

BUILDING TUCSON BUSINESS

A DIFFERENT PLAYBOOK



COURTESY SNEAKY OWL MEDIA

Dr. Eric Cornidez of the Pain Institute of Southern Arizona attributes its success to a relationship-focused approach to both staff and patients.

Focus on patients key to Tucson-based medical firm's success

Two of the pleasures I receive from writing these columns are the fascinating people I meet, and the business and life lessons I learn.



KEN COOK

Dr. Eric Cornidez of The Pain Institute of Southern Arizona checks both categories.

When we first met, Cornidez was clear about one fundamental principle: Relationships are the cornerstone of his business.

He believes that employee and patient connections are not just important — they are everything.



Cornidez

This philosophy is simple yet powerful.

Employees are the heartbeat of any business because they control every critical interaction — or “touch point” — with patients.

These moments ultimately determine an organization's success or failure.

The institute's mission statement captures this ethos perfectly: “Through compassion and innovation, we will make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and in communities.”

A touching anecdote illustrates this principle. When his 8-year-old daughter asked who owns his workplace, Cornidez turned the question back to her — Who do you think owns it? Her response? “The nice lady who says ‘hi’ when we come in — she always makes me feel good?”

This interaction reveals why relationships matter: Every employee becomes an owner of the company's mission. And the success of the company reflects the power of this approach.

Cornidez is Tucson-born and raised. He graduated from Sunnyside High School on

Tucson's south side. He excelled and earned a scholarship to Stanford Medical School.

Upon graduation in 2012, Cornidez had many offers to consider. However, he had a strong need to come back and serve the Tucson community.

He joined a small pain practice of 12 employees founded and owned by Reid Bullock and Ken Gossler in 2000.

Cornidez bought into the practice, and over 13 years, has transformed the business dramatically. Among the changes: expanded to 10 locations across Southern Arizona; the number of employees grew from 12 to 165; increased the number of providers to 22; and added two surgery centers and an in-house laboratory.

I was curious how Cornidez is able to have the institute stand out in the medical industry, where so many medical practices feel like factories to the patients.

His response was simple — focus on the patient.

The providers understand every patient's medical history before they meet. The intent is for the patient to feel as if the provider “gets me, and knows why I am here?”. The approach by the office helps the patient feel they are working with the provider, instead of feeling they have to convince the provider about their pain and why they are there.

Organizationally, the success of the operation stems from four foundational principles:

- 1 — Practice great medicine
- 2 — Recruit well-trained professionals
- 3 — Deliver great patient service
- 4 — Hire relationship-focused individuals who embrace patient care

Cornidez also imbues into the company culture three lessons he learned in medical school:

Please see **COOK**, Page D2

Cook

From D1

- 1 – Treat the patient, not just a diagnostic study
- 2 – Listen to the patient
- 3 – Treat the patient as if they

are a member of your family. Again, foundational principles that translate into growth. Further evidence of the success of this approach is that several pain clinics in Phoenix have approached Cornidez about merging. The Phoenix entities

appreciate the environment of selflessness in the institute's culture, and the collegial atmosphere among the employees and with the patients. The business is successful financially, growing and expanding the economic health of Tucson

and Southern Arizona. The company is a meaningful business in our community. They never say no to sponsorship requests. It sponsors numerous scholarships, and Cornidez frequently speaks to students and teachers, especially on the city's

south side. They achieve all of this sustainable success by focusing on strong relationships with both their people and their patients. The ultimate lesson? When you put people first, success inevitably follows.