

“As a certified professional coach, I leverage all of my PT professional training, business experience, and people experience to help my colleagues grow themselves and their people in ways that are transformational – personally and professionally.”

– Judy Cirullo



## Later Career Change

For 40 years, Judy Cirullo, PT, practiced as a clinician. Now, she is the CEO and owner of Grow Strong Teams. “I coach, consult, and facilitate with health care leaders and their teams,” she says.

In 1979, her first position was at a rehab hospital, but soon after knew she needed to get out on her own. After spending a year working in home health care, she opened her first private practice. In 1986, she sold it to move from California to North Carolina, where her husband was taking his medical residency at Duke University. While there, she owned a part-time private practice and fitness business.

Her next move came five years later, when her husband accepted a medical fellowship in Pennsylvania. She started another PT practice in a health club while also leading the establishment of APTA Aquatics (then called the Aquatic Section) in 1992.

In 1993, her family – including two sons who were 9 and 5 years old then, moved back to the West Coast, and Cirullo, for the fourth and final time, opened an outpatient practice, which she sold in 2018.

How did she move from owning clinics to coaching? Cirullo explains, “Beginning in 2005, I became curious about how to minimize stress and frustration in staffing. Retention and culture came into the forefront of my focus. I explored strategies,

techniques, and tools that might be helpful in my endeavor. I ended up looking outside of the medical field for things that have worked. Fast forward to 2014, and I enrolled a professional coaching program and graduated in 2015.”

Cirullo always believed that connections, relationships, and conversations are the backbone of a solid, thriving team. “However, in health care settings, there is never enough time to allow and nurture relationships within the team members,” she points out. “I wanted to craft a system that could be shared and customized with my colleagues and other health care teams – a system that helped them implement one of the most important skills for retention, conversations, and interaction dynamics. Currently, I help them make sense out of complex and challenging situations, by coaching, facilitating, and teaching others how to shift into a system that supports their success.”

Without a doubt, Cirullo knows that she still has an impact of the physical therapy profession. “As a certified professional coach, I leverage all of my PT professional training, business experience, and people experience to help my colleagues grow themselves and their people in ways that are transformational – personally and professionally. As a result, their impact on the world is so much stronger,” she says.

Cirullo also contributes to the physical therapy field in her own way. “Coaching is about helping each client gain clarity, an action plan, and accountability in what they want and need.

I’m helping them learn how to handle conversational challenges, set up expectations, and develop the self and each team member,” she says. “We are not educated in school about business development, personnel management, importance of relationships, strategies, and skills for becoming a true influential leader. It’s all about people and relationships!”

“It is important to understand and acknowledge that many times, our identity is wrapped up in being a PT or PTA,” says Cirullo. “Once I became aware of this, during my transition, I shifted to understand what my unique qualities and values were, and what drove me. This helped me validate that coaching was in my next chapter after clinical practice. I would not have been able to gain this clarity without it.”