

5 WAYS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS USE OUTSOURCED ACCOUNTING TO GROW WITH CONFIDENCE



AS THE FIELD OF AUTISM and Behavioral Health Services matures, more private organizations serving the industry see the opportunity for growth. Economies of scale help ABA (Applied Behavioral Analysis) service organizations better serve the interests of their clients with centralized administrative support, consistent levels of service and leading-edge resources. To support stable growth, ABA organization owners and managers need to maintain focus on clients and outcomes, which requires confidence in smooth business operations.

For any business, growth comes with expected challenges—managing more staff, maintaining facilities and handling more transactions—and unexpected complications. Through it all, leaders and managers must be fully engaged in maintaining professional excellence and providing the highest quality therapies.

To support that critical focus, more and more ABA owners are looking to outsource accounting. Instead of getting stuck in the weeds of reports and administrative tasks, growth-oriented leaders let experts handle the financial details. And, by working with a CFO-led financial management team who understands the industry, they not only relieve administrative burdens, they get additional insights to help them navigate the unexpected with confidence.

FOCUS ON THE QUALITY OF SERVICES

All industries face unique challenges, but for ABA service organizations the stakes are high. The quality of service the organization delivers has lasting impact on each client's success. To support both clients and behavioral therapy professionals well, the organization needs business processes that minimize distractions and

keep operations working smoothly. Owners and managers must stay fully focused on quality of care for each client.

Constellations Behavioral Services is a growing ABA provider that helps families and children with autism and developmental disabilities reach their highest potential by affecting positive behavioral changes that enable them to communicate, develop and become more self-reliant. Working with school districts to improve services, and with children directly at their clinic in Portsmouth, NH, Constellations' programs are specifically designed to address each individual child's skill deficits across a wide range of developmental domains—including language development, social skills, self-help, play and academic achievement. To retain focus on their primary goals, Constellations has partnered with Next Level Now, financial and strategic consultants.

“Working with Next Level Now allows us to focus on what we are good at,” said Tim Heald, CEO Executive Director of Constellations Behavioral Services. “Through business process outsourcing, we make sure that our internal processes are managed well. Their team processes the bills and makes payments to keep the business running smoothly. With the day-to-day details handled by a team we trust, we can focus on service excellence and strategic growth.”

HANDLE THE COMPLEXITIES OF GROWTH

Most ABA organizations start small, with business operations handled through QuickBooks or even simple spreadsheets. As the business grows,

operations need to be managed more formally. Business processes need to be in place to ensure details are handled efficiently—billing, insurance, financing requirements, payroll and benefits administration and more.

Taking on more clients, projects and offices requires financial management and planning that will strengthen the foundation for the rapid growth ahead. “A small business owner is expected to be an expert in everything, but you can't be,” said Heald. “It's very helpful to have a relatively affordable expert sitting over your shoulder to help you get through more complex projects. Helping you see all the financial angles with planning and forecasting is a huge relief as you build the business.”

An outsourced accounting organization can provide the insights that support the complex decisions faced when growing a business. Insights that include:

- Reporting across multiple locations to give owners a clear view of performance at individual centers and of the organization as a whole. Being able to identify strengths and weaknesses in separate locations allows managers to balance resources. Best practices from high-performing centers can be applied to those lagging.
- Cash flow projections to allow owners to prepare for current and future needs. Working with government agencies and insurance providers can make estimating cash flows an art. An experienced financial partner can help navigate the complexities of cash.
- Financial and tax implications of special projects and programs under evaluation. Expansion into new regions can have unexpected complications, from local tax laws to the costs of opening a new facility. Having an advisor to help owners think through all the details builds confidence in taking on the risks inherent in growth.

MORE THAN JUST TRANSACTIONS

Limitations on internal staff can stifle the growth of a business. The complexities of the ABA service business require an experienced financial hand.

Accounting isn't just recording transactions and creating reports. Regardless of title—bookkeeper, accountant or financial manager—the organization needs an interpreter of the numbers to monitor performance and guide the financial aspects of growing the company.

Turnover can be devastating. It takes time and energy to find and recruit high-quality financial professionals in today's competitive market. While finding experienced accounting professionals is hard enough, to find those with the ability to understand the implications of the numbers is even trickier.

“There is a level of trust you need to have with your bookkeeper that makes turnover especially difficult. In the past, I was trying to find a unicorn—someone who was skilled, we could trust and was like-minded,” said Heald. “Through outsourcing with Next Level Now, we don't need to worry about recruiting. We've worked with the same person for several years, who we like and trust, and appreciate that consistency.”

In today's data-rich world, financial management requires familiarity with the technology to turn information into insight. An outsourced accounting partner using cloud-based business management systems will provide the tools and guidance to streamline operations and deliver deep insight.

For a geographically dispersed business and workforce, cloud-based financial management systems centralize information and streamline processes. As the organization grows, information is consolidated across locations to support holistic

financial reporting and management. Employees can enter data from anywhere and managers can access the information they need any time.

OBJECTIVE GUIDANCE

The growth of a company is never without surprises—some welcome, some not. The leadership team of every growing ABA service organization will be faced with decisions outside of their comfort zone. Those organizations working with an outsourced financial management partner have a team of experts to call on when they need advice.

Working with accounting professionals who know the industry can provide advice and guidance when the ABA service organization needs:

- An objective point of view to provide advice untainted by internal politics or agendas.
- Guidance from a financial professional who has navigated a similar situation.
- Risk reduction through the experience of people who have seen similar challenges and opportunities.
- Connections to highly-skilled professionals and valuable resources.

“The Next Level Now team connected us with a better lending option when we needed it,” said Heald. “Having connections into a network of bankers we were unfamiliar with gave us better resources to grow the business. We are working with a bank that is excited to work with a company like ours.”



PROACTIVE REPORTING

Clear, concise information is critical for growth-oriented ABA owners to spend less time managing financial issues and more time on operations and service delivery. With financial information delivered by a CFO-led accounting partner, owners and managers receive:

- Income statements and balance sheets that summarize and compare financial metrics over time.
- Attention to the exceptions—results that stand out from the norm—to help leaders focus on issues that need immediate attention.
- Cash flow projections that provide deeper analysis to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the business.
- Consolidated information providing regional managers more precise metrics to compare locations, allowing them to fine tune operations.
- Information delivered to devices, providing easy access to information where and when it is needed.

FOCUS ON THE BUSINESS

It's easy for ABA owners to get bogged down in small tasks that take the focus off the big picture. By outsourcing accounting, accounts payable, payroll or human resources to Next Level Now, the transactional

work is overseen by an experienced and highly-skilled CFO. The professionals of Next Level Now understand the unique business challenges of Autism and Behavioral Health Services providers.

In addition to clear, concise financial reporting, Next Level Now will go beyond the accounting role, providing insights to help overcome the challenges of growth. To develop a plan or action for clients, Next Level Now professionals will:

- Actively listen to learn the intricacies of the organization, and what keeps the client's leaders up at night. Listening is part of understanding and leads to holistic analysis.
- Follow up with more questions and become proactive problem solvers, opening the door to creative and innovative solutions.
- Implement the best solution to help solve the issues that are facing the business. Through this plan Next Level Now help clients grow and reach their next level.

As a first step working with ABA organizations, Next Level Now provides a FREE assessment. If you would like to reclaim your focus on growing the business, call 603.433.4783 today.

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