BUSINESS OF ANESTHESIA

Many Aspects to Consider When Owning an Anesthesia Practice

For many people, the idea of starting a company and being your own boss is a dream come true. And, while some businesses can be created with little more than a spark of inspiration and some office space, CRNAs who want to start their own anesthesia practice will have to perform slightly more legwork. Even if a CRNA believes that he/she has the drive to run an independent practice, he/she must perform significant research before filling out the first legal document. They have to make sure there is a market in their area that can support a practice and see if any competitors exist. They have to secure funding for the practice. They must decide what kind of model to base their practice on—whether it’s autonomous or affiliated with a group.

Robert Gauvin, CRNA, MS, is president of Anesthesia PROfessionals, Inc., in Dartmouth, Mass., a full-service anesthesia group practice founded in 1991 by Rita LeBlanc, CRNA, ARNP, with accounts and clients across the country. The company provides a full range of anesthesia services to hospitals, surgical centers, ophthalmic centers, endoscopy centers, and office practices.

Jannine Deraney, CRNA, is one of the founders and a senior partner at Sweet Dreams Nurse Anesthesia, in Alpharetta, Ga., an all-CRNA firm that provides a wide range of anesthesia services to hospitals, ambulatory centers, and office-based practices. Many of its client relationships include handling logistics, credentialing the best-suited local clinicians, increasing revenue by improving exposure and potential for growth, and handling billing services.

Gauvin and Deraney answered a few questions about their experiences running anesthesia practices.

Q: What are some of the biggest considerations of any business that provides anesthesia?

Gauvin: Does the reimbursement for the services you deliver cover your expenses? Are you providing the value-added services necessary to maintain your contract?

Deraney: Some of the biggest considerations of any business that provides anesthesia are the ability to maintain consistent, quality anesthesia coverage and the ability to generate positive cash flow at a facility.

Our greatest asset is the quality of CRNAs in our group. We know the key to success is directly related to the excellent care that we give with our culture of caring, kindness, determination, flexibility, and so many other attributes that truly define us.

The ability to make a difference is one of the best ways to attract great CRNAs. Another major component is maintaining competitive pay rates and not limiting the income generating potential of a CRNA.

Q: What are some factors that CRNAs might not be aware of when owning a business?

Gauvin: In a nutshell, everything not clinically related to providing anesthesia services. Some of these aspects include: accounting, scheduling, recruiting, credentialing, legal services, billing, malpractice insurance, benefit packages, taxes, advertising, IT equipment.

Deraney: There are several factors that a CRNA might not be aware when owning a business.

Initial sacrifice. It may take some time before you generate a profit. You have to practice a lot of patience and be able to sustain your income until that time.

You have to do whatever it takes to make it successful and protect it. This may mean having tough conversations if there are breaks in integrity of quality of business. A business owner must have the courage to call people to account for the integrity of their work and honoring their word.

You may get paid last. As an owner of a business, you have a fiduciary responsibility to fulfill contractual obligations to others. If the cash flow goes down, you may go without pay and then be the last one to get paid.

Everyone is greatly interconnected with one another. With ownership comes great responsibility. As one of the owners, we use the power of consultation with a board of directors on major decisions. We must carefully make decisions, as they can have a profound impact on other people’s lives and the people who depend on them.

Q: What is the most rewarding aspect to owning your own anesthesia company?

Gauvin: It’s knowing that all your hard work and the countless hours that you put in make a difference to the many folks whose livelihood depends on you. It is very hard to describe this, but it is also the scariest part of owning your own business as well.
Deraney: It is rewarding knowing that we are expanding a business in which nurse anesthetists are free to practice their excellence. We work to dismantle any perception that nurse anesthetists are inferior. We work to take a stand of courage that we are all here to give the best of ourselves. I love what I do.

Q: What’s the biggest challenge?

Gauvin: Hands down, human resource management!

Deraney: Our business has grown very quickly over the past six years, and our biggest challenge is keeping up with all the moving parts. There are so many aspects to keep the business thriving, from practicing a high level of compliance to navigating issues with reimbursement.

Resources

Several resources exist for CRNAs who want to know more about owning their own business. The AANA sponsors a Business of Anesthesia Conference where experts intimately familiar with running anesthesia practices share tips and give advice. Visit the AANA Meetings page for more information. The AANA Insurance Services homepage provides helpful information about what kind of malpractice insurance is needed by a company.