Records. Their e-visit program already has two major payers authorizing reimbursement for this new concept.

Article provided by Gold Sponsor

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Success in business requires training and discipline and hard work. But if you're not frightened by these things, the opportunities are just as great today as they ever were.

\_\_\_\_\_David Rockefeller

*Courage and perseverance have a magical talisman, before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish into air.*

\_\_\_\_\_John Quincy Adams

Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it.

\_\_\_\_\_Henry David Thoreau

*From First Draft Publication  
April 2009*

### ***President's Point of View***

Greetings!

Just eight short weeks ago, I was full of good intentions. A brand new year had begun...a new beginning and a chance to leave my bad habits behind. I resolved to organize my time more efficiently, to never touch a document more than once, to keep clutter from my desk, and to read at least one business journal each week.

One by one, my resolutions faded. Time is still my nemesis, paper follows me where ever I go, and instead of reading at least one business journal each week, I skim through a myriad of electronic articles each day. Staying abreast of rapid fire changes has to be one of the greatest challenges that health care managers face.

Think I'm kidding? Just consider just a few of the significant issues of the past eight weeks directly affecting practice management strategies...

- New ADAA, FMLA, Fair Pay, and COBRA laws
- New HIPAA privacy and security amendments
- PQRI and E-Prescribing
- ARRA and Medicare, Medicaid, and IT funding
- Skolnik Act
- Physician health plan designations
- Recovery Audit Contractors
- ICD-10

The list goes on, and the clutter on my desk gets deeper.

Fortunately, we have resources for information. Your PAHCOM membership entitles you to weekly electronic newsletters and a bi-monthly journal full of well-written articles from experts in health care management. Each month our local chapter offers continuing education in health care management provided by experts in the field. And, we have within both our local and national membership a wonderful network of managers who have broad knowledge and expertise in all the areas of responsibility our profession entails. Take advantage of this wealth of information provided through your membership.

Pikes Peak PAHCOM is addressing several of the significant issues identified since the first of the year. Have you seen our upcoming events calendar? On March 10, the mysteries of Medicare Advantage Plans are revealed. Managers' Academy on March 31 and Supervisors' Academy on April 3 and April 7 offer an intensive course on management, communication, and leadership. And, on April 22, we have an all-day event highlighting Stark Law and Health Care Reform. Our speaker in May has not been finalized, but our June 11 event offering information about successful health care management in tough economic times promises to be an outstanding event.

Even though 2009 is well underway, it's never too late to improve. Resolve now to take advantage of the many opportunities your PAHCOM membership affords you to stay abreast of change. Hope to see all of you at the next meeting.

Janet

BTW, our own Annie Moats, PCH Training, has been invited to speak at the 21st Annual PAHCOM Conference in Phoenix this September. Congratulations, Annie!

## PIKES PEAK PAHCOM MEMBER LIST

Pikes Peak PAHCOM proudly recognizes its members and its corporate sponsors.

Welcome to our newest members:

**Cindy Hildebrand, MaraBeth Johnson, Jen Knellinger, Cyndie Pluid, Suzanne Roelof, and Cindy Valdez.** We are pleased to have you join us!

We extend our sincere gratitude for the confidence renewing members have placed in this association by referring new members. Our Chapter is successful because of you.

**Debbie Adams**, Dr. Laura Feldman, DO,PC  
**Julie Ballweber**, Cardiognostics of Colorado Springs  
**Cathy Bandt**, Associates In Women's Care  
**Judy Boesen**, Colorado Otolaryngology Associates  
**Vicky Bonato**, Colorado Springs Internal Medicine  
**Kathy Bosche, CMM**, Colorado Hearing & Balance  
**Patti Boughton**, Oak Springs Family Medicine  
**Jae Brinkmeier**, Peak Gastroenterology  
**Tracie Broome**, Colorado Springs Neurological Associates  
**Jolene Brown**, S. CO Internal Medicine  
**Janet Burch, CMM**, Pikes Peak Nephrology Associates  
**Maureen Butner**, Premier General Surgeons  
**Josephine Canales**, Evenstar Internal Medicine, P.C.  
**Debbie Carlson, CMM**, Women's Associates  
**Linda Cisco, RN**, Interventional Pain Mgmt  
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**Kelly Gamblin**, WP Family Medicine and WP Surgical Associates  
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**Trish Stuckert**, Academic Neurology & Headache Center  
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**Rosa Tellez, CMM**, Dr. Ron Pelton, MD  
**Lori Trivelli, CMM**, Colorado Springs Senior Medicine  
**Cindy Valdez**, Strode Family Practice  
**Valerie Velasquez**, Women's Associates, PC  
**Meg Wagner**, Southern Colorado Vascular Surgery  
**Rich West**, Front Range Orthopaedics  
**Karen Wheeland, RN**, Andrew R. Ellias, D.O., P.C.  
**Arlene Zimmerman, CMC**, Colorado Springs Family Practice.

*Together we can reach great heights. !!!!!*

*If you know of others who would benefit by being a member of Pikes Peak Professional Association of Health Care Office Management invite them to one of our meetings.*



## PP PAHCOM SPONSORS

Sincere thanks to all of our Corporate Sponsors whose sponsorship allows us to bring quality programs to our PP PAHCOM members.

**Our newest sponsor is Randy Wilcher with Vectra Bank.**

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*Make an effort to support our corporate sponsors. Most of these sponsors were referred by one of our members. Let others know about their services!*

### Contribute An Article

Our corporate sponsors are encouraged to provide an article for our Peak News newsletter which is current, practical, and unbiased. We do not include advertising space yet provide a by line for the contributor should readers desire more information. Articles should not exceed 650 words and should be emailed as a word attachment to our PP PAHCOM Newsletter email address of [pppahcomnews@aol.com](mailto:pppahcomnews@aol.com).

Pikes Peak Chapter of the  
Professional Association of Health Care  
Office Management  
Colorado Springs, Colorado



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President, Janet Burch, CMM 955-7240

**Sharing Knowledge in Health Care Management**

**PP PAHCOM News and Events**

**PEAK NEWS**

**Tuesday, March 10, 2009 7:30–10:00 a.m.**  
**Memorial Administrative Center (Monarch Rm)**  
Medicare Advantage Plans with Michele Law, Law Medi-  
cal Consulting and Cindy Maluschka, Insurance agent

**WE'RE ON THE WEB!**  
**WWW.PIKESPEAKPAHCOM.COM**  
*BE SURE TO VISIT THE MEMBERS ONLY  
PAGE!*

**Friday, March 20, 2009 7 –8 a.m.**  
**Memorial Administrative Center (Durango Rm)**  
Breakfast Club—Topic: Management Employment Agree-  
ments

**Tuesday, March 31, 2009 7:30 a.m to 4:30 p.m.**  
**Memorial Administrative Center (Monarch Rm)**  
Management training for the experienced manager pre-  
sented by Annie Moats, PCH Training.

**Friday, April 3, 2009 7:30 a.m. to noon (Session  
continues Wed., April 8, 7:30am to 4:30pm)**  
**Memorial Administrative Center (Monarch Rm)**  
This training given by Annie Moats of PCH Training is  
designed for those individuals new to management or  
who wish to have a refresher course.

PP PAHCOM relies on several communication channels. In addition to our web site, newsletters, and member e-mails, we enjoy professional relationships with members of the local and regional health care community. The El Paso County Medical Society, Colorado Medical Society, COPIC, Memorial Hospital, and MDNews have been especially generous with their resources in marketing our events. To these very special friends, our heartfelt thanks!

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Share The Knowledge
It is a known fact that PP PAHCOM managers are creative. Each of us works diligently to make our organizations more efficient, save time and money, develop new business, and satisfy patients. There are great health care management ideas out there, and we want you to share what you're doing. Here's the format. Include your name, your organization's name, and describe your management tip in 300–500 words. Explain the issue or problem you identified, the steps you took to resolve the issue or problem, and the outcome of your actions. Submit your completed tip in Word format to Editor, pppahcomnews@aol.com, subject " PP PAHCOM Management Tip".

Friday, April 17, 2009 7–8 a.m.
Memorial Administrative Center (Durango Rm)
Breakfast Club—Topic: AAPC Specialty Certifications

Wednesday, April 22, 2009 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Clarion Hotel 314 West Bijou Street
This is a conference you will not want to miss as Sarah Fontenot, RN, JD, one of our favorite speakers, returns to update us on the latest on Stark Rule changes and Health Care Reform. Our wonderful corporate sponsors will be their for the Vendor Fair!
Save this date! Brochure to be mailed soon.

Submit your management tip to PP PAHCOM. If we publish your tip, not only will your colleagues benefit from your experience, you could win a \$50 gift certificate!