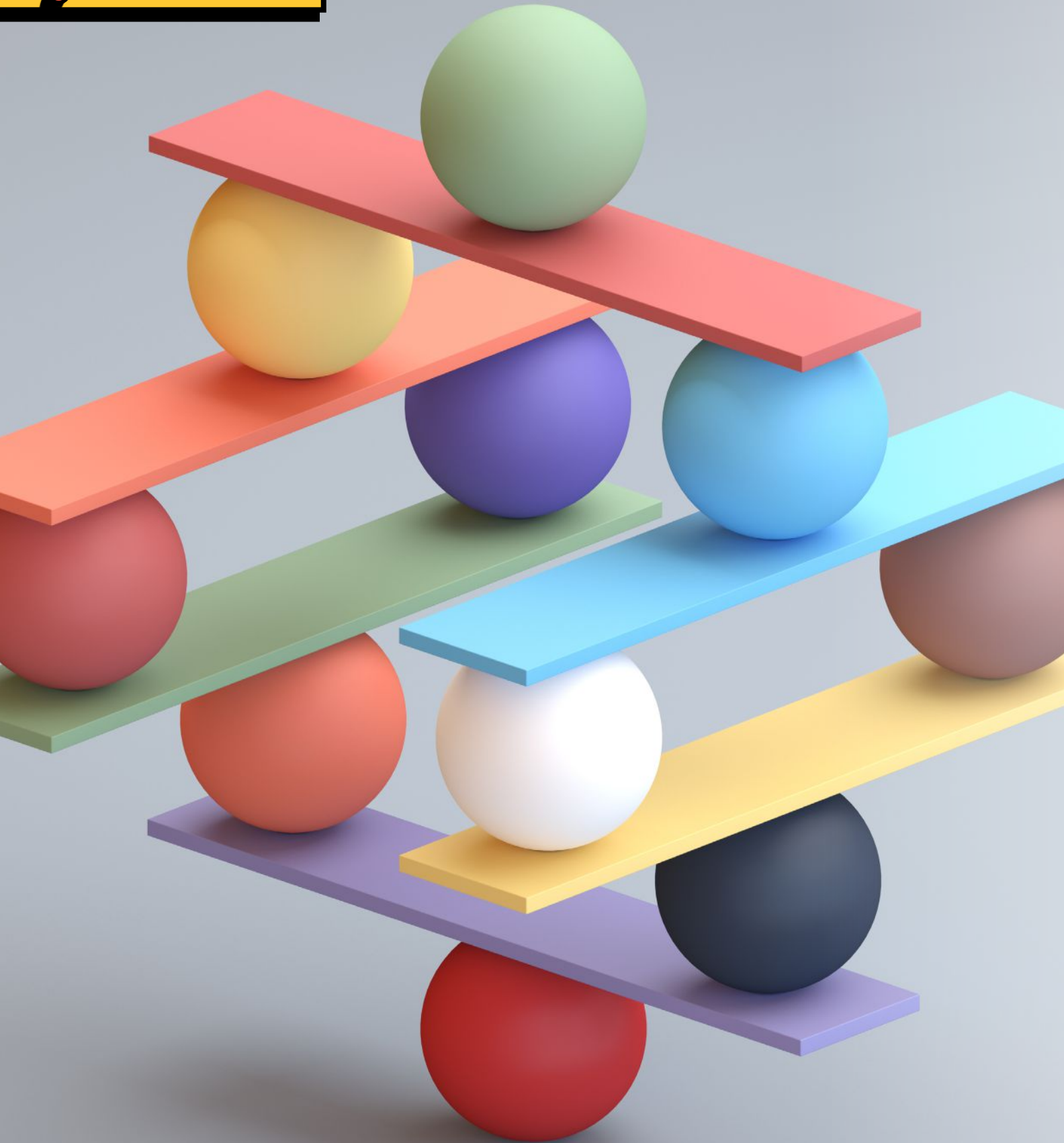


# FEATURE





# Maximizing Productivity

WITHOUT SACRIFICING

*Staff Satisfaction*

Achieving a healthy balance for your staff requires a strategic approach

By Brian Gallagher, PT

IN TODAY'S COMPETITIVE PRACTICE LANDSCAPE, attracting top talent who can obtain clinical outcomes by optimizing their patient care productivity is paramount for business success. However, achieving a healthy balance for your staff requires a strategic approach that combines the use of innovative compensation models and advanced technologies within a thriving company culture. In this article, we'll explore how physical therapy owners can leverage key aspects of personnel management to unlock their team's full potential, without sacrificing staff satisfaction.

## ● Streamlining Processes and Workflows

Operating with the most efficient processes and workflows is the backbone of any successful business - even more so with the time-dependent services of physical therapy. My own recent survey of our clients has shown that about 35% of a therapist's workweek is now consumed by non-direct patient care time. By identifying bottlenecks and inefficiencies, owners can streamline their operations to optimize the clinician's time and efforts.

The three areas of business that often need the most attention are Systems of Operations, Clinical Structure, and Personnel Management (commonly the #1 challenge that practice owners face). Consider making the following operational changes to streamline the workflow and unburden your staff, allowing them to focus more on the tasks at hand.

You might consider switching (EMR) systems, changing your clinic schedule, outsourcing any or all administrative functions, or converting your clinical compensation model from the outdated salary-plus-benefits model to a pay-for-performance model (more on this later). By moving some of the administrative burdens from your internal staff to an outsourced team, you can dial them into the more important aspects of their post. None of us went to physical therapy school to punch a keyboard and push papers!

## ● Embracing Technology & Innovation

Each day, technology continues to revolutionize the field of physical therapy, offering innovative solutions that result in speedier recoveries and fewer complications. By embracing technology and staying abreast of the latest advancements, clinics can stay competitive while better empowering their staff to deliver high-quality care. A few of the most powerful

opportunities to explore include the latest in AI technology, the revolutionary power of the Neubie e-stim device, and remote therapeutic monitoring (RTM) - which now enables therapists to get greater long-term patient outcomes using a more engaging plan of care with patients over a distance.

## ● Personnel Compensation Strategies: Rewarding Excellence

As business owners, we need to understand the difference between acknowledgement and validation. It is imperative that you become accustomed to using both, as appropriate. Acknowledging the individual for the person they are is an essential act of inclusion in your company culture and builds upon the individual's sense of belonging. Noticing a job well done and pointing it out adds to their self-worth and can motivate them to further commit to the group's mission.

These rewards could take place in the form of manager recognition, or peer-to-peer shoutouts during a staff meeting. You could also try contests and games based on performance and announce the top performers. For example, the highest net promoter scores (NPS) in a month or most time out of the schedule given back to the community through marketing or charity events. It can even be as simple as sharing with everyone something you overheard your therapist educating a patient on that was interesting or unique, that they went above and beyond for the benefit of their patients.

To attract and retain top performers, businesses must offer competitive compensation packages that inspire and reward excellence. For a while, many were adopting a shared risk model; however, on closer inspection, it became clear that this model does not always produce the intended outcomes. By asking your team to "share your risk," you are asking them to share in your responsibilities as a practice owner — a path that not all clinicians choose to take. If they wanted to embrace such burdens and seek out the ROI for those efforts, they would have opened their own private practice.

Implementing a value point system and adopting what's known as the pay-for-performance model is a whole different story. This stems from the very reason that many of us sought to become physical therapists in the first place and encourages us to be the best practicing clinicians that we can be. A common answer that we hear to the question, "Why did

you decide to become a physical therapist?" is: "I wanted to help as many people as possible within my community live a better life by achieving optimal health," or "I wanted to develop my clinical skills and have the knowledge to make a difference in the well-being of my patients'

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lives with each and every engagement, without the use of drugs or surgery.”

These values can be translated into value-points based on the three metrics of Clinical Efficiency, Production, and Quality of Care (as deemed by a patient survey via the Net Promoter Score). Each of these metrics represents some aspect of why we went to physical therapy school in the first place. By encouraging our therapists to operate with greater clinical efficiency, there is a natural increase in compensation in the form of performance pay that goes into their paycheck. The same is done for their productivity (volume of care per session) and their quality of care as measured by the NPS. In application, we have observed that if your therapist can increase each of these metrics by just 5%, their annual income bumps up to \$6,000-\$8,000 on average.

By tying compensation directly to the purpose of why one became a clinician, you are sending the message that all of us should be striving for clinical excellence that aligns with our organization’s goals. This model also ensures that only those who are interested in driving the course of their own future as an “intrapreneur,” versus an entrepreneur, will fully realize the outcomes of a working relationship founded in greater self-worth and professionalism.

As the practice owner, you must be well-versed in your understanding of the mechanics and outcomes of the pay-for-performance model. As with any change that affects your staff’s income, there will likely be some degree of emotion, and potentially even some pushback. The more communication and transparency on the finance lines, the better! Plan accordingly in regard to when you will hold a group staff meeting and/or individual meetings. Be sure to convey, first and foremost, that these changes are in their best interest and are designed to reward clinicians who only want to practice in the top 10% of their license.

## ● A Rewarding Company Culture

While compensation is essential for retaining talent, fostering a collaborative company culture is equally crucial for maximizing productivity and staff satisfaction. A culture in which employees feel valued, empowered, and connected to the company’s mission fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among team members. Rather than merely working for the company, employees become active participants in its success. This can be encouraged by fostering transparency from the top down of your organization.

One tactic that owners have found to be beneficial is to include your staff in your yearly strategic planning of the upcoming year’s roadmap for growth and success; try to keep an open mind to your team’s feedback and suggestions. Perhaps you choose to utilize the “10-minute meeting,” which

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serves as a regular opportunity for your staff to check in and discuss whatever is on their mind, a similar concept to holding open office hours. We have been told by owners over the years that this one action alone has done the most for their staff retention. Securing these ongoing meetings for each staff member in your schedule shows staff that they are important to you, and not just an after-thought.

You might also consider other ways of encouraging a more engaging environment in your physical therapy practice. Many physical therapists come from a background of sports and oftentimes gravitate toward offering sports rehab as a major part of their services; therefore, inspiring the spirit of a game can prove effective for team building and uplifting your company’s overall atmosphere. Everyone loves a good game! For example, you might invest in holiday celebrations (there is a major holiday nearly every month), employee contests, company-sponsored events, patient vs. employee competitions - the possibilities are endless! This also serves as a great way for your patients to feel more involved and engaged with your team, making them proud advocates of your services.

## ● Integrating Compensation and Culture

The key to unlocking team potential lies in finding the right balance between compensation strategies and a collaborative culture. Also, investing in the latest technology ensures that you are operating as a practice of the future, instead of a bygone era. Businesses can achieve this by:

1. **Aligning Incentives with Values.** Ensure that your compensation model reinforces the company’s core values and objectives, incentivizing behaviors that contribute to long-term success for all.
2. **Promoting Transparency.** Foster open communication to ensure that employees understand how decisions are made and how their performance directly impacts their rewards.
3. **Investing in the Company Culture.** Offer opportunities for employees to reach their full potential in a fun and nurturing environment.
4. **Celebrating Successes.** Acknowledge and validate individual and team achievements to reinforce a culture of appreciation and continued excellence.

## ● Unlocking Potential

In today's competitive business environment, unlocking team potential requires an approach that integrates advanced technologies, innovation in systems of operations and alternative compensation models, and a company culture that leans into the idea of work-life balance with enhanced skill development. By implementing a value-based compensation model that promotes your company culture and values, your business will attract top talent who are engaged for the long-term, ensuring the very highest levels of staff and patient satisfaction. **1**

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