

Setting the Tone in Your Practice

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Every practice has a tone that can only be appreciated by an outsider who comes in and views the practice with somewhat of an “out of body experience”. The tone of the office affects the means by which you hire people. A practice that has a very formal tone and culture cannot engage individuals who are too casual or there will be a clash of the titans.

A practice that is designed for medical and surgical competencies can engage individuals with less of an interest for that same objective. A serious office such as a practice that is committed to excellence within the profession cannot have sloppy, casual individuals in that practice. Casualness is appropriate in certain businesses that are geared towards a casual atmosphere. For example, Southwest Airlines celebrates its casualness and sloppiness. Individuals are very friendly; they joke with passengers but they have to function in a rather unstructured environment where seat assignments are passed out at the last nano second based on groupings.

A serious practice generally makes more money than a casual practice. Serious practices perform a different quality of medicine and surgery. Casual practices are better attuned to wellness programs that do not necessarily require complete competency in multi-faceted areas.

Ask yourself and look to your practice to determine if your practice is serious or casual. Are the members in your practice geared to practice their profession with intensity or is there more of a Southwest Airlines attitude?

After you ask those **prices???** then set your fees. For example, if you are a Continental Airlines passenger and accustomed to first class, you may find the casualness and lack of amenities in Southwest Airlines to be less than desirable. Granted, you will pay more for your seat. Also, expect a great meal from a friendly group of individuals who maintain a profession-like air of service from Continental Airlines. In Southwest Airlines, expect to see the staff greeting you in shorts and casual attire, cracking jokes, slapping you on the back, and herding you in as cattle. For this reason, expect to pay more for a Continental flight than a Southwest flight. Pattern the same template for your own practice. If you want a casual, less than serious, less than quality practice group, maintain that air so you can complete the conceit. On the other hand, if you are serious doctors performing life-saving activities on a daily basis, maintain an air of professionalism and serious tone.

We just came about this theory ourselves. I was discussing this very point with my colleague, Shauna L. Jackson. Ms. Jackson and I were discussing how the tone of our office differs from other businesses in that we are a very serious office. I remarked that this would affect our decisions in hiring and our insistence that we make full disclosure to any candidate of how serious our office is. Individuals who do not fit that pattern should be counseled out. Sometimes, individuals come to a practice, maintain a level of seriousness but, in time, let down their guard to the point that they lose that edge that is needed for the practice. In those instances, those individuals should seek alternative opportunities, possibly at Southwest Airlines.

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