



EVERGREEN SPEECH & HEARING CLINIC

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES HELPED AN ESTABLISHED
PRIVATE PRACTICE BRING THEIR BOOKKEEPING INTO
THE 21ST CENTURY AND IMPROVE THEIR BOTTOM LINE

The departure of a full-time staff member created a potential crisis for Evergreen Speech & Hearing Clinic. Supporting Strategies turned this challenge into an opportunity for the clinic.

Client Profile

Audiologist Thomas J. Norwood founded Evergreen Speech & Hearing Clinic (ESHC) in 1979. His goal was to provide patients in the Puget Sound region with services beyond what local hospitals could offer, such as comprehensive hearing evaluations and rehabilitation. Dr. Norwood's clinic has since expanded to three locations and a staff of 28, including five audiologists and six speech therapists.

When 'Someday' Arrives Sooner Than Expected

As ESHC grew, so did their bookkeeping challenges. The speech clinic and the hearing clinic became separate business entities, with separate billing

requirements. But they still shared a billing department and administrative office at the Redmond, Washington, location. And while ESHC used a robust, mid-market accounting system, they still relied on entering vendor invoices and cutting checks manually.

The system was conducive to the kinds of errors that could be difficult to track. Then, to compound the problem, ESHC's in-house bookkeeper gave two weeks' notice.

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*Chris Norwood, Project Manager
Evergreen Speech & Hearing Clinic*

Outsourced Bookkeeping: The Seamless Solution

A business associate suggested that ESHC contact Jason Freiling, Managing Director of Supporting Strategies | South Puget Sound - Tacoma.

Clinic Director Ruth Norwood, ESHC's original bookkeeper, had some initial misgivings about outsourcing. However, she soon saw the advantages that could be gained by using Supporting Strategies, including improved efficiency and enhanced financial visibility that could be accomplished through migration to a cloud-based system.

"Supporting Strategies was a lifesaver," says ESHC Project Manager Chris Norwood, Ruth's son. "Jason came out immediately and told us he and his team could do the job, even with all of our complications. The Supporting Strategies team optimized our entire system and brought us into the 21st century. What felt like a crisis turned out to be a great opportunity."

Going Above and Beyond

In addition to migrating the bookkeeping system to the cloud, Supporting Strategies gave ESHC new insights into their business operations. "They've taken a fresh look at some invoices that had just been pushed through the funnel before and led us to reassess some services that we had been paying too much for," Chris Norwood says.

In addition, ESHC adjusted their retail pricing after analyzing gross profit by order, something they hadn't done previously.

Supporting Strategies helped ESHC negotiate better prices with vendors and manufacturers — even a renewed lease on one of their buildings. They also simplified ESHC's internal staff processing of onsite patient payments from their multiple locations, significantly reducing daily reconciliation efforts and discrepancies.

Lastly, Supporting Strategies provided reports from ESHC's patient management system to analyze the number of free follow-up appointments made per patient. This helped ESHC monitor the cost and quality of patient services.

Real Data = Real Savings

But Supporting Strategies' most valuable contribution might have involved tracking hearing aid sales, a critical component of ESHC's business. Although hearing aid purchases are made with a single upfront payment, Washington state law grants patients up to 90 days to return them for a full refund. In addition, patients are allowed as many follow-up visits for fittings or adjustments as they wish, free of charge.

Accounting for sales and returns can be a bookkeeping nightmare — and for years at ESHC, it was. The practice relied on a paper log to record each hearing device sale. Supporting Strategies custom-built a database form that lets the audiologists record the make and model of each hearing aid at the time of sale. The database also aids in verifying that vendor credits are received for returned hearing aids as well as monitoring changes in vendor pricing.

"Now we have almost-live tracking each month of hearing aid sales at each location, which is great for financial reports," Chris Norwood says. "It provides the data we need to make adjustments, which helps save money."

Enjoying Full Support

For ESHC, it's a huge relief knowing the practice is in good hands. No longer are the bookkeeping responsibilities handled by a single staff member who could potentially leave at any time.

"The Supporting Strategies team collectively has decades of industry experience," Chris Norwood says. "Having them as a resource for any questions we have is reassuring. And we now have a much better picture of our business operations than we ever had before."