

## Famed Flashbacks

Hall of Famers have “fun” with numbers that generate some heat

*The One Where I (Almost) gave Marv Feldman a heart attack*

By Fred W. Crans

**SCHAUMBURG, IL (August 20, 2024)** – There was once a television series named “Dragnet.” Each episode began with this statement: “The story you are about to hear is true. The names have been changed to protect the innocent.”

Well, the story you are about to hear *is* true, and at least one of the names has been changed to protect a guilty co-conspirator.

Another, much more recent television series, “Friends,” had a habit of naming each episode, “The One Where...”



Marv Feldman, Bellwether Class of 2018

So, this is “The One Where I (Almost) Gave Marv Feldman (Bellwether Class of 2018) a Heart Attack” by having some “fun” with his costs and savings estimates.

I can honestly say that there is no Bellwether more eminently qualified to have been inducted into the august group than Marv. I usually copy the Bellwether profile to include in these stories, but Marv’s is so long that it would double the length of my usual story. But here’s a little tease:

“Marvin Feldman led the reorganization and implementation of contemporary pharmacy service departments at several major teaching hospitals including Brigham & Women’s Hospital (Boston), St. Elizabeth’s Medical Center (Boston) and the Veteran’s Health Administration’s New England Healthcare System during his 16 years in hospital pharmacy practice. In each situation, he convened high-impact leadership teams that assessed the baseline clinical and logistical operations to establish state-of-the-art and cost-efficient programs and services for the patients served.

“Feldman helped build one of the most respected healthcare consulting practices in the nation by working closely with Tom Hughes at Concepts In Healthcare during a nine year period ended in 1999. Together these innovative leaders brought together a staff of remarkably experienced practitioners in supply chain management, facilities planning, pharmacy, clinical supply cost management and applied market research who completed hundreds of strategically relevant projects for their many clients. Ultimately, this practice grew to the point where it was acquired by Becton Dickinson.

“Feldman innovated the concept of process redesign in the practice of hospital pharmacy prior to it gaining widespread acceptance as a management strategy.”

And that’s just the tip of the iceberg!

Oh yeah, Marv is also one of the sweetest human beings ever to have walked the face of the earth. And one of the most detailed...

Our story begins during my tenure with BD Healthcare Consulting. We were pursuing a huge non-salary expense reduction project with a prestigious system. I, along with “Peter” (not his real name, but since he looks like Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary, that’s the name I chose for this story) was selected to analyze the various areas where there were opportunities for savings and identify a dollar target for each area.

After lunch one afternoon, “Peter” and I retired to the conference room in Hopkinton, MA, to identify targets. We had high-level data – basically the expenditure by function, Inventory values, etc.

We began marching through the categories, discussing each based on our experience with previous projects and assigning percentages and dollars. When we finished our discussion, I would announce a percentage, and we would then create the associated “identified savings.”

Examples included:

- Laundry: 4.23%
- Linen Replacement: 3.62%
- Blood: 3.86%
- Inventory Reduction: 26.35%
- Waste Management: 4.02%

After two hours of exhaustive work, we had covered all the categories, save one. Pharmacy costs, which almost always are equal to or greater than medical/surgical supply costs, were under Marv’s review.

And Marv was not in the office. But he had left a detailed line by line study.

His findings? 0.75%, or .0075!

Less than 1% on the largest single spend. How could we go with that number?

I freaked out and told Peter to call Marv, but Marv was really, really unreachable.

Frustrated, I said, “Peter, we can’t tell them that there was less than a 1% opportunity in Pharmacy. Double it. Make it a percent and a half.”

Well, we submitted our proposal, and to shorten the story, it wasn’t too long before Marv found out about the number I had generously assigned him. I was summoned into the office by “Beary” (not his real name, of course, but so named because he was as big and potentially as mean as any bear in the woods), the engagement Lead. Beary, also a pharmacist, had been accosted and chewed out by Marv, and he was not in a good mood to say the least.

“Where did you and Peter come up with your savings numbers?!” he demanded.

“In the Conference Room in Hopkinton,” I joked.

Beary was not impressed. “Furthermore, how did you get such exact predictions?”

“Listen, Bear,” I started, “We all know that for every one of the categories we are addressing, the savings range is always at least 3-5%. I merely added two numbers past the decimal point, so it looked like we applied scientific analysis instead of a SWAG. It should help us get the job.”

It did.

We got the job.

Our savings target was \$19 million.

We actually saved them \$24 million.

The pharmacy saved 2.3%

Marv still hasn’t forgiven me.

*Fred W. Crans, Bellwether Class of 2020, has more than five decades of healthcare supply chain experience and service in a variety of executive leadership roles that spans military and private-sector communities as well as provider, supplier, group purchasing organization and consultant segments. He currently serves on the Advisory Council of Bellwether League Foundation and as Healthcare Business Development Executive for St. Onge Co. For more, visit Bellwether League Foundation’s web site at <https://www.bellwetherleague.org/>.*



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