

Softwords

A&L Computer Software Limited

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The Future Is Now

Where has the time gone? Many times we start sentences with, "Remember when...?" Those of you who took computer science in high school, used punch cards to identify one routine. Simple programs on punch cards equated to something that was a few inches thick that had to be in sequence. If you were out of order or spilled your cards, putting them back together was almost like building a house of cards (isn't binary code wonderful!). Then came the personal computer. Computers were once sold with 5 ¼ inch drives. Remember just a few years ago we were using 5 ¼ inch floppy discs to store 720k. We were able to carry our data around on these round flexible devices with fairly good results. This was high tech when you consider the alternative was carrying hard copy files of documents or programs. Time evolved to bring us new programming languages and the sturdier 3½ inch discs. The high-density version also brought us a larger 1.44MB capacity, twice the amount of space available on the high-density 5 ¼ inch discs.

Now we have computers with what are commonly known as CD burners. Time and technology has brought us tighter compressions, larger drives with larger capacities to go along with bigger more complex programs that have higher memory and drive space requirements. Thus the need to have media to hold these larger files. There were tapes and cartridges made by a number of different companies, with the larger capacities designed to fill the need for backups. They came with their own devices that had to be run with their proprietary software, meaning that if your computer had to be replaced, you had to install or re-install the same device so that you could retrieve your backup from your tape or cartridge. The problem with this is that your hardware will last at least three years, if not longer. When it comes time to replace your computer, your backup tape or cartridge has probably advanced and changed versions such that it may no longer be compatible. If

that is the case, you have to remove your device from your old computer, install it on your new computer, then reload the program it came with, if it is compatible with the new operating system. For most technical people, if it's compatible with your operating system it's not a big deal to re-install. But with CD writers, it makes it much easier to reinstall from your backup discs. You simply insert it into your CD and you can copy it over.

Are there any drawbacks to using CD burners for your backup? Most people will say no. For the truly novice computer user, maybe. All CD burners come with software, which you must learn to use to create the CD. With Windows XP, word has it that you can "drag and drop" the file onto the CD drive. However, it is preferred that you learn to use the software it came with. Some software programs come with utilities that will verify that the copy was performed correctly. Another useful utility is the formatting of the disc to ensure that the recording surface is still good.

There are many good reasons to move towards CD writers for your backup. If you are using the 3 ½ inch floppy disks and it's taking over 20 disks and one hour to complete, it's a great reason to move to a CD backup. From a restoration standpoint, as mentioned, it can be quick and easy. The medium used is called a CD-RW. This provides for 700MB storage space and allows you to reuse the CD over and over again. If purchased in large enough numbers, it can cost you less than a \$3.00/disc. Zip cartridges cost at least six times that and only have either 100MB or 250MB capacity.

Disc capacities continue to grow. The next generation of growth is the DVD. The DVD recording devices are approaching mainstream pricing very quickly and physically, the disc is the same size. The capacity? 4.7GB! That's just less than 7 CDs. You know that you'll be hearing about DVD burners in Softwords in the near future.

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Dealing With Patient Expectations

By Don Price, B.Sc., M.B.A.

This is one of a series of articles by Don Price on Practice Management which have been appearing in recent issues of **Softwords**. Don Price, B.Sc., M.B.A., is a Practice Management Consultant based in Ottawa, Ontario. He travels extensively throughout Canada helping physicians and their staff tune up and revitalize their offices through consultations and seminars. In addition, Mr. Price publishes workbooks and two bi-monthly newsletters for physicians and medical office staff. He can be reached at 1-800-458-1900 or fax (888) 339-5975.



One of the reasons that patients become difficult is that their expectations aren't being met. These patients may be in the minority, but they certainly create the most stress.

Following the 'Pareto' rule, 20% of your patients will tie up 80% of staff time. The number of patients who are 'difficult' with the doctor will be much lower, simply because most patients put on their best act when in the exam room.

If your staff can't offer the same high level of service to the 80% of patients who aren't demanding or difficult, then the majority of your patients are being short-changed. Eventually, even some of the best patients will become disgruntled and join the ranks of the difficult and demanding.

To reduce the number of difficult patients in your practice, you have two options. One is to ensure you meet your patients' expectations. However, this is not an easy task—even impossible, although you may be able to improve efficiency to such a level that you are meeting the majority of patient expectations most of the time.

The second option is to lower your patients' expectations to a more realistic level. You still won't totally alleviate all the problems and stress patients put on staff, but if you do the job well, your staff will have suitable ammunition with which to ward off the majority of demanding patients.

Step 1.

Ask your staff to keep a list of all the complaints and questions they handle over the course of a week or two. They should keep adding to this list even after this time, though. Doctors too should keep a list of any complaints and administrative questions they hear from patients.

Step 2.

Now they should write down their responses and solutions to patient complaints and questions. For any that they cannot answer, they should ask for your input.

Step 3.

Develop a Question and Answer Fact Sheet for your patients, listing the most commonly asked questions – in fact, any questions asked more than twice a week – and your responses, based on the lists provided by staff and doctors.

Step 4.

Make special note of complaints to staff, such as "The doctor's always late" or "Why does it take three weeks to get an appointment in this office?" and include these in the Fact Sheet along with your reasons. This lowers patient expectations, if the reasons are plausible.


Step 5.

Have this sheet or booklet printed up on coloured paper and

distributed to your most demanding patients by mail or in person if they come in for an appointment. The staff and doctors should keep copies of the Fact Sheet to hand out to other patients when necessary. It's also a very good idea to provide new patients with a copy before they too become demanding.

Step 6.

Update or add to the Fact Sheet regularly.

This article first appeared in *The Practice Manager* in February 2002. 

Holiday Message

The holiday season can be the greatest and worst of times. Many people are happy with the hectic pace simply because they are probably doing something for someone. A sense of purpose and accomplishment regardless of the time of year makes us feel good about ourselves. Whether it is for family, friends, or for an organization, it amounts to doing a good deed and we feel better for doing that.

Most often, those in need of a good deed or in need of help are the most afraid to seek it. Whether it is shyness or pride, it can sometimes get to the point of their very survival, and even then sometimes they still don't ask.

As the hustle and bustle heads toward a crescendo at the end of the year, please be sure to offer your help. It will bring our city and society some warmth in what can sometimes be the coldest time of the year.



Network Security

The definition of networking in the Gage Canadian dictionary is, "A system of communication links interconnecting a set of computers and peripheral devices." Another definition in the same dictionary is, "meet with friends or colleagues to exchange ideas or further one's own interests." The second definition is also applicable to the people behind the computers. The common denominator here is the linking and sharing of information. The use of computers to make our lives easier has been well documented, although some might disagree. Storage of information, sharing simultaneously and never misfiling is the reason why large corporations do this, including MOHLTC moving towards OFHN.

This technology is also becoming quite common in smaller offices and homes. There are many reasons for the proliferation and acceptance of networks. Ease of implementation and acceptance of technology are major reasons why it's been pre-wired in many new offices and homes and if it's not pre-wired, wireless technology is now widely available. Price also falls into the category of 'ease' and is part of the equation. Network cards are commonly part of the package when purchasing computers, as opposed to being options as in years past. Routers, Hubs and Switches used to link more than two computers together are also reasonably priced, allowing offices and homes to share computers, peripherals, programs files and Internet .

Network protocols linked to network cards, mapped to proper locations are necessary to start the networking process. Setting it up properly and getting the right equipment for your needs are all part of the preparation. Is it that easy? The answer is yes, but there are many things to consider like: Should I go High-end/Low-end? Who is going to set up my network? Who will set up my security? Why do I need a hub/router? What do I look for when buying? Finally, do I go wireless? It's very new and high tech but here is a list of things to consider regarding Wireless Networks

- ◆ A larger threat of network security breaches
- ◆ The technology's low cost of entry makes it very appealing
- ◆ Inexpensive equipment also makes it easier for hackers to launch an assault
- ◆ Many WLAN (Wireless Local Area Networks) kits come already configured either with no passwords or default accounts that are widely known in hacking circles
- ◆ Other exploits that might endanger WLAN environments include jamming, which overwhelms the frequencies with illegitimate traffic
- ◆ Client-to-client attacks that circumvent the access point; and encryption attacks that exploit well known limitations in the Wired Equivalent Privacy encryption system.

Security should be a concern for both office and home. Personal information from your home or trade secrets from the office can be vulnerable in wireless environments. Without security measures, there is little to stop an internal or external attack if setup by a naive PC user. This may provide a useful entry point to the network, which is behind the firewall and other perimeter security. An attacker abusing these wireless access points wouldn't necessarily stand out. Who would ques-

tion a man in a suit using a PDA in the office lobby, or on the street outside? Rather than glancing through his/her schedule, he/she could be running one of several security and hacking tools that have now been ported to handheld devices to enable them to intercept and monitor wireless traffic. Understanding how they work and using this information to thwart their success is a beneficial stepping-stone to any secure and safe wireless solution. ☒

User's Corner

It seems that more and more physicians are working in several different location where each location is producing and submitting billings for that doctor. As in the Canada Post setup, you can send a letter anywhere to anyone as long as you drop it in the mailbox. However, if someone mailed something to you, you only have one home address and that's where it would be received. That's how MOHLTC seems to work as well. You can submit claims from any location as long as you've been approved to use the medium.

However, when MOHLTC sends your Claims Error Report, Remittance Advice, OBEC acknowledgment, or Batch Edit acknowledgment back (the last two apply only to those with EDT), they will only send it to one location. That may be your EDT mailbox or directly to a physical location like an office or home. However, when you receive that information, both programs, the A&L Medical System and the A&L HERO*, are able to decipher and determine what is on the disk. Each program is able to print all remittance advice information created on the program as well as identifying those that aren't. The programs simply identify the claim or transaction numbers. If the program finds the match, it is able to tell you exactly what claim it is. If it doesn't, it means one of two things occurred. 1) The claim originated from a different computer or 2) It was deleted from your computer.

How can you tell if it originated from your computer or from the A&L program? If it didn't originate from your computer it will print the transaction or claim number, the health card number, service date, service code and the amount billed, but no name. How can you tell if the claim originated from your computer and program? With the A&L Medical System, the transaction number follows a certain formula. Here is an example: A2L25001

The "A" is for the doctor code. "2" is the last number of the current year. 2002 will be 2. 2003 will be 3 etc. "L" corresponds with the twelfth letter of the alphabet, which in turn corresponds with the twelfth month of the year (December). "25" corresponds with the 25th day of the month. "001" identifies it as being the first claim created that day. All claims for the A&L Medical System will therefore be in "ANANNNNN" format (A=Alpha, N=Numeric). For the A&L HERO* program, it simply starts at 11000000 or 12000000 and it increases sequentially.

With either A&L program, you are able to identify and retrieve the patient by the health number. If you are able to identify the patient, you may want to submit the claim through your own program or you can always send the information to the other office and let them deal with it. Hopefully, their program will be as user friendly as yours. *HERO is a registered trademark of HTN Inc.



Give children a chance to learn and grow through sports.

**S'port For Kids
Foundation**

The S'port for Kids Charitable Foundation was created to give kids a sporting chance at life. The values learned through sport have never been more important. Fair play and tolerance, leadership and commitment are among many qualities we can introduce and impress on the young. The foundation allows underprivileged kids a chance to participate in sporting programs where they may not otherwise have had the resources for funding.

The 2002 S'port for Kids grant recipients were from four worthy groups; the Toronto City Mission, the Yonge Street Mission, the Regent Park Community Centre and the "Stay in School, Keep the Peace Basketball" program established in conjunction with the Toronto Police Services.

S'port For Kids Foundation, whose mission is to help promote wholesome values in young people through their involvement in organized sport. The Foundation is committed to providing guidance and/or direct funding to organizations or individuals who demonstrate they are in need, in order to promote the physical, emotional and social development of youth through sport. A&L's president, Alex Yuan, is Chair of the Foundation.

If you would like to donate the S'port for Kids Charitable Foundation, please tear off the bottom portion and submit it along with a cheque.

Together, we would be able to help more needy children. Please donate generously.

Your Tax Receipt for 2002 will be sent for the amount donated.

S'port For Kids Foundation - Donation Form

Name _____ Company Name _____

Address _____ Postal Code _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

I would like to donate \$ _____

Please make the charitable receipt out to:

Name _____ Telephone _____

Company Name _____ Fax _____

Address _____ Postal Code _____

Make cheque payable to **S'port for Kids Foundation** at
175 West Beaver Creek Rd. Unit 6, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 3M1
Charitable Registration # 88879 5770 RR0001