

Course Outline for COPE accreditation

Venue: Vision Expo East (April 2022), Vision Expo West (September 2022)

Title: Private Practice Horror Stories

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Description (35 words or less): from employee theft and con artists to bad contracts and a contentious partner buy-out. Expensive mistakes and how to avoid them.

Objective: Private practice owners must navigate various complex fields beyond our medical expertise: legal, human resources, financial, management, etc. Protect yourself and your practice from administrative nightmares. Develop an attitude of resilience when challenges arise.

Course Category: Practice Management

Course Format: Live CE

Hours: 1

Disclosure of financial/proprietary interests: Dr. Julie Helmus has no relevant financial relationships to disclose. The content and format of this course is presented without commercial bias and does not claim superiority of any commercial product or service.

OPENING SCENE:

- I'm pacing outside the office, on the phone with a consultant across the country. He's salivating at the chance to broker the sale of my 33 year-old, multi-doc, large practice in the heart of downtown. I start venting and the stories pour out...

WHY ME?

- Who I Am: young (millennial), transparent, second-gen OD.
- Who I Am Not: lawyer, CPA, MBA, HR specialist.

ANALOGY

- Practice ownership can be compared to:
 - Marriage
 - Parenthood
 - Home ownership
- All involve: investment, intimacy, suffering, gambles, headaches, heartaches, strategy, luck, external support, grit and perseverance.
- All are unpredictable and dynamic, but hopefully stimulating and rewarding.
- All are ripe with lessons. Transferable skills!
- Attitude:
 - Bring it.
 - Each new hurdle was a new experience to add to my collection
 - Walk through fire and emerge a new version
 - Rearrange goals: no longer to get more done, but rather have less to do
- Is it worth it? The ongoing question. Not for everyone. I haven't sold yet!

TIME FRAME

- How long to crawl out of crisis mode?
- More than "two seasons" as predicted by a well-known industry consultant
- Reinvent/rebuild/stabilize requires: 9 months – 2 years
- Flourish in 3 years

OUR MEDICAL ROOTS

- "You can't know what abnormal is unless you know what normal is"
- Prevention vs treatment = proactive vs reactive

PRIVATE PRACTICE CASE STUDIES

1. Bad Contract:
 1. Contentious OD Partner Divorce
 1. S-Corp
 2. Three partners: 16.67%, 33%, 50%
 3. Options: endure vs dissolve vs buy out
 4. My legal fees: \$26,000, Mom's legal fees: \$26,000
 5. Time to close: 10 weeks
 6. Have an escape clause
2. Bad Structure:
 1. Previously: no staff org chart, no room for growth, no investment or training of staff
3. Bad Communication
 1. No meetings or one-on-ones
 2. Over-sharing
4. Unrealistic Expectations:
 1. Hiring an office manager (PH) and hoping she would be the solution to all problems. Dumping work load on her and retreating to the lane.
5. Bad Hires:
 1. PH: late to interview
 2. C: failed to check references
 3. TS: lasted 2 days, left b/c she didn't realize health insurance wasn't provided
 4. SP: two new foster babies
 5. SN: employee benefits theft
 6. TS: con artist, fake "disability"
 7. MR: toxic attitude, intimidating new employees
 8. AA: princess attitude, ungrateful, "what's in it for me," young, impatient, immediate gratification.
 9. AN: not listening to what she wants, overwhelming her in new role
 10. FB: yelling at her re triage of possible weekend retinal detachment
6. Postponing Difficult Conversations:
 1. SW delayed dismissal
 2. Associate OD: partnership is off the table
7. Bad Decisions:
 1. PH: paying out vacation before accrued
 2. No frame adjustments/repairs for outside purchases
 3. MR dismissal post COVID
8. Bad Policies:
 1. Staff materials
9. Bad Infrastructure:
 1. Internet outages
 2. HIPAA-compliance
 3. December office burglary

10. Fake Vendors:

1. Frame company from LA

11. Bad Reviews:

1. Responding to negative patient reviews on Yelp, Google, Facebook etc
2. Reviews planted by competitors and reviews egged on by competitor
3. HIPAA considerations

12. Bad Luck:

1. Patient who tripped in new bifocals

13. Board Complaints:

1. YPM: exam too fast, screaming at staff
2. LR: 48 yr -6.00 myope, 5 no charge MF CL follow-ups

14. No Contact:

1. Independent Contactor MH, medical biller, let go, small claims court over severance
2. Judge ruled in my favor, no "meeting of the minds"

CLOSING SCENE:

1. I am now a CEO OD:

- a. 100% owner!
- b. Team of advisors: legal, HR, CPA, business consultants, etc.
- c. Better pay, benefits, holidays, schedules, culture for staff:
 - i. 9 paid holidays, 6 paid sick days, 80-120 hours PTO, matching 401k, QSHERA
 - ii. No weekend hours. Alternative work week schedules
 - iii. Finely tuned recruiting, interviewing, onboarding systems
 - iv. Word-of-mouth, career page on website, staff referral incentives
 - v. Staff lounge w/ massage chair, TV, puzzle table, etc.
 - vi. Ongoing and continuous communication, meetings and trainings
 - vii. Abundance of qualified candidates!
- d. Roster: 28 Employees
 - i. 4 Associates
 - ii. 7 Teams (Optical, Front Desk, Clinical Techs, Billing, Operations, CLs, Doctors)
 - iii. 6 Team Leads form the Leadership Team
- e. Capacity: 210 comp exams/week across a 5-day work week
- f. Equipment upgrades and additions
- g. Clinic: Expanded and remodeled
- h. 6-month sabbatical from patient care; see patients when I feel like it
- i. Hit 3.1 million gross
- j. Team set aggressive goals for 2022