

A Manager's Perspective
by
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Mickey and Goofy Visit PT-World

“What a long, strange trip it’s been.”
The Grateful Dead.

The summer is over. Time to get back to reality. It’s been a very strange summer. Too hot. Too humid. And too short.

I’ve spent a lot of time with PT managers around the country since the last edition of *A Manager’s Perspective*. Two other things that I did over the summer got me thinking about our profession. Jake and I took the kids to Disney World (in July - not a great idea) and I finally finished the book on improving productivity without sacrificing quality.

In Florida, it was hot and the crowds were amazing. It was, however, a great time. I am a great admirer of Disney. Simply put, I believe Disney is the single best customer service company in the world. There is something right about Disney. Seeing the throngs of people stand in the sweltering heat in the endless lines knowing that each of them would go home and tell all their friends about “the happiest place on earth” convinced me of that. Each of the two zillion people in line in front of us paid a fortune to get in. Many had saved for a long time to be able to travel to Orlando just to go to the Magic Kingdom, Epcot or any of the other attractions.

What if we ran our PT practice like it was Disney World? I wonder what the cartoon characters would think of how we currently run our practices? I wonder what they would think of the long waits for service on our waiting lists (we didn’t have to wait to get in at Disney World), the proximity of our handicapped parking (they even sent a shuttle bus to pick us up near our car), the long waits we

sometimes impose on them in our waiting rooms or treatment areas (we waited a lot in Orlando, but there was always something to keep us entertained during the wait, often there was a preview of the attraction that promised that we would really enjoy what was soon to happen to us). The manner in which we sometimes treat our patients related to insurance and payment for services (the costs were very high for just about everything but we always knew what they were and when we bought something, we knew it was very high quality). I bet Mickey, Minnie and their friends would shutter at the decor and cleanliness of some of our clinics (Disney World was impeccably clean - even the areas outside the motion rides where the little kids throw up).

The thing that impressed me most about the mouse house was the manner in which every employee went out of the way to treat us as guests. We were always treated with respect and courtesy. Clearly we were welcome in their park. We did not represent a bother or inconvenience to them. We felt like they were there to help us enjoy ourselves. The Orlando trip was quite a contrast to some PT departments I’ve been in this year. Maybe I was particularly sensitive to our shortcomings because I finished the productivity book just before leaving for Florida. The process of writing 160+ pages on how to improve productivity is a

humbling experience. The research and preparation that went into developing the working outline and then the actual contents forced me to reevaluate many core values and beliefs that I hold as a therapist. In retrospect, I probably should have reevaluated those values and beliefs sooner, but there was always something else to do. After working with many clinics and many PT staffs during and after the book project, I have to come to some fairly somber conclusions:

- 1.) We really have not gotten serious about being either productive or accountable as a profession. Ouch!
- 2.) It may be hard work to improve productivity, but it certainly isn't rocket science. The biggest obstacle that we have to improving our output is the extra baggage we carry around as bad attitude and an elevated sense of self-importance. Ouch! Ouch!
- 3.) Although we know it is not really accurate, many of us want to believe that increasing our productivity **MUST** decrease our quality. In reality, if that is true, PT must be the only industry where increased output is **NOT** associated with higher quality. Believing the inverse relationship between productivity and quality is convenient, but not accurate. **OUCH! OUCH! OUCH!**

At a time when our services continue to be more in demand, we just can't afford not to get serious about our individual and collective productivity. If we don't take better care of our patients and the responsibility we have to them, somebody else will. I know that Mickey Mouse knows that. I saw it myself throughout the Disney complex. Mickey would probably say that if we miss this opportunity to prove our value to our patients and the health care community, we must be just plain Goofy.

Let me know what you think.

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