



Doctors and Staff: Worlds Apart How to Close the Gap

"Doing the dentistry is the easy part, it's managing the staff that is the hardest part of my job!" How many times have I heard this statement, from doctors, in my consulting career? Thousands! Managing the staff effectively and with low stress is the biggest challenge doctors consistently tell me they have and want help with. Therefore, over the next year of PMM, I will be dedicating my articles to helping doctors become "People Smart" to better meet the challenge of managing their staff successfully!

Being "People Smart" means understanding how people possess different mixtures of behavior traits and how this impacts their job performance. Behavior is defined as a person's natural strengths and traits, work style approach, communication style, motivators/demotivators and reaction under stress, in addition to much more.

"People Smart" knowledge is a powerful leadership tool that can help doctors better lead and manage their staff. It teaches how to best use each person's strengths, understand their limitations and provide the different motivators that each staff member has that will empower them to be more productive and experience greater job satisfaction.

People Come From Four Different "Planets"

The most important point to realize when you are managing employees is that they all come with a mixture of four different behavior traits and a preferred work style approach. After extensive research, Professional Dynametric Programs (PDP), a worldwide leader in top-of-the-line behavioral assessment solutions for businesses, has defined the four behavior traits as Dominance (take charge), Extroversion (people), Pace (patience) and Conformity (systems). Each trait has high and low behavioral intensities. One of these four high traits will be a person's strongest and dictate 50-70 percent of their behavior. The rest of a person's trait makeup will be made up of either a high or low intensity in the other three traits.

You will see from the following descriptions of the four behavior traits how very different the strengths and natural reactions of each one are. It is almost like people come from four different "planets," each "planet" with its own natural way of behaving that makes complete sense to the other people that come from that same "planet", but it makes no sense to someone from a different planet.

After learning about the four "planets" and work style approaches, doctors have a better insight as to why some of

the employees function in the way they do, especially if the employee is from a "planet" different from the doctor.

Behavior Traits (The Four "Planets")

High Dominant (take charge)

- Can take charge and comfortable with risks
- Interested in accomplishing goals and bottom line results
- Prefer not to be bothered with details
- Can perform well with minimal controls and supervision
- Will be stressed and leave behind a work environment where they are micro-managed
- Their communication style is short and to the point, can often be interpreted as blunt
- Can become dictatorial when stressed

Low Dominant

- Does not want to be in charge, looks for strong leadership
- Very supportive to manager
- Agreeable

High Extrovert (people)

- Outgoing, enthusiastic, motivating
- Prefers to interact with people, good with small talk and making others feel welcomed and comfortable
- Thrives on positive interactions with others praise, recognition and being part of a team
- Will not stay in a work environment where they are isolated, rejected or unappreciated
- Their communication style is persuasive and they enjoy talking; sometime to a point that it distracts them from their work
- Can verbally attack a coworker when stressed

Low Extrovert

- Does not mind working alone
- Enjoys quiet time; private individual
- Quiet with people they do not know

High Pace (patience)

- Prefers routines and working on one thing at a time
- Thrives in a work environment that is stable, cooperative and harmonious
- Does not adapt easily to sudden changes, likes



time to think in order to adjust if change occurs

- Will be stressed and/or perform poorly in an unpredictable work environment
- Avoids confrontation
- Their communication style is warm, friendly and careful to avoid confrontation
- May think or act out passive aggressive actions when stressed

Low Pace

- Likes change and fast pace
- Can easily multi-task
- Impatient

High Conformity (systems)

- Prefers a structured work environment with standard operating procedures, disorganization irritates them
- Concerned with quality, accuracy; needs time to attend to details
- Avoids risks and trying new things
- Seeks regular praise, updates and confirmation that they are performing their job correctly, does not want unjustified criticism
- Their communication style is guarded, cautious and exacting because they are concerned with always being right
- Will be stressed and/or perform poorly in a chaotic and disorganized work environment

Low Extrovert

- Can see the big picture and does not need a preset structure to work in
- Independent, wants to live by their own rules
- Flexible

Behavior Traits (The Four “Planets”)

There are three major ways that people approach getting a job done. Many times doctors do not understand why their employees always wait to be told what to do or why their employees do not just see the jobs at hand and do it! This can easily be explained by understanding the three work style approaches; Thrust, Ste-Nacity and Allegiance.

Thrust

- An inner drive to push quickly to get the job done
- Initiates and completes a project or task
- Comfortable with not having an exact plan laid out before beginning a project, figuring it out along the way

Ste-Nacity

- A coined word of PDP from steadfast and tenacious
- An inner drive that gets the job done in a steady, persistent manner
- Initiates and completes a project or task

Allegiance

- Looks to an outer directed source (supervisor) to be told what needs to be done
- Supports completing a project or task; rarely initiates because he/she does not want to make a mistake

It can be very frustrating for a doctor that has a Thrust work style approach to work with an employee who has the opposite work style approach of Allegiance because it is natural for the doctor to jump right into a project, while expecting the same behavior from his/her employees. Once a doctor and the employee have a better understanding of each other's work styles, the doctor can be more proactive in directing employee actions and the employee can be more proactive in initiating tasks on their own.

Why Stress Occurs on Dental Teams

As you can see, these four “planets” and the three work style approaches are very different from each other. Each, with their own unique set of behaviors. Stress occurs in dental teams because doctors and team members do not understand these differences and struggle with thinking “why can't he/she be more like me in the way they work!” Instead of fighting these differences, the savvy team understands what “planet” they each come from and works with their differences.

I have profiled hundreds of dental staff members and have found that 90 percent of dental employees that are from the “planets” of Pace and Conformity with an Allegiant work style. This is because dentistry is a very repetitive and exacting type of work. The Pace/Conformity traits enjoy methodical tasks, paying attention to detail and avoiding conflict. They are perfectionists who want to concentrate on one thing at a time and do it right. The Allegiant work approach ties into the Pace/Conformity traits because if they do what they are told, instead of initiating a task, confrontations are avoided. Stress occurs because the entrepreneurial doctor is often from the planet of Dominance or Extroversion, which is usually just the opposite of the majority of dental employees.

Another interesting difference in people is their response to change. A successful practice must make changes to continually improve systems and adapt to the marketplace. Each “planet” accepts change in a different manner. Pace and Conformity take more time to make changes than Dominance and Extroversion because “Pacers” and “Conformists” need extra time to think and process the details and decide if the change is the “right” thing to do, since they are driven to be correct and avoid conflict. Dominance and Extroversion can accept and can make changes more quickly because details are not as important to them and they do not get as stressed if the change has glitches in it that have to be worked out.

Doctors who are constantly making changes in systems, before thinking it through and discussing the pros and cons with the team, can send their team into turmoil and create chaos. I have seen this happen more than once. A doctor is frustrated with how things are going in the office, so he/she announces a litany of changes that are going to take place immediately. It would be better to hold a team meeting to identify the frustrations and roadblocks the team is experiencing. Then, as a group, come up with a solution to each roadblock that is agreed upon and the date it will be implemented. That way, there is a consensus of the team for an improved way of working together. The Pace/Conformity team members have had time to adapt, thus creating a greater chance for success.





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