

BUILDING BETTER PRACTICES

# chiropractic economics

## DCs: Are You Back in Black?

Results from our 13th Annual  
Salary & Expense Survey



**DOCUMENTATION**  
I can't pay!

**PERSONAL  
GROWTH**  
Do you have  
the gift of gab?

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Electrotherapy  
Resource Guide

## The gift of gab

How you communicate makes a world of difference in your relationships, leadership, and business.

BY MONICA WOFFORD, CSP

**I**T'S ALL ABOUT COMMUNICATION. IT WOULD BE SO MUCH EASIER TO LIE AND SAY, "Nope, it's about all those other people and their hang-ups, quirks, or character flaws."

But that's just not true. In this issue, when you are looking at the Annual Salary & Expense Survey and how you compare to your colleagues, it is important to note that one small difference might just be your communication.

How do you talk to employees? How do you share information with patients? How do you talk with your spouse who might run the front desk? It all matters and is important, but there are also a few steps you can take to make it even better than you might be performing it now.

### How to do it better

Consider these few steps to make your communication better:

**Avoid the lingo.** Most of your patients would have a hard time spelling subluxation much less understanding exactly what it means or how it applies to them.

And while that is not a reflection on your teaching ability in a report, it is a reflection on just how comfortable you can get with the lingo of your industry and then spew forth words and acronyms that make no sense to the layperson.

The only challenge is that while they may not understand, their ego would get in the way and make them say things such as, "oh, well, yes of course."

Your patients will act as if they understand to keep from looking stupid, but at the end of the day it is you who will pay for that lack of understanding when they also act as if they appreciate what you do and don't come back for their next appointment.

**Confirm understanding.** Anytime you ask someone if they understand, the automatic response will be yes, even if they weren't even sure you were talking to them.

This comes from the conditioning many experienced



## PERSONAL GROWTH

as a small child. When a parent asked if they understood and they said nothing, then the parent would say "answer me" so they did — and usually the fastest way to end that conversation was "yes."

### Communication skills are the most important element of relationship building.

They learned fast and it stuck.

Also, no one wants to look silly or foolish or as if they don't really understand what you said or meant. When you are confirming whether or not they understood what you said, try asking them to repeat or recall what you said and how they heard it.

**Watch body language.** Generations of students have been taught that crossed arms in front of one's body indicate a negative or closed thought process. Much like this is not always true, there

is very little in body language that is definitive and clear.

The key is to pay attention to changes, watch for tension in the muscles, and look for indications that

in context would give you the impression the words are not in alignment with the thoughts.

When an employee or patient says he or she is fine, but you can visibly see tension in the neck area and the facial expression gives you the impression that all is "not fine," pay attention. Note there is a distinct difference between paying attention and making notes and prying.

**Note the tone.** Adults want you to "get it," but they are not always comfortable

telling you the truth or information that may create a conflict or disagreement.

*For example:* You suggest a patient sleep on a certain type of pillow and when you ask how it went or if there were changes, they stammer and sputter and tell you in an all too enthusiastic response that it is "great."

This exaggeration could probably be spotted from across the office. The challenge in some communication encounters, however, is that you are not always paying attention to the cues or how words land on others.

**Keep it professional.** A wrong word said at the wrong time could easily and immediately be seen as a personal attack. When working in public service, or rather in serving the public, there will be misunderstandings and misinterpretations and people who bring you their bad day, both from inside the office and out.

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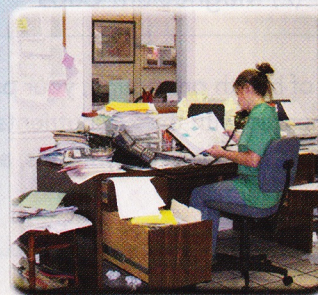
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The key is to take things professionally and not personally. Usually, those who make critical comments to you or about a staff member are sharing well-intentioned feedback in a less-than-friendly way.

After all, if they didn't want you or the situation to improve so they could enjoy their next visit, why would they bother telling you how to make things better? Those who are not coming back don't bother to share their opinion.

**Stress changes everything.** If you are normally a direct communicator who shares information in a "straight talk" format when all is well, this might become a dictatorial and controlling kind of communication when you are stressed.

Pay attention to your stress level and remind yourself that delicate conversations might well wait to be had when stress is less.

The same is true for patients who arrive in your office in an already stressed-out state.

They may not realize how they sound or what they are saying entirely, just as you don't always realize the stress you are experiencing until it is incredibly obvious.

**Hearing is a gift; listening is a skill.**

There are many courses that teach you how to talk or present. How many courses have you attended that teach you how to listen?


It's the other side of communication and it is the one often ignored. It's been said that, "God gave you two ears and one mouth and they should be used in proportion." Keep in mind that just because you can listen doesn't mean you are doing such a hot job in listening.

Communication skills are the most important element of relationship

building, and relationship building is how you build your business.

You want to build relationships with your patients, don't you? You want them to understand the value of what you do and the care you provide, right?

These two elements combined will fill your office with loyal patients and revenue for years to come. All it takes is dutiful attention paid to the art of communicating your intention. Simple, right?

It can be, if you focus and, in this case, follow some simple steps. 



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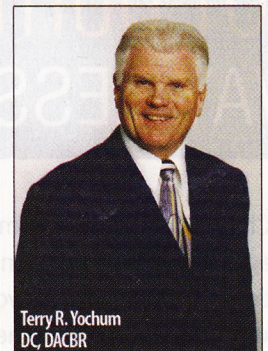
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