

The Power of Small Wins

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Presenter

Healthcare and Life Sciences



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- Sarah Hull is a Managing Director at Ankura with over 30 years of experience in hospital, integrated delivery system (IDS), and medical group settings. Sarah's experience covers all areas of finance and operations, with a focus on revenue cycle management, cost reporting, financial and operations improvement, physician compensation, and health system integration.
- Sarah advises healthcare clients on strategic, financial, and operational concerns, with an emphasis on physician services. Sample engagements: medical group and revenue cycle performance improvement, physician compensation, HIS, Tribal health, and FQHC operations, and health system integration. Sarah's experience also includes collaborative facilitation and change management.

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“Small wins are still won,
and the journey is more
important than overnight
success.”

– Bill Watterson



Small Wins

Manage Progress, not People

The Progress Principle - Study of work diaries (12,000 entries, 238 employees, 7 companies)

Inner Work Life: Moment by moment encouragement at work

- Inner work life drives productivity and performance
 - Single most important contributor to positive inner work life is **making progress on meaningful work**
 - 76% of participants' very best days involved making progress
 - Team members need to feel they are contributing to something worthwhile
- Negative aspects – harm inner work life
 - Experience setbacks or having progress blocked
 - Obstacles to progress got in the way
 - Toxins – disrespect, inattention, negative emotions

Overly simplified conclusion:

- Provide people with meaningful work
- Support progress - resources for success, remove obstacles
- Provide autonomy – allow team to feel it is their efforts and talents that contribute to success

Small Wins

Manage Progress, not People

“Progress” events not necessarily major breakthroughs

- Progress:
 - Small, incremental steps forward
 - Significant impact when acknowledged and celebrated
 - Building blocks for motivation and progress – yields greater accomplishments in the long run
 - Recognize and appreciate small victories – maintain focus and momentum
- Catalysts: Supporting the work
- Talent doesn't make the team – the team makes the talent
 - Nourish the team
 - Shape the habits and practices that bring out the best in each team member
 - Obstacles to progress got in the way

“Do you know what happens when you celebrate wins in your work or on your team every single day? You start to notice that there’s something worth celebrating, every single day.” – David Burkus

Small Wins and Big Wins

Scale and Impact

“Progress” events not necessarily major breakthroughs

- Small wins: often overlooked but are crucial building blocks
- Small wins: build resilience
- Small wins: daily achievements and progress to bigger goals
- Examples
 - Responding to emails and clearing your inbox
 - Completing a project (report, analysis) ahead of schedule
 - Finding the bug in a program and smashing it
- Big wins are major milestones or achievements
 - Based on the foundation of small wins
 - Examples
 - Exceeding sales target by 20%
 - Reducing denials by 15 %
 - Winning an award



Table Exercise

Small Wins

- Favorite
- Most impactful
- Brought you the most joy
- Made your day
- Jazzed
- Made you want to jump up and click your heels





“Treat every small victory like
you just won the Super Bowl.”
— Lewis Howes



My Own Mini Survey

Small Wins – “Please let me know what came to your mind when you first read ‘the power of small wins.’ Literally, what popped into your head.”

- He **slept** until 5:00 am instead of 4:30 am
- Momentum, **motivation**, and **inspiration**
- Increased **creativity**, sense of professionalism, and team
- Small **victories** despite resistance or unwillingness to accept change or additional **accountability** within the team
- Small wins can build **momentum** by building a **habit** or by **motivating** someone (or a team) to continue to **expand their horizons**
- Celebrate the small stuff because everything is a **part of the big stuff**
- Make us all **proud**

My Own Mini Survey

Small Wins – “Please let me know what came to your mind when you first read ‘the power of small wins.’ Literally, what popped into your head.”

- Windows (yes, there is a story)
- Every “win” matters. It demonstrates that **success** is possible.
- Large wins are very difficult to come by for a variety of reasons, but a series of small wins can build **confidence** in people and the process.
- That even though a win is small, it can be very **powerful** and **important**
- Every major achievement is comprised of the achievement of myriad **small parts** / pieces (i.e., small wins). Nick Saban once said that the way you win the game is to make sure you **win every play**.

My Own Mini Survey

Examples – “Provide an example of how small wins yielded something much bigger from your life experience”

- **Non-Healthcare:** Being asked to chair a professional associations' Professional Development committee (**small win**) when I first moved to a new area, and with this, established a career and cliental to keep me busy for 13 years (**big win**)
- **Retiree:** I'm bored and need to get out of the house! Volunteering seems like a good idea. My very thoughtful wife suggested I volunteer with the oncology practice I've consulted with and has been treating one of my daughters. I texted the CEO and asked if I could volunteer and he said yes (**small win**). A few days later got another text from him asking if I could also serve on a board focused on improving screening and prevention in the oncology space (**big win**).
- **Fitness achievement:** starting to run bit by bit until I ran a mile without stopping. For example, saying I'll run three blocks a day for a week rather than saying three miles a when just starting. By doing it, it's a **small win** that encourages me to go 4 or 5 blocks a day the next week because I feel good about my accomplishment. Personally, I went from HATING running and making excuses to get out of it in high school gym class to running marathons and doing triathlons (**big win**).

My Own Mini Survey

Examples – “Provide an example of how small wins yielded something much bigger from your life experience”

- **Parenting/leading:** Make us proud - I spoke this to my children, my work colleagues, and beyond. We can only do so much alone. If we are encouraged and supported to support one another, have that inside drive to be the best, and to give yourself to others to see them succeed. It's a **win win**.
- **Senior Executive:** You must pay attention to the details (of **every small part**) to make sure that everything goes smoothly and is achieved. All the little parts add up to the **big thing**.
- **Healthcare CFO:** The small win comes from the fact that a ~20 person Finance Department was cubicled in a massive room (a former warehouse) with all of patient accounting (around 100). Finance Team not adjacent. There was no privacy. I fought for and managed to get our own space in a separate, adjoining area after saying “other staff might hear us talking about” or “for Medicare it is this, but for other purposes it is that” and think/gossip about two sets of books. That change to QUIET, separate, space not only gave the staff the private space they needed, but increased their creativity, sense of professionalism, and team. On a personal note, it bought me an awful lot of loyalty that exists to this day. **#BigWin**

My Own Mini Survey

Examples – “Provide an example of how small wins yielded something much bigger from your life experience”

- **Parenting/leading:** Recognizing small moments of our son’s growth provides a sense of progress and motivation (**small win**). Parenting can feel overwhelming, but acknowledging small wins reminds me of the positive strides we make every day. I've learned to embrace these moments as they come, seeing them as reminders of the beautiful journey we are on together. It's a mindset that appreciates the little things and nurtures a positive and resilient parenting experience.
 - I can also tie this to my healthcare work experience whether as a manager, or as a consultant working with clients - It’s gratifying to see how **small wins** reinforce positive behaviors and foster a sense of accomplishment for the team/project (**big win**).
- **Healthcare Business owner:** Sometimes true leadership means saying you're wrong, you've made a mistake. Strength through vulnerability has its purpose, too. Letting your team know that you should have handled something differently, involved others in a decision doesn't always have to be seen as a sign of weakness. Use it as a learning tool for you and your team. Loyalty and support often grows when leaders acknowledge they don't always get it right either. **Small oops yields big win.**

My Own Mini Survey

Examples – “Provide an example of how small wins yielded something much bigger from your life experience”

- **Retired FQHC CEO:** Small wins can help build credibility and trust with team members and the momentum that inspires people to think bigger. When I would “round” in the clinics - see what’s going well, what obstacles there may be, often I would be told of something that could be solved easily - they either hadn’t told anyone, or it was ignored. When I would fix something quickly (**small win**), I built credibility with that person or team. They were more likely to believe that things can change, that I wanted to help them, and they were more likely to be willing to be part of a greater goal (**big win**).

My Own Mini Survey

Examples – “Provide an example of how small wins yielded something much bigger from your life experience”

- **Retired VERY Successful Consultant:** I started a very part time job in the fitness center at our local YMCA 3 years ago. After about a year, and after I had personally spearheaded several improvements in how we maintain the cleanliness and appearance, I wanted to improve things further with my other part time colleagues by improving our communication from shift to shift and day to day. At the time I asked my 3 colleagues to help with no response. So, I drafted something and asked for their input with no response. So, I started using my little chart and kept it posted on the schedule board in our office for all to see and use if they wished. My boss endorsed my effort (**small win**). Over time, as colleagues left and were replaced, I trained new staff, using the chart to help all of us keep track of what was and wasn't done over the course of any given week. Some tried and stopped while others never even tried. I kept using it and modified it over time as needs and circumstances changed. The latest crop of colleagues understand the importance and are using the chart regularly. I was very pleased to see, while I was off for a week earlier this month, that all four colleagues used the chart when they worked. That is **my small and very satisfying win** that I wanted to share.

My Own Mini Survey

Examples – “Provide an example of how small wins yielded something much bigger from your life experience”

Was this really a small win?

YMCA Fitness Center Work Summary

TASK	Mon Date	Tu Date	W Date	Th Date	Fri Date	SAT Date	SUN Date
ROUNDS	10/6	10/7	10/8	10/9	10/10	10/11	10/12
Refill bottles	TA	NS	CF	NS	TA	TA	CF
Refill paper towels	TA	NS	CF	NS	TA	TA	CF
Broom-up floors	TA		CF	NS	TA	TA	CF
Put equipment away	TA		CF	NS	TA	TA	CF
Refill cloths	TA	NS	CF	NS	TA	TA	CF
Check trash	TA	NS	CF	NS	TA	TA	CF
MACHINES CLEANED							
Balconey Row	TA		CF			TA	
Treadmill Row 1	TA						
Treadmill Row 2	TA				TA		CF
Cybex "T"	TA				TA		
MTX Row	TA		CF				
Rowing Row	TA						
ARCs Row	TA						
*Life Fitness Ellipticals	TA				TA	TA	
StarTrac Units					TA	TA	
Free Weights							
Synergy 180					TA		
Matrix Bays							
AS NEEDED							
Spot clean mirrors			CF	NS		TA	CF
Spot clean floors	TA	NS	CF	NS		TA	CF
Vacuum Floors	TA	NS	CF	NS		TA	CF
Vacuum Green Floor	TA	NS	CF	NS		TA	CF
Vacuum Track		NS	CF	NS		TA	CF
Clean Power Boxes							
CLOSING DUTIES	TA	NS	CF	NS	TA	TA	CF
# MEMBERS INTERACTED	2	3	3	1	2	0	0
OTC-My Fit Sessions							

CODE: Check Mark = done; Y = yellow swiffer; R = red swiffer; YC = yellow cloth G = green floor swiffe.
Blank = not done
Add letter (if used) next to check mark; cleaner # (if used) next to letter
SV = Shark Vac; MV = Milwaukee Vac; SCV = Shark Cord Vac

did not vacuum track - Shark not work
mirrors behind barbell back row - u
I'll clean them on 10/15.

OBJECTS IN MOTION TEND TO STAY IN MOTION.



GET STARTED.

ankura 

“The most effective form of motivation is progress. When we get a signal that we are moving forward, we become more motivated to continue down that path. In this way, habit tracking can have an addictive effect on motivation. Each small win feeds your desire.”

— James Clear

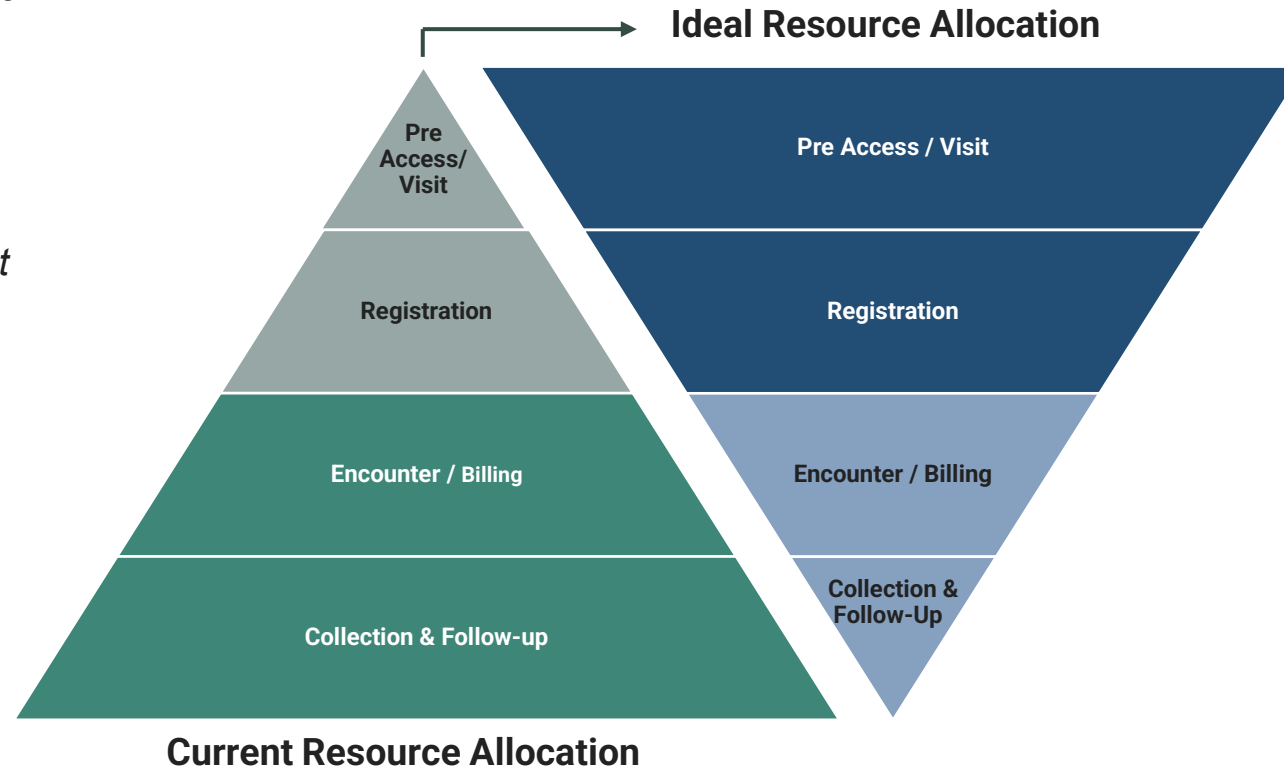
Front End Work Effort Transition

'Flip the Triangle' work effort

Billing, collections, and follow-up are often 'thought of' as the most important RCM component, resulting in large amounts of time and resources spent on those aspects of the cycle, and less on others.

However, the amount of time invested in ensuring accuracy of patient information should be, at minimum, inversely proportional to the amount of time invested in billing and collecting. The work effort triangle should be flipped to look something like the one on the right.

- *Has a direct impact on improving collections and reducing AR*
- *Reduces the overall cost to collect*

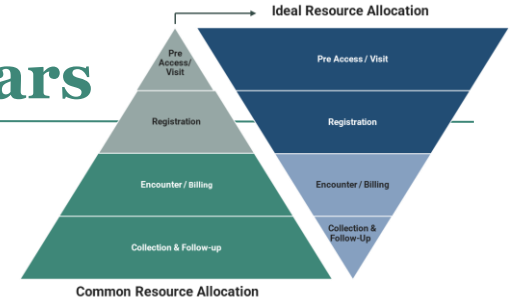


Front End Work Effort Translates Small Wins to Big Dollars

Successful Outcomes from Access Efforts

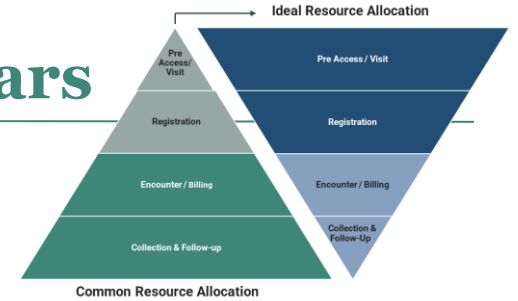
Some Data:

- Experian health State of Claims 2025 report
 - Overall denial percentage increased from 30% in 2022 to 41% in 2025
 - #2 denial reason: Authorizations – 35%
 - #3 denial reason: Incomplete or incorrect patient registration data – 32%
 - 82% of respondents say reducing denials is a priority for the organization
- Change Healthcare 2022 Revenue Cycle Denials Index
 - Front end denials have come down 5% since 2020, but still account for more than 41%
 - Registration/Eligibility is still the top cause at 22%
 - Authorization/pre-certification is fourth cause at 13%
 - Around 82% if denials are potentially avoidable
- Conclusion – revenue loss is occurring that is preventable



Front End Work Effort Translates Small Wins to Big Dollars

Successful Outcomes from Access Efforts

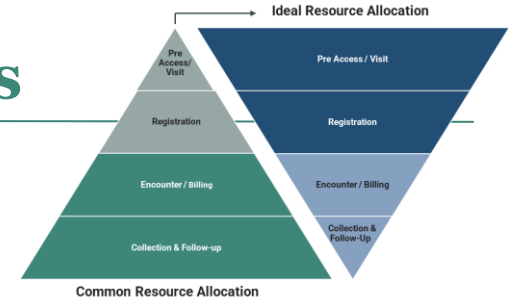


Small wins yielding big results:

- Eligibility and prior authorization tools
 - Boost staff morale by streamlining workflows and reducing repetitive tasks by leveraging system automation.
 - Create a foundation for long-term success by improving efficiency and reducing bottlenecks.
 - ✓ Providers who implement targeted process improvements see an average of 15-20% reduction in AR days within six months. (Source: HFMA)
- Leverage Automation for Repetitive Tasks
 - Challenge: Administrative staff spend significant time on tasks like payment posting and follow-ups.
 - Solution: Use Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to handle repetitive tasks, freeing staff for higher-value activities and ensuring accuracy.
 - ✓ Statistic: Automation reduces manual processing time by 70%, boosting staff productivity. (Source: Black Book Research)
- Accuracy in patient registration
 - Right data, right time
 - Without accurate patient health information, it is impossible to bill and collect

Front End Work Effort Translates Small Wins to Big Wins

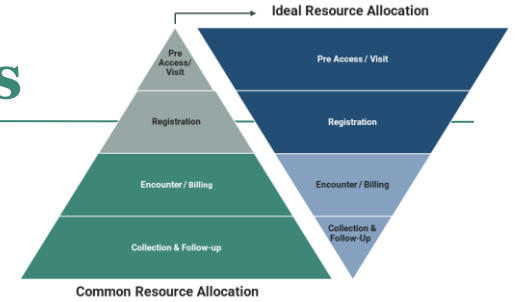
Successful Outcomes from Access Efforts – examples from my survey



- **Point of Service Collections:**
 - Surgery Scheduler/Financial Counselor with responsibility to call patients to let them know their personal responsibility for collection before or at time of service.
 - Patient brought \$16,000 in cash on day of service.
 - Employee SO excited she called manager.
 - Small win for the large health system but a HUGE win for this employee.
- It truly takes a village and remember to celebrate the village!
 - To meet cash collection goals, quarterly cash incentive payout to the ENTIRE revenue cycle team.
 - Yes, all areas that had a part to play and pulled together to make collection goals happen received a part of the reward!
- **Structure:** Upgrading Patient Access related positions so team members aspire to move into those positions rather than "Business Office" or "Billing" positions.
 - Small win requiring strong leadership to propose and implement something very contrary to how most organizations operate.

Front End Work Effort Translates Small Wins to Big Wins

Successful Outcomes from Access Efforts



- **Results:**

- Implemented multidisciplinary denials committee – team evaluated root cause, made changes to front end processes and reduced denials
 - Team appreciated autonomy for root cause analysis (**small win**)
 - Team applauded implementation of small fixes (**small win**)
 - Team celebrated reduction of work effort (**inner work life**)
 - Denials decreased \$700K in 9 months (**big win**)
- Point of Service Collections Training – 2 hospital system with large medical group
 - Ten 90-minute sessions, touching over 250 front end team members
 - Scheduling, Patient Service Rep; Registrars, Receptionists, Care Navigators, Practice Managers, Etc....
 - Positive Feedback – (**small win**)
 - “Loved the scripting”
 - “Learned something to better help me do my job”
 - 32% increase in point of service collections in 3 months (**big win**)

Table Exercise

Celebrate the Small Wins

- On the back of the card with the Small Wins
- Write three things you will do to put celebration into practice



THANK YOU



..... And celebrate your wins



Comprehensive Healthcare Expertise



Ankura’s healthcare capabilities extend across a wide range of multi-disciplinary specialties. Ankura’s T&R professionals leverage the deep expertise across the firm to bring the appropriate specialized resources to deliver solutions to complex problems.

WHO WE ARE:

150+

DEDICATED
PROFESSIONALS

OUR CLIENTS:

225+

PROFESSIONALS WITH
HEALTHCARE EXPERTISE

A TEAM OF



CLINICIANS

FORMER INDUSTRY EXECS

DATA ANALYSTS

ECONOMISTS

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- Healthcare Analytics
- Revenue Cycle Management
- FQHC and RHC Consulting
- Valuation Services
- Investigations
- Payer Services
- Physician Consulting
- Turnaround & Restructuring

