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Monday Morning Wisdom

Monday
February 9th, 2009

Monday Morning Wisdom is published every Monday on a different business topic that directly impacts care providing and care support organizations including case managers, community mental health agencies, home care providers, group living operators, medical equipment suppliers, hospitals and others.

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Special Edition:

"Having the Wrong View of a Consultant's Role Leads to Damaged Relationships"

For subscribers to American Care News, here is this week's edition of Monday Morning Wisdom. This bonus edition is being made available to subscribers to American Care News, the membership of Michigan Community Living, (www.michigancommunityliving.com) and others with a link to the work of small scale assisted living/group home providers in America. It will also be posted at: www.americancarenews.com.

Our focus this week: **The need to have the proper view of a consultant's role and services.**

I have worked with numerous companies over the past 15 years in a variety of capacities. I have assisted nursing homes to manage disputes with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. I have assisted community based group living programs to develop a marketable product that shines. I have assisted home care companies to prepare for Medicare certification survey and others to develop 24-hour in-home care marketing strategies. I have helped aspiring adult day care entrepreneurs to develop medical model programs in order to broaden their base of service. I have helped respite programs establish themselves in their communities.

And yes I have extended myself and my company in ways others with my experience will not, including visiting prospective group living locations to help those with limited investment capital to get off to a good start. I suppose I felt it was a way to give back for the success I have enjoyed.

Regardless of the joys, it is always disappointing to encounter people - and in 2009 it still happens - who have the wrong view of a consultant's role or who dismiss the language of agreements and create a separate role in their own minds that suits their own purpose.

My friend Joel Murray of Wetumpka, Alabama assists for profit hospital companies in the development and acquisition of new hospitals, including specialty hospitals. With some projects he starts from the time the architectural plans are drawn up until the first patient is served.

His job is to help the company to make sure the hospital is properly designed from an architectural perspective and built in strict accordance with federal and state mandates. He also ensures the hospital is prepared to bill for their services the day the doors open. He specializes in establishing cardiac catheterization labs and also opines on what equipment many of the hospital departments need. He is paid well and has been a millionaire for years.

A wonderful part of his company is that his clients understand clearly that his job is to put them on the road to efficient operation, not to recruit their patients and take over the leadership of the institution. He ensures his clients understand his role and I do the same.

This is especially important when assisting someone to develop a group living program. My job is to help a client **establish a workable business model** that provides them with a marketable product that takes into consideration their location, their personal background and the likelihood that they may be able to rely upon public funds. My job extends to ensuring they have positioned themselves to properly manage risks through effective personnel policies and ensuring the proper capitalization required to have all required insurances in place.



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Add to that our ability to train direct care workers and care delivering administrators and assisting in the development of a corporate identity as showcased to the left as we have a full-time graphic designer on staff. In matters of regulatory compliance my office is most often asked to help a client swim the waters of technical writing requirements associated with some licensing, which may just involve the professional compilation of certain programmatic materials to ensure they are presented to the applicable licensing body in a concise, readable and organized manner. We design and educate on what we believe is the best framework for success, though we can never guarantee it.

We do not create or sell a business opportunity. We cannot influence regulatory processes or personnel. We do not step in to run a client's business for them. Our affiliate, Michigan Community Living, Inc. (www.michigancommunityliving.com) does maintain good relationships with various segments of the long-term care community and refers residents from skilled nursing centers and other venues to qualified homes. However, even this benefit extends only to the best-managed and well-developed group living programs out there.

One major difference in our referral model is that we are not paid a percentage of what a resident pays the home who receives this new resident. Michigan Community Living, Inc. members pay an annual \$150.00 membership fee only and from this fee alone members qualify for our help placing residents in short-term facilities in the event of disasters, resident referrals and prominent posting in the on-line database, www.michigancommunityliving.com. We never send a referral to 50 homes as some referral agencies do. This overwhelms families and providers alike.



We ask specific questions of families and discharge planners who phone us including geographic preferences of families and prospective residents. Once we have all of this we send an e-mail to homes that qualify, never more than 10. At this point it is time for the leadership of the group living program to sell their program to the family or prospective resident and hopefully make a lasting impression and connection. As simplistic as this process is, some still hold us responsible if the resident chooses another home. How unfair such a conclusion is when our role was to only make a referral.

When it comes to other areas of technical help – no matter how thorough our discussion - some still sit in front of my staff and I and virtually ask us to guarantee their business success. It makes me sad because that is not what America was built on. Real entrepreneurship starts with one's ability and willingness to jump in and make their own program or service work as a result of their following the model I help them to develop. They are prepared to take educated risks and work diligently toward success. They never look to someone else to ensure it happens.



To think of counting on someone else for your success is troubling and could be an indicator that someone has the wrong view of a consultant's role and the wrong approach to entrepreneurship. Such an improper view will lead to disappointment.

World famous author and real estate mogul Robert Kiyosaki said it best when speaking on Larry King Live recently regarding certain kinds of federal bailout programs for industry. His remarks, "there are legitimate situations when the government must step in to benefit the economy as a whole; but I did not serve in Vietnam so I could rely upon the government, I learned the value of relying upon myself." For some this thought process is at the heart of the real entrepreneur.

Small businesses in America, operated by some of the most driven people alive, create tons of jobs and supply the money that bailouts are made of. Can you be one of those contributors long-term if you are reliant on someone else for your operational success?



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Consultants have so much to give – in a variety of areas - and are an important staple of business success. However, if you have the wrong view of what we have to offer, your relationship with us will die on the vine; for your good and our own.

Thanks for playing along. I look forward to speaking with you next week.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Bruce M. Keller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Subjects Coming in February and March.....

1. Assisted Living Associations Desperately Need to Modify Their Business Models to Help Their Membership Succeed as Group Living Providers
2. Home Care Associations Must Do More to Help Members Grow
3. Abuse in Adult Foster Care Comes in Many Forms; Listen to Some Horrifying Stories
4. Urban Respite Programs such as Monica's House Must not be Overlooked for Their Potential

Brought to you by:

Autumn Ravines – Assisted Living in Southfield, MI



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