

Five Questions for Harry Layton, CPO, LPO



Harry Layton, CPO, LPO, has been working in O&P since he pushed a broom around his father's shop in Lawton, Oklahoma, at age 11. Now, at 53 years old, Layton can count himself as a clinician, business owner, inventor, university guest lecturer, and active association member. However, what gives the proprietor of Lawton Brace & Limb his greatest sense

of value as a practitioner comes from the lessons in empathy he learned as a result of a car accident in 1993. The life-altering accident left Layton in a week-long coma. He awoke to find half of his body paralyzed and his cognitive abilities "fairly scrambled." After a recovery he calls "nothing short of miraculous," he returned to work a month later, but spent subsequent months regaining the ability to drive and perform other basic tasks. According to Layton, the experience transformed the way he cares for his patients. In 1994, he went on to invent and patent the LADON vacuum-assisted donning system for transfemoral amputees.

1. How did you become involved in O&P?

My grandmother was the corsetiere at the Bone and Joint Hospital in Oklahoma City in the 1940s. My father was one of

the first orthotists to take and pass the ABC [American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics] exam, and he formed the Lawton Brace and Appliance Company. When I was around 11, I was handed a broom and asked to clean up. Then I was allowed to use various machines, started sewing leather for spinal and lower-limb orthotics, branched into metal fabrication, and then transitioned into shoes. After my oldest brother became a prosthetist, I began to gain experience in prosthetics. Finally, I completed certificate programs at Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois.

2. What has motivated or inspired you in your professional pursuits?

Everything seems to fascinate me. I'm motivated to understand how things work. I truly care when people suffer, but I learned to care a heck of a lot more after I experienced my own suffering.

3. How has your career progressed?

My career in the last half of the 1970s was all about learning and constantly adapting learned technologies, looking for better results. In the 1980s, prosthetics progressed so rapidly that I felt kind of uncentered in the profession. Then I had my accident, which changed everything, but when 1994 rolled around, my sister's mother-in-law had a transfemoral amputation. She was a 74-year-old, overweight, arthritic amputee, and her doctors said she'd never walk again. Several synchronistic, inspirational experiences later, I invented a vacuum tool that allowed her to self-don a vacuum-suspension prosthesis without having to use pull socks. That led to me being issued patent no. 5,658,353.

4. What emerging trends do you see for O&P?

There are a lot of computer-controlled, powered devices hanging in closets because they're too heavy and bulky for the average amputee. Designing away that compromise will make the difference between them being used or not.

5. How do you set yourself apart from competing businesses and practitioners in your area?

Because of my empathy for people who want to achieve very basic self-care abilities, I've tried to achieve a lot of things, and a lot of the time, I've failed. From those failures, I've learned. There are folks who've been doing this stuff for 30 years, but they're doing the same stuff now that they were doing 30 years ago. To me, the way to help people is to embrace change, experiment, take the pitfalls of those experiments, learn from them, and continue on from there. **WEB QUICK FIND: EDFTF1208**

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