
How Much Is Enough?

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Compensation

How to pay workers appropriately

Part 1

Paying workers fairly is one of the most difficult jobs of an employer. What does it mean to fairly compensate yourself and your employees? This will be the focus of the next few months' issues. Throughout these articles I will use several terms, which I will clearly define. The first is "fair pay," which I define as "compensation that fairly reflects the value of the service rendered." "Fair pay" ultimately is achieved when both the employer and the employee feel good about the amount included in the total compensation package. Another way to describe fair pay is simply paying what the market deems reasonable for the job skill set. This is what I call "market pay." For example, your business has a position that requires a certain skill set. The marketplace has established a fair pay for that skill set. Your job is to find a person that fits that skill set and pay them the "fair" or "market pay." For a business, the market pay provides a guideline for how much an employee should be compensated for the skill set needed in the business. For an employee, this is a way to determine the "market value" for the skill set the individual has acquired and possesses. If an employee went out to find a job and received three serious job offers, the average of these three would likely represent the "market value" of the employee. The question the employer must ask in the end is, "am I paying market value for the skill set needed," while the question for the employee is "am I receiving fair market value for my skill set?"

Now, how do an employer and employee determine fair pay and full pay (full pay will be discussed in the May issue)? The first step is to have a standard of measurement. A "job description" must be written for each position in the business, which should include a clear "general description" of the job and a list of "job duties". This is a good exercise for both the employer and employee to determine the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team. The "job description" should include a job title if applicable, the basic reason for hire, and the general duties of the job to capture the essence of the role the employee fulfills for the business. The "job duties" list can be in bullet point fashion listing the key duties of the job providing no more than two sentences to explain each duty. This list should not be more than 5 items long. If it is longer, the job has not been defined clearly enough. Under each "job duty," note the "expected level of performance" the employee is required to achieve to fulfill that duty. The job and skill set can now be taken to the marketplace to determine what the "fair" or "market pay" is for those skills.

In addition to the "job description," a business should establish Standards of Conduct. These standards should be based on the individual practice values. The standards can be used to evaluate the employees and the employer in monthly progress reports, which then can be presented at the monthly business meetings. (Evaluation tools will be discussed in a later issue.)

On the next three pages, I have included an example of a Job Description and an example of Standards of Conduct. Hopefully, these examples can get you started in developing job descriptions for each of the positions

in the business. Involving the employees in writing the job descriptions can promote discussion about the individual roles and responsibilities.

Next month's issue: "Full pay" compensation, a continuation of how to pay workers appropriately.

EXAMPLE

Job Description

Job Title: Front Office Coordinator

General description: Functional roles are 1) to keep the schedule full, 2) to keep patients up-to-date on their treatment plan work, and 3) to manage the flow of people and papers that move through the front office on a daily basis. Relational roles include making patients feel welcome, cared for, personally served and satisfied with their experience when they leave the office.

Job Duties:

1. To schedule all appointments for patients to see the doctor(s) and/or hygienists during the business hours of the practice. This includes staying current on all “re-care” appointments, keeping a short list to fill broken or cancelled appointments, and keeping track of treatment plan work pending to get patient appointments ~~it~~ on the calendar appropriately. The goal is to keep the schedule full for maximum production.

Performance Standard: 1) Schedule: Keep unfilled (broken/cancelled/open) time for each provider at or less than 5%. 2) Re-care: Keep re-care list current, booking month-ahead group by 1st of month. 3) Treatment pending: Keep continuous list of pending work “A” list defined by dr/hyg, no more than 60 days past ideal schedule date.

2. To design and manage the “ideal calendar” for the practice throughout the year.–Formatting the calendar for “ideal daily production” requires knowledge of all production days for each month as well as vacations/holidays, CE days, staff meetings, and other activities that will factor into the calendar of work time

Performance Standard: 1) Annual Plan: Design ideal calendar by December planning meeting, with all production days, other days and all employees schedules included in calendar. 2) Monthly Plan: Keep a monthly plan, working with the financial coordinator, that allows the practice to meet at minimum Break Even budget, and targets the ideal budget.

3. To greet and dismiss patients, making sure files are updated and available for the visit, checking patients out with a visit statement, and scheduling an appointment (hyg or treatment plan work) for the next visit if necessary. This also includes providing patients with the printed copy of the visit and charges, once the payment has been settled with the Financial Coordinator.

Performance Standard: 1) Ask every patient for record update. 2) Pre-appoint 90% of patients with pending next visit. 3) Give every patient printed copy of the visit prior to dismissal.

4. To organize daily chart/file maintenance including pulling and refilling the days charts and records.

Performance Standard: 1) Have all daily charts available for morning meeting. 2) Have all day-end charts re-filed prior to leaving office. 3) Have orderly process of getting charts to and from team during patient flow of day.

5. To maintain punctuality in the daily practice schedule, by keeping patients seated on time, working in emergency patients with the least disruption to the schedule, and dismissing patients efficiently. This involves keeping telephone and personal “chat” time to a minimum.

Performance Standard: 1) Every patient seated within 5 minutes of appointed time. 2) 80% success rate for seeing emergency patients during scheduled emergency time. 3) Keeping each patient contact (greeting, phone call, dismissal) to less than 3 minutes.

6. To deliver a monthly progress report to the team during the monthly business meeting, providing the status of the 5 components of the Job Description based on the job duties assigned. [Report delivery held to 10 min] 1) *Schedule*: Report covers MTD, YTD results of Schedule filled, broken/cancelled, open time, broken out to total the total production time of each provider for the period, and forecast for month ahead. 2) *Ideal Calendar*: MTD, YTD production days planned, completed, and other activities planned, completed. Forecast the next 60 days of work, CE, vacation days. 3) *Patient Flow*: MTD, YTD success in pre-appointing patients, checking out with payment settlement sheet and written instruction, departing questions. 4) *Records Flow*: MTD, YTD score 1-5 on success of managing records flow, pulling, refilling, ease of flow. 5) *Punctuality*: MTD, YTD score 1-5, on success of managing patient flow, timely seating, timely dismissing, ease of flow.

Performance Standard: 1) Deliver full monthly report to team in 10 minutes or less. 2) Document feedback from team on areas of improvement, manage improvement steps (with discussion by key people), and report on improvements or unresolved issues. 2) Annually achieve a score of 90% or better on the results in the 5 areas of job responsibility.

EXAMPLE

Standards of Conduct

1. **Attitude:** To be the first and last impression as providers of high quality care to patients. To place the needs of the patient first and foremost when addressing them as they enter and exit the office, and when answering the phone. Your presence should be cordial, professional, and attentive. You should use appropriate conflict management skills to address patient complaints, never confrontational or defensive, but deferring to the appropriate solution. Unacceptable behavior includes any form of expression that may be deemed negative by the patient, whether verbal or nonverbal. Helping the patient feel well served is the primary desired result.
2. **Team participation:** To be an integral part of the team, doing your job, helping and encouraging others where appropriate. To not undermine team morale or relationships by acting in ways that would offend or injure other workers. Unacceptable behavior includes negative attitude, behavior of superiority, gossip or talk behind another's back. Always look to assist another team member without compromising your own role and responsibilities.
3. **Patient care:** To be focused continuously on the patient, providing them with your utmost level of support, encouragement, attention and follow-through.
4. **Competency:** To be the best you can possibly be at completing your job, technically and behaviorally. Being proficient and efficient at completing tasks and assignments as well as being self-managed in your role.
5. **Contribution to Excellence:** To act in such a way that you have a positive effect on the patients, the team and the organization. To provide the highest level of care and service to each person you encounter. And to do everything you can to enhance the quality and the excellence of the workplace and the work.