



The Practice Manager

The MGMA of Greater St. Louis Newsletter



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The STRUGGLE for a BALANCED Life

As I sit here on a sunny patio in Sedona, Arizona, I am contemplating how to better incorporate balance in my life. I have a patio at home, yet I rarely find myself there. The day-to-day demands of work and family seem to consume any spare time I have. Many articles expound the benefits of down-time, but where are the ones that give the directions on how to arrange your life so that you can experience those wonderful moments where you are actually able to carve out and enjoy spare time?

The numbers – In any given week there are 168 hours. Research shows that a minimum of 7 hours of sleep each night is necessary for good health, so that is 49 hours. Because most of our jobs are not of the 8 to 5 variety, let's say that we work another 50 hours per week. And, with traffic the way it is in St. Louis, let's add in another 10 hours a week for drive and park time. In every piece of reading material we are told that we need to exercise a minimum of 30 minutes per day, so let's subtract another 7 hours for prep and exercise time. After subtracting those hours above, we are left with a total of 52 unscheduled hours. How do these hours get eaten up?

Depending on where we are in the continuum of life,

we may have children or aging parents to care for, homes to maintain, school to attend, secondary jobs that we need to work, volunteer responsibilities, devotion to religions, etc. And with available technology, the line between work and home is becoming more blurred. So out of those 52 hours can we find a way to carve out an hour a day for the down-time necessary to rest our minds and renew our souls?

For me, and I imagine for many of you, it will make a commitment that I have not yet been able to make. Some suggestions that may help:

1. **Make a log to track work and personal obligations for one week.** Mark what is essential and then mark those obligations that give the greatest satisfaction. Can essential obligations be cut or delegated?
2. **Remember that it's OK to respectfully say, No.** For me, guilt is a powerful motivator. It is important to make room in our lives for the activities that are meaningful.
3. **Technology makes it difficult to create a boundary between work and home.** Make a conscious decision to separate work time from personal time. However difficult, when home turn off your cell phone and put away your laptop.
4. **Organize household tasks efficiently** and rethink your cleaning standards. Do what needs to be done and let the rest go. Try to schedule the routine chores on workdays so that your weekends are more relaxing.
5. **Examine your priorities and set boundaries.** Know your limits – physically as well as mentally.

When a friend asks advice on a personal dilemma, my answer tends to be, "What would your answer be if your best friend had this problem?" I think I need to tell my "best friend" that she needs to commit to one hour a day so that she can restore harmony to her life.

— Donna Delbridge, MBA, President





MISSION STATEMENT

MGMA of Greater St. Louis is an organization of professional executives dedicated to providing educational and networking opportunities to medical practice managers regardless of practice size or scope, thereby improving the organizations who employ them.

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Economic Stimulus Package Contains Vital Incentives for Physician Practices

By Kris Pearce, CPA, AMD Health Care Services

Most physician practices are aware of the Economic Stimulus Package that was signed by President Bush in February 2008 because of the tax rebate provided to many households. However, you may not be aware of the business incentives that are vital components in this stimulus package, and could result in tax savings for you in 2008.

The two incentives are Section 179, which allows for additional depreciation to be taken in the year the asset is placed in service, and Bonus Depreciation, an additional 50 percent depreciation available for 2008 *only*.

Section 179 may be beneficial to you and your practice. Some of the specifics include:

- Incentive is available for either new or used assets (if new to you)
- It allows for additional depreciation to be taken in the year the asset is placed in service
- It can be used to the extent there is income and there is no carry-forward or carry-back allowed
- A practice or business can expense up to \$250,000 in purchases in 2008; phase-out begins at \$800,000 and is dollar-for-dollar.
- Practices and businesses with total purchases of \$1,050,000 or greater cannot utilize Section 179
- Levels are expected to drop at the end of 2008 to their previous levels of \$128,000 and \$510,000.

To take advantage of the Bonus Depreciation incentive, you will need to meet the following criteria:

- Equipment must be new
- It must be purchased and placed in service during 2008
- This incentive will expire at the end of 2008
- With the exception of inventory, tangible property qualifies; it must have a life of 20 years or less
- If property is sold in same year it is purchased no bonus depreciation is allowed
- Bonus depreciation will be entered on line 14 of form 4562-FY (if a fiscal year entity)
- May be used with Section 179

There are several points to remember regarding Bonus Depreciation and Section 179. Section 179 is available every year, but because of the Economic Stimulus Package, more practices and businesses will qualify in 2008. The Bonus Depreciation applies to 2008 *only*. Large purchases being considered for early 2009 could possibly be purchased in 2008 to take advantage of the Bonus Depreciation. Finally, it is important to remember that extra depreciation taken in the current year will reduce depreciation expense in future years, which may lead to increased income in those years.

Here are some Planning Points to help you determine how these incentives could benefit you:

- If Section 179 does not exceed \$800,000, it should be used before bonus depreciation.
- Once the \$250,000 is expensed, then begin to use the bonus depreciation on the new assets



- Bonus depreciation is not limited by the amount of assets that are purchased during the current year
- Bonus depreciation is beneficial when more than \$800,000 of assets are purchased during the year
- Bonus depreciation may also be carried forward if large income is expected in future years.
- Certain states allow bonus depreciation while others do not. Missouri is allowing bonus depreciation while Illinois is not allowing the extra depreciation.
- Consider using Section 179 on used equipment first in order to claim the bonus depreciation on the new assets.
- Section 179 can also be utilized to avoid mid-quarter convention on assets.

For more information specific to your practice, contact Kris at kpearce@amdcpa.com or your financial advisor.



THE WINDOW THROUGH WHICH WE LOOK

A young couple moves into a new neighborhood. The next morning while they are eating breakfast, the young woman sees her neighbor hanging the wash outside. "That laundry is not very clean," she said. "She doesn't know how to wash correctly. Perhaps she needs better laundry

soap." Her husband looked on, but remained silent.

Every time her neighbor would hang out her wash to dry, the young woman would make the same comments. About one month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line and she said to her husband: "Look, she has learned how to wash correctly. I wonder who taught her this." The husband answered, "I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows."



And so it is with life. What we see when watching others depends on the purity of the window through which we look. —Submitted by Kathie Huttegger, FACMPE

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NOTICEABLY DIFFERENT

Do your plans for 2009 include taking the exams to be a Certified Medical Practice Executive (CMPE)? If so, being part of our upcoming study group might just do the trick to help you prepare!

Please contact Kathie Huttegger if you are interested in learning more about the study groups forming in early 2009. These study groups can be tailored to meet the needs of the group.

ACMPE Test Dates

Test dates for 2009 have been set. Thanks to LarsonAllen for being a test site again in 2009.

Exam Date	Registration Deadline
February 28, 2009	February 14, 2009
May 16, 2009	May 2, 2009
July 25, 2009	July 11, 2009

Check the website for more information at <http://www.mgma.com/pd/article.aspx?id=976>.

— Kathie Huttegger, FACMPE

THE
COLLEGE
CORNER
NEWS FROM
ACMPE

IMPORTANT
ACMPE
TEST
DATES

Burning Out

By Jennifer Blanchard, HRTTools



High-stress jobs and lack of vacations are causing many employees to burnout early in their careers.

Burnout, according to Wikipedia.org, is a psychological term for the experience of long-term exhaustion and diminished interest, usually in the work context. Burnout is often construed as the result of a period of expending too much effort at work while having too little recovery time.

Job burnout can occur at any stage in a career, but is characterized by excessive and prolonged stress, which usually occurs after many years in the workforce. Since burnout doesn't happen overnight, it's important for employers to recognize early signs in their employees and address them so the employee has a better chance of avoiding burnout.

Signs and Symptoms of Job Burnout

According to helpguide.org, "burnout is a state of emotional and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It can occur when you feel overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands. As the stress continues, you begin to lose the interest or motivation that led you to take on a certain role in the first place. Burnout reduces your productivity and saps your energy, leaving you feeling increasingly hopeless, powerless, cynical and resentful. The unhappiness burnout causes can eventually threaten your job, your relationships and your health." Here are the most common signs and symptoms of burnout:

- Feeling: powerless, hopeless, irritable, frustrated, despair, apathy
- Emotional exhaustion
- Thinking negatively about everything
- Constant boredom
- Loss of motivation
- Loss of interest
- Being detached from yourself, your family, friends, life, etc.
- Isolating yourself from others
- Feeling like you're trapped

Causes of Job Burnout

Burnout can happen in any occupation, but, according to helpguide.org, employees who feel underpaid, underappreciated and overworked, or those who tend to the needs of others all day long, such as service professionals, are more at risk.

Some of the causes of burnout, according to mayoclinic.com and helpguide.org, include:

- Setting unrealistic goals for yourself or having them imposed on you
- Lack of control, such as being unable to influence decisions that affect your job, like the hours you work or the amount of work you have

- Working in a dysfunctional environment, such as having to deal with an office bully, being undermined by colleagues or having a boss that micromanages you
- Doing work that frequently causes you to violate your personal values or beliefs
- Boredom from work that is monotonous, unchallenging and/or that you have no interest in
- Feeling trapped by low pay, being underappreciated or being overworked
- Working in a job that poorly aligns your interests and skills
- Having unclear job expectations or not having the resources you need to get your job done



Remedying Burnout

A recent Yahoo! Hot Jobs survey of 1,100 workers found that 44 percent of workers currently shoulder greater workloads than they did a year ago.

The survey also found that 57 percent of the workers cited burnout as a problem.

One of the best ways to remedy burnout, or to keep from burning out, is to take time off from work. That could mean stopping working all together, taking time off from work or just taking a vacation to rest and recharge. Only the employee is able to

determine what will help them avoid burning out.

However, according to the survey, 51 percent of workers planned to skip summer vacations due to being burdened by a too-heavy workload and fear of a possible recession.

As an employer, it's your job to make sure your employees are giving themselves enough of a break from work. Sometimes, especially in high-stress jobs, evenings and weekends off aren't enough to keep burnout at bay.

Encourage employees to use all of their vacation or paid time off (PTO) each year. They will be a lot happier, a lot more motivated and a lot more productive if they take some time off.

Preventing Burnout in the Future

Helpguide.org says the most effective way to head off job burnout is to quit doing what you're doing and do something else, whether that means changing jobs or changing careers.

But since this isn't always an option, and since you want to retain your employees, there are a few things that can be done to improve an employee's situation and state-of-mind:

- Clarify Their Job Description**—nowadays, it's rare to find someone who only does one job. Most people have various job duties and responsibilities, that's just how it is. But sometimes an employer expects too much from one person. To make sure your employees don't burn out, evaluate their job description, and the

(Continued on page 5)

FTC Delays Enforcement Of “Red Flags” Rule



As a result of advocacy efforts by MGMA and other medical professional organizations, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has announced its decision to delay enforcement of the “red flags” rule until May 1, 2009. Under the original rule, “creditors” would have been required to implement an identity-theft program by November 1, 2008 to detect and respond to patterns, practices or

specific activities known as “red flags” that could indicate identity theft.

MGMA was one of a group of organizations that wrote to the FTC requesting clarification on the application of this rule to medical practices and arguing that physicians should not be subjected to the rule. In delaying enforcement of the rule, the FTC cited confusion and uncertainty in many industries as to whether the rule applied. On October 1, the FTC made its first official statement indicating that it intended to apply the rule to medical practices that qualify as “creditors.” It also announced that it was developing a template for a program that would comply with this rule.

MGMA will continue to work with the FTC to seek clarification and guidance on the application of these rules in the medical practice setting. We will notify members when the FTC releases its program template.

Read the FTC notice of the Red Flag rules enforcement delay at <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2008/10/redflags.shtm>.

Read the original MGMA Washington Connexion article on the FTC “red flags” rule at <http://www.mgma.com/policy/default.aspx?id=22590>.

Read the coalition letter asking for clarification of the application of the FTC “red flags” rule at <http://www.mgma.com/policy/default.aspx?id=22230>.

— Medical Group Management Association, Government Affairs Department. www.mgma.com, email govaff@mgma.com. Washington Connexion, 10/29/08

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Burning Out

(Continued from page 4)

duties they’re currently performing, and see if the workload needs to be reduced or spread out more.

□ **Offer Them a Job Transfer**—although it seems silly to transfer someone who is really good at their job, you could be saving them from burning out. If there are other available positions within your organization they would qualify for, it might be a good idea to sit down and discuss a transfer with them. They may not want to transfer, or they may be totally for it, but either way you’d at least be opening the lines of communication to ensure they aren’t getting burned out in their current position. This will also help you retain an employee in the long-run who may have burned out and ended up leaving.

□ **Give Them Additional Duties**—employees can get burned out from too much work, but they can also get burned out from work that’s too monotonous. So it’s always a good idea to see if you can give them different work—a new project, a new sales territory, a new machine, etc.

□ **When All Else Fails**—if after evaluating an employee’s job and related job performance, and offering up other solutions, burnout still seems inevitable, you may want to offer up as an option a temporary personal leave of absence from work. Anything that will remove them from the situation for a little while. Although it may be difficult to have them gone from work, it will be better for them to recharge and return than burnout and quit. Be careful, however, not to “diagnose” the employee or otherwise attribute to the individual any type of medical condition, as doing so is inappropriate, both professionally and legally.

For more information about recognizing and preventing job burnout, visit mayoclinic.com and helpguide.org.

Disclaimer: This article is for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional advice. If you or your employees are experiencing high-stress or signs and symptoms of burnout, seek the advice of a medical professional.

Quotable Quotes

“... And Then Some”

Character

is shaped by a myriad of factors. Our thoughts form our beliefs. Our beliefs shape our values. Our values impact our behavior (actions). Our behavior forms our habits. Our habits reflect our character.

—By John Maxwell

These three little words are the secret to success. They are the difference between average people and top people in most companies.

The top people always do what is expected ... *and then some.*

They are thoughtful of others; they are considerate and kind ... *and then some.*

They meet their responsibilities fairly and squarely ... *and then some.*

They are good friends and helpful neighbors ... *and then some.*

They can be counted on in an emergency ... *and then some.*

I am thankful for people like this, for they make the world a better place. Their spirit of service is summed up in these three words ... *and then some.* — By Carl Holmes

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MGMA of Greater St. Louis

Newsletter Advertising Application Medical Group Management Association of Greater St. Louis

The newsletter will be published quarterly on the first week of the following months in 2009: **January, April, July and October.**

The rate scale will be as follows:

Size of Ad	1 Issues	2 Issues	4 Issues
Business Card	\$40	\$70	\$130
4 X 4	\$80	\$140	\$260
½ Page	\$125	\$235	\$460
Full Page	\$200	\$380	\$740
* Ad based on 8 ½ x 11 page			

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CMS to Release Specifics on Qualifying For E-prescribing Bonuses

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will soon release details on how eligible medical groups can qualify for bonuses from electronic prescribing in the forthcoming 2009 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule. Practices that meet the e-prescribing criteria can earn a 2 percent bonus of the allowed Part B charges in 2009 and 2010, a 1 percent bonus in 2011 and 2012 and a 0.5 percent bonus in 2013.

Medical practices not e-prescribing will face a 1 percent cut in 2012 and 2013. That cut will grow to 2 percent in 2014 and beyond. Although e-prescribing will no longer be an eligible measure under the Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) after 2008, CMS will permit practices to receive separate bonuses from both the e-prescribing program and the PQRI — to a maximum 4 percent award.

— Medical Group Management Association, Government Affairs Department. www.mgma.com, email govaff@mgma.com. Washington Connexion, 10/29/08

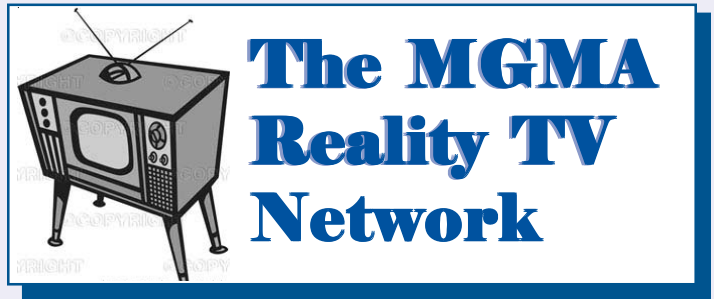


Is your medical group one of the many throughout the nation celebrating National Medical Group Practice Week, **January 19-23, 2009**? The Medical Group Management Association nationally observes this week as a platform for medical group practices nationwide to celebrate their staffs, engage their communities and further public and industry awareness. Join other medical group practices and industry leaders across the nation in celebrating the National Medical Group Practice Week.

The theme for the 2009 National Medical Group Practice Week is **“Caring for Community.”** The sixth anniversary celebration considers the immense impact group practices have both independently and collectively on the communities they serve. Group practices are employers, charity care providers, public health educators and community supporters for generations of patients and their families.

Start planning now!

- ◆ Visit the National Medical Group Practice Week website at <http://www.mgma.com/gpw/>
- ◆ Download the official 2009 Celebration Guide (free) at <http://www.mgma.com/WorkArea/showcontent.aspx?id=14422>.
- ◆ Find free tools and resources to help your group celebrate and promote your practice at <http://www.mgma.com/gpw/default.aspx?id=14480>.
- ◆ Purchase National Medical Group Practice Week logo branded merchandise for staff celebrations and community outreach at <http://www.mgma.com/gpw/default.aspx?id=14482>.
- ◆ Already made plans to celebrate National Medical Group Practice Week? Tell us how you plan to celebrate by emailing us at celebrate@mgma.com.



December 10, 2008

Speaker:

Mary Calcaterra, SSM Health Systems

Topic:

“The Apprentice: Avoid Having to Say “You’re Fired” by recruiting the right person using Behavior Based Interviewing Techniques

December 10, 2008 Meeting

DATE: Wednesday, December 10, 2008

LOCATION: Ces & Judy’s

REGISTRATION (3 Options Only): (1) Register online! Use the website link: www.mgma-sl.org; (2) Call the MGMA office at 314.416.2230 to make a reservation; or (3) Email to administrator@mgma-sl.org. Payment is accepted via cash, check, or credit card in advance or at the door.

TOPIC: Recruiting and Interviewing Techniques

SPEAKER: Mary Calcaterra, SSM Health Systems

TIME: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

PAYMENT: \$25 members; \$35 nonmember guests

Forward your check, payable to “MGMA of Greater St. Louis” along with this registration form **no later than noon on Friday, December 5**, to: MGMA of Greater St. Louis, 4728 Hedgemont Drive, St. Louis, MO 63128.

Member Name: _____

Organization: _____

Nonmember: _____

Organization: _____

Guest Name: _____

Organization: _____

Meeting Cancellation Notice

You must call Beth Quick-Andrews at 314.416.2230 at least 72 hours before the meeting to cancel your reservation without being charged. We now guarantee attendance 72 hours in advance.