



## Effectively Managing Remote Staff

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**STROUDWATER**  
*Revenue Cycle Solutions*

# Is Remote Staff Feasible?

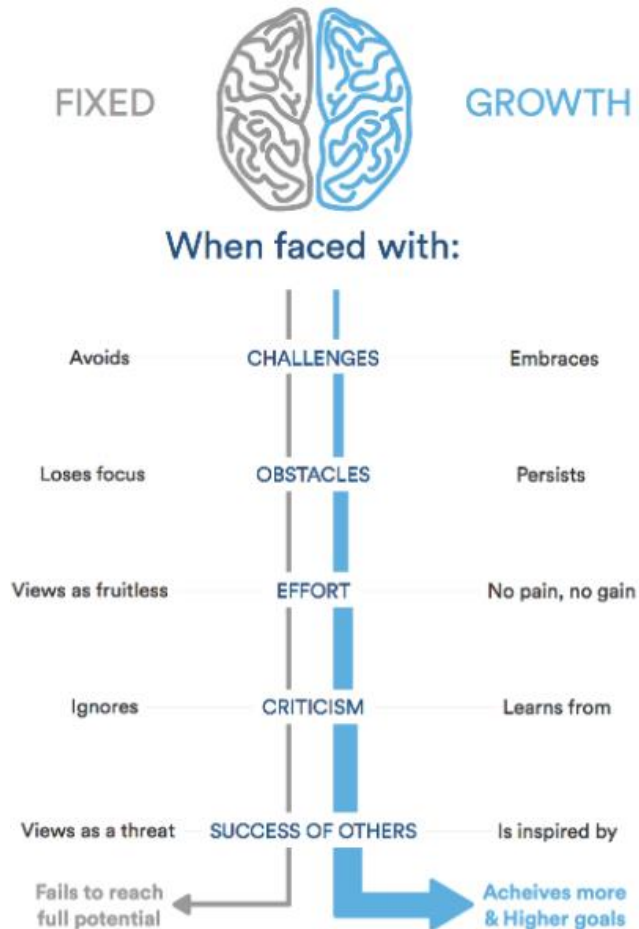
- Access to data
  - Entire record paper based
  - Entire record on-line
  - Hybrid
- Internet connectivity
- On site
- Remote worker site
- Work queue assignment and organization

# Hiring Remote Staff

- Evaluate different skills
  - Self discipline
  - Ability to work independently
  - Communication skills, style
  - Organizational, prioritization skills
  - Time management skills
  - Performance
  - Knowledge
  - Learning style

# Personality

## Skills



## Questions

- What is the most ambitious project you have ever pursued?
- Describe a time when you took a risk?
  - What was the outcome?
  - What did you learn?
- Describe a time when you felt a colleague was disrespectful or inappropriate?
- What would you feel if a coworker became your boss?

# Interview Process

- Telephone interview
  - Knowledge and skills
  - Communication
- Written assignment
  - Ability to craft emails
  - Reports
  - Sample audit if applicable
- Video interview
  - Include team members in remote locations

# Interview Questions

## Questions

- What is your remote work experience?
- What tools have you used in the past?
  - Software required for position
  - Time tracking software
  - Task management applications
  - Calendars

## Skills

- Success independently
- Comfort with technology
- Self discipline
- Time management

# Interview Questions, contd.

## Questions

- How do you stay focused?
- How do you stay motivated and on task without supervision?
- What would you do if you had an urgent question and your team was offline?
- What medium would you choose to have a difficult conversation with a colleague and why? (e.g. video call, email, instant message)
- Do you check your emails after work?
- How do you make sure you switch off from work?

## Skills

- Self discipline
- Organization, prioritization
- Communication, critical thinking, problem solving
- Team spirit
- Work-life balance

# Interview Process

- Create scenarios
  - Assess critical thinking skills
  - Objectivity
  - Prioritization
  - Research skills
  - Ability to overcome challenges
- What would you do if your system went down and you had a critical deadline?
- What would you do if you disagreed with the direction/findings of a group project?
- What would you do if you found out colleagues in another location were talking about you behind your back?



# Interview Questions

- Describe your home office
  - Internet connectivity
  - Noise level
  - Privacy
  - Security
- What measures do you take to secure files?
  - Digital
  - Paper

# Interview Questions, contd.

- How do you research, trouble shoot on your own?
- How do you keep current with healthcare news?
- What professional organizations do you belong to, or participate in?

# Establish Office Policies

- Day-care required for remote staff
- Office hours
  - For workers time zone
  - For home office time zone
- Earned time/PTO calculation
- Quality and production standards

# Remote Employees' Top Complaints About Leaders

## Employee

- Not recognizing achievements – 63%
- Taking credits for others work or ideas – 57%
- Not giving clear directions – 57%
- Not having time – 52%
- Not offering constructive criticism – 39%

## Manager Focus

- Recognition
- Inclusion
- Clear directions
  - Multiple methods
- Feedback

# Remote Employees' Top Complaints About Leaders, contd.

## **Employee**

- Refusing to talk to subordinates – 51%
- Not knowing employees names – 36%
- Refusing to talk to people (on the phone/in person) – 34%
- Not asking about life outside of work – 23%

## **Manager Focus**

- Focus
- Organization
- Meaningful interaction
- Multitasking
- Interest

# Prepare Yourself

- Engage and connect
- Prepare orientation materials geared toward remote staff
- Provide opportunities to engage and contribute in multiple ways
- Arrange scheduled “check-ins” and stay on schedule
- Do not multi-task
- Prepare for different and varied communication styles
  - Visual
  - List-makers
  - One-word responders

# Create Onboarding Process

- Orientation geared to remote staff
  - Company
  - Values
  - HIPAA
  - Team
    - Dynamics
    - Culture
    - Responsibilities
  - Software
  - Other
- If possible, face to face
- Establish regular one-on-one face to face schedule if possible, even if semi-annually

# Communication

- Remote should not be out of sight, out of mind
- Touch base regularly
- Establish communication schedule
  - Team meetings - set agenda
  - One on one - two way communication
- Coaching sessions
  - Scheduled
  - Informal
- Assign alternate contact, mentor



# Relationships

- Get to know remote staff on a personal level
- Make an effort to stay connected
- Touch base on non work issues
  - Holidays
  - Anniversaries
  - “Water cooler talk”
- Create inclusive scenarios
- Assign a local mentor or contact

# Communication

- Methods and style
- Support understanding
  - Values
  - Mission
  - Outcomes
  - Roles and responsibilities

# Communication, contd.

- Utilize technology
  - IM
  - Email – especially group email
  - Text – urgent matters
  - Phone calls
  - Shared calendars
  - Video conferences
- Establish communication expectations
  - Communication style for situations
  - Text –priority
  - IM – quick response
  - Email – informational or not urgent
- Be aware of time zones

# Communication, contd.

- Provide access
- Respond as quickly as possible
  - Set expectations for return communication to employee, and from employee
- Be cognizant of language
  - Us vs. them
- Recognize and praise remote staff in group meetings equally
- Ensure all team members are aware of common goals
- Create collaboration

# Employee Growth

- Focus on goals, not tasks
  - Monthly
  - Quarterly
  - Annually
- Routine check-in to assess progress
- Continue to assess independent progress

# Remote Employees

- Establish expectations
  - Responsibilities
  - Quality
  - Production
  - Flexibility
  - Communication

# Expectations

## Production

- Utilize time tracking tool
- Set clear production goals for all staff
- Remote can be higher expectation if work-at-home is privilege
  - Accounts/day
  - Claims /day
  - Quality
  - Queue management

## Evaluate

- What is current production?
  - Inpatient
  - Outpatient – Ancillary
  - Observation
  - Surgery
  - Emergency Department
- What are non-production duties?

# Identify Non-Production Duties: Coding

- Interaction with
  - Business Office
  - Physicians
  - Case Management/UR
  - Abstracting
- Abstracting
  - Occurrence data
  - Core measures
  - OR
    - Blood loss, anesthesia type
- Deficiencies
- Appeals
- Incomplete record management
- Audit requests
- Follow-up



# Expectations

- Quality
  - Coders remote and office based
    - Internal or external audit
      - Internal – blinded
    - Number of accounts
    - Clearly established metrics
    - Clearly established scoring mechanism

# Evaluate Consistently

## **Expectation**

- Standard guidelines
- Standard reports
- Consistent project assignment
- Audit templates
- Report-outs

## **Measure - Coder**

- Production
- Deficiency analysis
- Queries
- Release of information
- Filing

## **Production**

- Claims processed per day
- Appeals
- Work queue management
- Aging management

## **Evaluation**

- With what systems are you familiar?
- Which payors present the largest challenge?
- Prioritize an average work day

# Avoid Micromanaging

- Delegate
- Do not hover
- Focus on the goal – not the tiny details
- Do not take back incomplete projects, or “join the team”
- Trust the team, or individual

# Vendor Management



# Evaluate Current State

- Coding
  - Production
  - Quality
- Billing
  - Aging
  - Accounts billed daily
  - Held Accounts
  - Cost to collect
  - Net collection rate
- Improvement objective

# Vendor Pricing

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- Length of contract
- Early out contingency
- Monthly fee
- Per account
- Percent collected
- Communicate expectations internally

# Vendor Pricing, contd.

- Understand pricing model
  - Specify what is included
    - Initial coding, per account, per type of service
    - Review
      - Coder error
      - Clearinghouse rejection
      - Appeal
    - Willingness to adapt to facility contracts
    - Reporting
  - Waived fees or reductions for non adherence
    - TAT
    - Quality
    - Response



# Technology

- What systems are provided by vendor
  - Cost savings/incurred for facility technology
- System interfaces
- Regulatory and insurance updates

# Communication and Staffing

- Contact staff
- Availability
- Staffing in country or abroad
  - Timing
  - Language skills
  - Written/spoken
  - Knowledge of local and national regulations
- Certifications

# Managing Outsource Vendors

- On-line Security
  - Firewalls
  - Authentication for system access
    - User name
    - Password complexity
    - Password update schedule
  - Encryption
- Physical Security
  - Access to building(s) where data is processed
    - Key pass security
    - Video cameras
    - Alarm systems
    - Visitor policies

# Fees and Collection

- How is money transferred
  - Collection to lock box
  - Checks
  - Direct deposit
- How often

# Managing Outsource Vendors

- HIPAA
  - Work in hospital system vs. transfer records
  - Contractual protection
  - Safeguard all PHI
  - Will not store PHI in any form
  - Will not use for purposes other than scope of engagement

# Due Diligence

- Vendor policies and procedures
  - Employee confidentiality requirements
  - HIPAA
    - PHI storage
    - Transmission/ encryption
    - Acceptable spyware, malware and virus protections
    - Remote staff – is this acceptable
      - Off shore?
      - Security of transmission
      - Remote workstations and workspace
  - Quality
    - Pass coding test provided by facility
- Independent Audits
  - Production
  - Quality

# Due Diligence, contd.

- Breach response – reporting, notification
- Financial stability
  - Client retention
  - Long term assurance
- Standards
  - Deadlines, TAT
  - Quality levels per type of service
- Verify all information
- Follow facility applicable Policies and Procedures

# Track Outsourced Vendor

- Reports
  - Vendor reports
  - Internal reports
- Meetings
  - Who controls meeting schedule
  - Conference calls
  - Face to face
  - Frequency



# Summary

- Choose remote staff and vendors methodically
  - Standards
  - Research
  - Policies and Procedures
- Track consistently
- Assess internal and external expectations and achievements
- Follow up continuously

# Questions?

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# Thank You

- Stroudwater Revenue Cycle Solutions was established to help our clients navigate through uncertain times and financial stress. Increased denials, expanding regulatory guidelines and billing complexities have combined to challenge the financial footing of all providers.
- Our goal is to provide resources, advice and solutions that make sense and allow you to take action.
- We focus on foundational aspects which contribute to consistent gross revenue, facilitate representative net reimbursement and mitigate compliance concerns. Stroudwater Revenue Cycle Solutions helps our clients to build processes which ensure ownership and accountability within your revenue cycle while exceeding customer demands.
- **Contact us to see how we can help.**

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