



Steering Practice Priorities

A lot has changed in General Practice compared to how it is now and what it was like 30 years ago. Going back three decades, General Practice was the main medical service; there were few female GPs and even fewer bureaucratic contrasts. Today, medical centres are bigger, operated more like businesses than health services and the industry is heavily governed.

Those that have worked in General Practice and have been witnesses to the aforementioned developments, have reacted to the change in various ways such as ignoring it, fighting it, coping with it, adapting to it, managing it and even creating it. Practice Managers are a necessity to ensure the efficient running of general practices and need to be ready to embrace the future and the opportunities it presents for the industry.

Before the determination of any future directions, Practice Managers should take stock the assets and resources currently available to them. This may include:

- Assessment of staff;
- Survey of patients and new patients;
- Review of services;
- Audit of systems;
- Analysis of financial data; and
- Listening for the unspoken complaint.

Once this stock take has been conducted, goals and strategies to achieve them can then be devised – all of these will ultimately form part of a business development plan.

There are a number of systems to support change monitoring which will also assist in the creation of a business development plan. Some examples are:

- A new patient survey;
- Complaints handling;
- Performance reviews;
- A meeting program in practice; and
- Allocating responsibilities for monitoring the practice environment;

Practice Managers should also foster a culture of flexibility. For example, Practice Managers need to ensure that their practices are learning organisations and support staff in training activities. A proactive and open to change Practice Manager won't just settle for what they have. There are always improvement opportunities to investigate and apply the appropriate action or actions to.