

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Private-Duty Home Care Agencies

2014

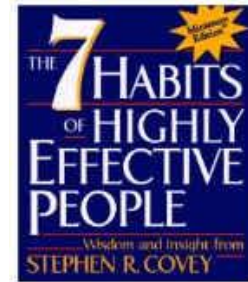


As a home care software vendor, we have the pleasure of working with many home care agencies, and we've gotten pretty good at picking the winners. Learn about best practices we've observed from thriving, growing and happy home care agencies.

Ankota
203 Crescent Street, Suite 205
Waltham MA 02453
888.972.8190
www.ankota.com

Seven Habits of Highly Effective Home Care Agencies:

Early in my career, the book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, by Stephen R Covey, was one of the books that made an impression on me. The advice was simple yet transformative and encouraged readers to change their mindset to become more effective. At work, we spoke frequently about paradigm shifts and the habits themselves, like “Begin with the End in Mind” and “Sharpen the Saw”, became part of the corporate lingo where I worked (at GE) and elsewhere. If you Google “7 Habits of” today, you’ll see books and articles about highly effective kids, and teens and startup leaders, and families, and even “slim people.” This all went viral before we were even using the Internet.



As a home care software provider, we have the unique perspective of interacting with numerous private duty agencies each and every day, and candidly we’ve developed a knack for determining which ones are the good ones. Please enjoy The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Home Care Agencies:

Answer the phone

You only get one chance to make a first impression. You should answer the phone with a live human being who understands that every time the phone rings, it might be someone needing help caring for their mom, dad, grandparent, husband, wife or another cherished person in their life. They might be confused and panicked. They might be hundreds or thousands of miles away and needing care for their mom today. This is your moment to shine and a great home care agency can win the client right on that phone call.



Use your web site as a two way communications portal

The Internet has become the way people shop. If my mom in Tavares Florida needed care, the first thing I’d do is Google “Home Care Tavares FL.” If you do that for the towns supported by your agency, where does your agency come up? Is it on the top half of the first page? If yes, great! If not, you’ve got some work to do. For your web site to rank highly, it can’t be static and it needs lots of visits. Consider incorporating a blog. Also make sure that your page titles match the searches that you expect. A web page named *Home Care Plymouth MA* will get more hits than one called *about us*.



Also, since you may not be able to answer your phone 24 hours a day, think of ways that your web site can help fill the gap. Perhaps your recording can say “For immediate access to information about our care, go to www.myagencyname.com. When they go to your site you need to make sure they can actually find information about the things that they are most likely to be concerned about. Better yet, if your site can allow them to share information about the loved one who needs help, you can get the referral without even answering the phone. As an example, Ankota’s home care software provides a simple way that you can plug this functionality into your site and it does the majority of your admission for you.

Differentiate – know what makes your agency special

Let’s face it, there are a lot of things about the care your organization provides that are going to be very similar to the care that your competitors provide. You need to differentiate! I admire one agency where the owner is passionate about reducing the risk of falls. She talks about what her nurses do, how they are trained, how devastating falls are to elderly people, and how the fall statistics of her clients blow away



the industry averages. What's your thing? Is it the way you screen your people? Is it the way your clients never feel alone? Do you provide additional services like home safety equipment installs? Find your thing, and do it!

Always be ready for an audit

Sometimes our implementation projects go on hold for a few weeks and one of the common reasons given by our customers is "we have to prepare for an audit." Of course, we know that this won't be a concern once our software is in place, but we've found that the highly effective organizations have designed processes (and the supporting technology) so that they're always ready for an audit. Think through the steps: 1) you need to be able to produce a client list, perhaps for a specific referring program; 2) you need to produce any client's care plan and have it be clear when the supervising nurse last updated it; 3) you need to then demonstrate that the care plan you showed them is identical to the care plan executed by your caregivers; 4) you need to prove that your caregivers were at the clients' homes at the times they clocked in and out. Can you be audited today?



You should consider your software vendor a strategic partner

We love the customers who communicate with us and challenge us all the time. If you're not sitting down with your software vendor at least once a year, telling them where you're taking your organization, and suggesting ways that they can help, perhaps you have the wrong software vendor. Or even worse, if you think that your software vendor wouldn't want to have that conversation with you, then they're definitely the wrong vendor. Customers who come to us and ask for help are customers who grow, and we love that. One small baby-step suggestion is to ask your vendor if there are one or more features you're not using that can make you better.



Keep your billing simple

Earlier, we told you to differentiate. But now, we're going to tell you not to differentiate by having complex billing. Your prospects want to be able to do the math in their head and know what they're in for. They will be comparing your billing rates to other competitors. Make it simple enough to explain in 30 seconds. Having a rate and a few adjustments like extra charges late at night or on holidays is just perfect. If you have to give your prospects a printed rate sheet and they pull out the calculator on their cell phone, you're probably differentiating in the wrong way.



Foster a culture of continuous improvement

Never lose sight of the importance of what you do. You're enabling people to live their lives to the fullest in the comfort of their own homes. You're likely helping them avoid hospitalizations. You may also be providing great relief and peace of mind to their family members while creating jobs. Love what you do and create a culture that makes it better each and every day. Also, create a culture where innovation can come from anyone in the organization. Celebrate change and the rewards that go with it. Agencies who have a plan to be better this year than last year are the agencies where we see success.



About Ankota

Ankota provides software for managing home care and care transitions. Our goal is to make the delivery of care more efficient and easier to coordinate. We believe that the home care industry is a key foundation for health care reform (which we simply define as Better Care at Lower Cost). Every day that an individual is at home surrounded by the people and things that they love, quality of life is better and health care costs are lower. Please learn more about Ankota's software for private duty non-medical home care at www.ankota.com/private-duty

