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**ATTRACTING & retaining
TOP TALENT**

LCP Dental Team Coaching (formerly Julie Weir & Associates) is recognized as the premier consulting firm specializing in pediatric dentistry since 1996.

Attracting and Retaining Top Talent

Attracting and retaining productive team members is one of the most critical benchmarks of healthy dental practices. Without the correct number of team members, existing employees get burned out, and operating a profitable practice becomes impossible. This article focuses on team member retention, which is integral in making the business thrive and achieve its goals. What's recently been referred to as the "Turnover Tsunami" or the "Great Resignation" has put many employers on edge as they have watched some of their best team players and top talent resign. Team members leave for many reasons, such as losing trust in leadership, lack of affirmation, higher compensation and starting a new career. Meanwhile, employers are scrambling to recruit swiftly and develop long-term retention solutions before it's too late. Technology has changed significantly in dentistry, and so has successful team member engagement and retention.

Many team members are bidding their current positions farewell due to not feeling appreciated. Now more than ever, employers must show rather than tell their team members just how much they care. Far too many new job opportunities are swarming the internet tempting team members to leave. Doctors must now have the leadership skills to attract and retain great team members.

Tackling turnover starts with recruitment. The goal is to hire great team members who will perform well and remain long-term. Employers should pay attention to their role in keeping team members engaged. Failing to take that responsibility seriously could make even the most motivated team members look elsewhere.

Top retention avenues for dental practices to attract and retain their team:

VISION, CORE VALUES, AND PRACTICE CULTURE

- Discuss the workplace culture that each team member is expected to support. The appearance of the practice is part of the culture. How the team shows up, their interactions with one another, and with patients and their parents are all part of the culture.
- The doctor should share their vision for the practice and the "why" behind their motivators and chosen passion for pediatric dentistry.
- As a team, create two practice mission statements that align with the goals of the doctor's vision; 1) A practice mission statement on how to serve the patients and parents and 2) A team mission statement on how to serve each other. A shared mission statement will encourage a unified team and remind everyone of the code of honor to which everyone is committed.

- Post your practice mission statement in the office for the patients and parents to see. Post your team mission statement in your team breakroom.
- When meeting with a potential team member, provide them with the office's mission statement and ask them what stands out and how they will represent the practice's mission.
- Revisit the practice vision, mission statements, and core practice values with the team. An excellent place to do this is at monthly team meetings.

CREATE A CULTURE OF TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

- Team members want to have trust and confidence in their leaders. Be the kind of leader that team members want to follow:
- Lead confidently. Empower your team and communicate often.

- Set the example. Be the first to arrive, the last to leave, and have a smile on your face.
- Understand that your attitude will set the mood/tone for the day. The team will absorb their leader's mood, and it will impact the patients.
- Show personal interest in each team member.
- Encourage team members to create strong workplace relationships where they can depend on and rely on each other.
- Team member stagnation is unproductive for business and can be the precursor to top performers leaving.
- Ask them about their professional and personal goals. Offer more challenging tasks or tasks that align more with their skills and personality.
- Conduct team member surveys. What motivates them? What would they like to change? Complete exit interviews when employees leave.

IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

- Emotional intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions and handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.
- Leaders must be self-aware, self-regulated, empathic, and have motivation.
- Have any potential new hires complete assessments before extending an offer to see how they will fit in with your current team.

PROVIDE FEEDBACK AND SHOW RECOGNITION

- Team members' personalities, emotions, and strengths impact their work and productivity. Schedule and conduct regular performance reviews.
- Recognize positive behavior instantly by telling team members how you value the behavior and the positive impact.
- Publicly celebrate success and verbally express gratitude.
- At monthly meetings, award certain team members that went above and beyond during the previous month. Create awards that the team can vote on to recognize their team members.
- When interviewing potential candidates, share how you recognize the team and show gratitude, as this is a great recruiting tool.

TEAM ENGAGEMENT

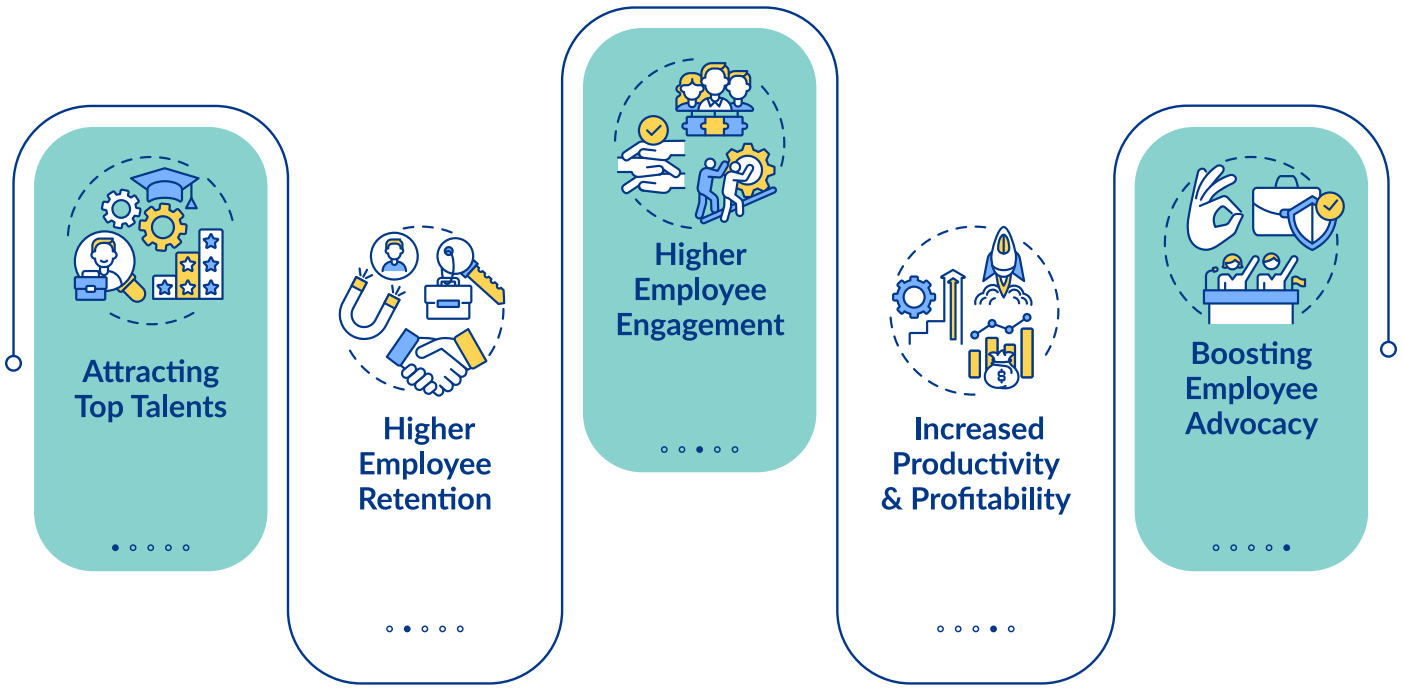
- Doctors empower their teams by regularly asking for ideas and feedback for practice improvement.
- Involve office leaders in business decisions. Invite team members to share and listen. If the team feels that their ideas are heard, validated, and implemented, they will be more invested.

WARNING SIGNS OF POOR ENGAGEMENT

- Sarcasm, arriving late, frequent absences, lack of care for patients, "This isn't my job", passing blame, and high turnover.

REWARDS/INCENTIVE PLANS

- Engaged team members directly impact the bottom line. Incentives can be put into place to encourage certain behaviors or outcomes. People weigh an incentive's value by how difficult it is to earn. The reward will not produce the desired result if the goal is unattainable and may cause team members to become unengaged.
- Are financial or non-financial incentives more effective? Although everyone enjoys receiving monetary rewards, money alone does not buy happiness and can lead to entitlement.
- Research has shown that when team members feel a sense of belonging and are recognized for making a positive difference, they are more likely to stay long-term and put forth their best efforts because they feel appreciated and connected to their leaders and team.
- Ideas for Rewards:
 - Financial: cash, gift cards, team bonuses, paid time off, time served incentives
 - Team events: catered lunch, a spa day, amusement park tickets, sporting events, or dinner at their favorite restaurant
 - Non-Financial: team member of the month award, notes of appreciation, advancement opportunities, additional leadership role, continuing education



TEAM MEMBER BENEFITS

- Tailor company benefits to meet team members’ needs; flextime, free meals, or other incentives that can be included.
- Wages and benefits are equal when a team member considers where to work. The sense of value the team member feels from the leader and team will make the difference in retention. Provide each team member with a total compensation calculator to visualize their actual benefits package.
- Health insurance is a top necessity for teams. A medical plan or stipend for purchasing an outside medical plan can help attract and retain a team member who otherwise would not have access.
- Provide an annual benefit towards dental cleanings and treatment for the team member’s children.

- 401k or Profit-Sharing plans can help with team member retention because the longer the team member stays with the practice, the more vested they are and will receive a higher benefit from the retirement plan.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CONTINUING EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP COURSES

- Engaged team members want a career path with advancement opportunities and options for learning and developing new skills. This can include taking classes or workshops, attending professional or industry conferences, or earning a certificate to expand their knowledge in the field.
- Continuing Education courses should be sponsored and paid for by the employer for the clinical and administrative team.

- Investing in leaders through leadership coaching can help determine which team members would be strong candidates for promotions.
- Hands-on clinical training for clinical team members should be encouraged by the practice to maintain current standards.
- Increase team member availability by cross-training clinical and administrative team members.

GOAL SETTING

- Set practice goals. Communicate and monitor these goals as a team. A healthy work environment is created as teams work toward a common purpose together and are more likely to achieve the goal.
- At a monthly team meeting, celebrate the goal numbers that were met. Discuss what the team can do differently in the next month to meet goals that were not met.
- Make it fun!

TEAM BONDING ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

- The purpose of a team retreat is to get team members focused, collaborate, and recharge their batteries. A great example is spending two days at a resort. Have part of the day discussing practice items and the rest of the day enjoying the hotel, spa, local museums, beach, or nature hikes.

- Team building activities encourage the team to work together outside of the dental environment, discover and understand each other's strengths, create better work relationships, and build a strong sense of dependability with each other. Some ideas for team-building activities are visiting an escape room, cooking classes, or inviting a coach that specializes in team building to spend a day with the team.

Regarding turnover, most people are hyper-focused on the dollar signs tied to team member separations. However, the consequences that fall outside of profit margins raise red flags. The actual cost of employee turnover is depleting team morale, damaging the practice's reputation, and increasing turnover. Investing in team members is vital to an enjoyable and prosperous dental practice.

"Trust is earned, respect is given, and loyalty is demonstrated. Betrayal of any one of those is to lose all three."

Ziad K. Abdelnour

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