

The ReCOREder

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***Editors Note:** Now that the holiday season has come to a close I have looked back over the past couple of weeks and asked myself if I ever really felt the “spirit” of the season. My first answer was no, but then I remembered those precious moments: watching my husband risk life and limb to hang lights on the roof for me, when my two-year-old, more concerned about Rudolph than Santa, insisted we leave hay outside in the yard, but didn’t think that Santa needed any milk and cookies; when we delivered our gifts to the Salvation Army for the family our office adopted for the holidays, So, maybe I was not humming the tune of “Jingle Bells” as I made my way through the hectic season, but I was a little bit warm and fuzzy inside. As always we welcome your comments and suggestions. Please e-mail them to support@corerecovery.biz*

www.corerecovery.biz is Here!



Everyone at Core Recovery is excited to announce our new website! We wanted to design a website that would not only provide our clients with another venue through which to send accounts and

payment information to us, but also a resource through which we could answer questions regarding the collection industry.

Voila! **corerecovery.biz**

You can e-mail us from our website, send direct payment information, and list accounts. Also, with the introduction of our website we have new e-mail addresses. If you would like to e-mail our collection department to ask specific questions on an account you have listed with us, you can send your e-mail to

collect@corerecovery.biz. If you would like to contact our sales and customer service staff, you can send your e-mail to support@corerecovery.biz. Of course, the telephones still work and we always welcome your calls and the opportunity to catch up!

“Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.” – Carl Sandburg, poet

Although predicted to slow in the next decade, US healthcare spending will continue to outpace overall economic growth. A report from the centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) projects that national healthcare spending – which grew by 8.7% to \$1.4 trillion in 2001 – will grow at an average annual rate of 7.3% and slow to 6.7% by 2012.

Golf Balls, Sand, and Beer

A professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly, he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. – They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles, and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. – They agreed that it was.

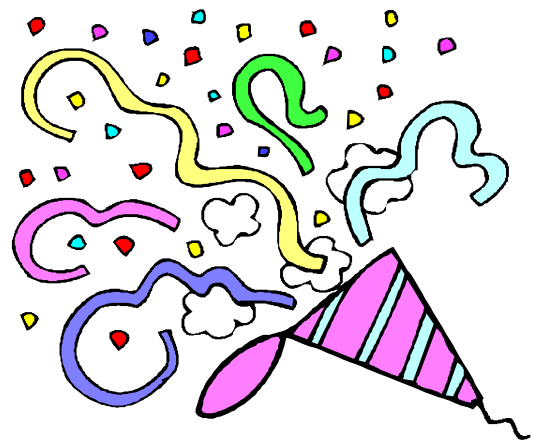
The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. – The students responded, “yes”.

The professor then produced two cans of beer from under the table and poured their entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed. “Now,” said the professor as the laughter subsided, “I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the important things—your family, your children, your health, your friends, your favorite passions, God – things that if everything else was lost, and only they remained, your life would still be full.

“The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else—the small stuff.”

“If you put the sand into the jar first,” he continued, “there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are really important to you.”

“Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical check-ups. Take your partner out to dinner. Play another 18. There will always be time to clean the house and fix the disposal. Take care of the golf balls first, the things that really matter. – Set your priorities. – The rest is just sand.” One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the beer represented. The professor smiled. “I’m glad you asked,” he said. “It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, -- there’s always room for a couple of beers.”



**Happy New Year
from all of us at**

Set New Goals in the New Year

Bring in more cash in 2004!

Think about your personal New Year’s resolutions for last year. Perhaps you resolved to exercise more, eat less, land a promotion, or get better pay. Did any of it happen? If you are like most people—probably not. We all make resolutions in the New Year, but all too often, they are forgotten by Spring. This is usually because we are not committed to our goals.

Therein lies the problem.

Every collector thinks it is a good idea to improve collection totals. Just thinking about improved collection totals may help you achieve them, but you will have a better chance of success if you design a plan that will lead you to improved collections. What you need is a commitment along with a solid goal or goals. To be successful, you will need to set some goals and strive to take responsibility for the results. The following five steps are designed to help you hit your collection goals in 2004:

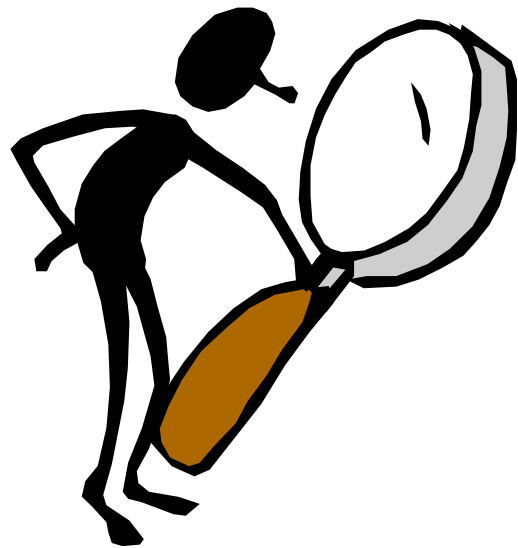
1. *Identify your collection goals.* Be Specific, measure collection goals in terms of dollars and percentages.
2. *Determine the benefits you will derive by reaching your goal.* It may be a promotion, more money, or a sense of pride in doing your job.
3. *Decide which obstacles need to be overcome in order to reach your collection goals.* Do you have a time/priority problem? System problems? Training needs?
4. *Ask whether you and your employees have the skills you need to reach your goals.* If not, what will it take to get up to speed?
5. *Create a plan of action to reach your collection goal.* Develop a systematic plan with due dates that will keep you on track and help you reach the collection goal.

You can choose goals for your staff and department, but unless the goals are achievable, they won't mean much – and they won't be met. Ask yourself these questions for each goal that you set:

1. *Is the goal measurable?* Is it a goal that can be measured, such as in dollar totals or percentages?

2. *Is the goal specific?*
3. *Is the goal results-centered?*
4. *Is the goal realistic and attainable?*
5. *Did you set a deadline?*

You probably can't lose 10 pounds in a week and stay healthy. Goal setting works the same way—you must have reasonable expectations, all you will do is create job stress and anxiety, which will keep you from performing well. No one will take an unrealistic goal seriously. A healthy and practical attitude is the key for achieving collection goals



Collecting During an Insurance Investigation

What are your obligations?

Case in point: A patient has an outstanding balance of \$1,000. The patient's insurance company has been pending the claim for 5 months. Can you collect payment from the patient, even though the company is still investigating?

“Since insurance companies these days seem to be increasingly in the business of collecting premiums and denying claims, we

Remember that the six most expensive words in business are: “We’ve always done it that way.”

--Catherine DeVrye, business writer

In medieval Italy, when a businessman did not pay his debts, it was the practice to destroy his trading bench. From the Italian word for broken bench, “banca rotta,” comes the term for bankruptcy.

see a greater number of such cases, despite the fact that this state has both a fair claims settlement and a prompt payment statute on the books,” says collections specialist Attorney Frederick W. Burr of Burr & Reid, LLP, in Vestal, New York. “Therefore, the short answer would seem to be yes, you can collect from a patient in this situation, absent any participation agreement between the provider and the carrier,” he adds.

Know Your Contracts

Health law attorney Melissa Lomison of AHC Inc., Manassas, Virginia, expands on what Burr says, “If the payer is a health maintenance organization (HMO), the provider cannot pursue the patient for monies owed by the insurer. So, if the services aren’t covered by the policy for whatever reason, the money is not technically ‘owed’ by the insurer and the patient could be pursued,” she says. However, if the claim is still pending, there has been no determination by the insurer that they are not liable for the claim, then the provider would not be able to pursue payment from the patient until the claim was no longer pending.

If the payer is not an HMO, but is contracted with the provider, Lomison recommends that the provider review the contract before pursuing the patient. “Contracts often have ‘hold harmless’ provisions that state that the patient cannot be pursued for claims that are the responsibility of the insurer,” she says. The catch is that health care providers usually accept the responsibility of properly submitting claims to an insurance company on behalf of the patient after services have been provided. In accepting this duty, a provider must take all reasonable steps necessary to perform it. This includes submitting the patient’s claim in conformance with that particular insurer’s policies and procedures.

If the provider improperly submits a claim

to an insurance company or doesn’t provide the requisite information, the provider may have breached the duty of properly submitting the in patient’s claims. When viewed in this way, aggressively pursuing a patient for collection purposes would be imprudent and possibly in violation of the “good faith “ requirements of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA). Therefore, it is necessary for a provider to ensure it has properly submitted the claim before aggressively pursuing collection from a patient.

Hard Facts

“If the payer is not an HMO and is not contracted with the provider, I don’t believe there is anything to prevent the provider from pursuing the patient for the claim.,” Lomison says.

Six Tips to Collect at The Time of Service

1. Start off by saying, “The charge is X dollars. Would like like to pay by cash, check, or credit card?”
2. Sell the patient on the importance of paying today. It is the best collection chance you have.
3. Always ask for the balance in full. Don’t ask how much the patient can pay.
4. If the patient cannot pay today, obtain a date when the account will be paid in full. Try not to go beyond 30 days.
5. Develop urgency. Explain politely that your facility does not carry accounts.
6. There are always exceptions to the rule; however, weigh those exceptions carefully.

Source: *Collecting During an Insurance Investigation*, Health Care Collector Nov. 2003; *Set New Goals in the New Year*, Health Care Collector Jan 2003; *Tips*; Health Care Collector, Feb 2003; www.acainternational.org

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