



Key Components in Employee Retention

Julie Weir & Associates is recognized as the premier consulting firm specializing in pediatric dentistry since 1996.

High retention of productive employees is one of the most critical benchmarks of a healthy dental practice. Employee retention is integral in making a business thrive and achieve its goals. In the last five years, there has been a dramatic shift in workplace expectations. Currently, competitive pay and benefits no longer will retain top performers. Employees now desire a sense of fulfillment in the workplace with opportunities that allow and encourage personal growth and development or they will look for these opportunities elsewhere. Just as technology has changed significantly in dentistry, so has successful employee engagement and retention. Doctors must now have the leadership skills to attract and retain great employees.

SHARING PRACTICE MISSION, VALUES AND CULTURE

- Understanding a common goal inspires employees to be engaged and driven by a greater purpose. The doctor should share their vision for the practice and the *why* behind their motivators and chosen passion of pediatric dentistry. This will help the team better understand what they are a part of and being asked to help create.
- Discuss the work place culture that each team member is expected to support. This is represented through the office decor, the team's appearance, verbal skills and how they interact with each another as well as with the patients and parents.
- Understand each employee's set of motivators and growth goals. Look for ways to help them feel engaged and fulfilled.
- 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 serve as a reminder of the code of honor everyone is expected to abide by.
- Revisit the practice vision, mission statements and core practice values consistently with your team to stay on track.

BUILD TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

- Employees want to have trust and confidence in their leaders. Be the kind of leader that employees want to follow:
 - Show confidence in your work and ability to lead.
 - Be the first to arrive for the morning meeting and welcome everyone with a smile on your face.
 - Understand your attitude will set the mood/tone for the day.
 - Show personal interest and encouragement in each employee.

- Simon Sinek, motivational author and consultant says, "A team is not a group of people who work together. A team is a group of people who *trust* each other." It is important for the doctor to create a foundation of trust with the team by trusting them to make the right decisions and delegate tasks with the courage that the task will get done correctly.
- Encourage employees to create strong workplace relationships where they feel they can depend and rely on each other.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

- Emotional intelligence is defined as the capacity to be aware of, control and express one's emotions, and handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. The more emotionally intelligent a leader and team is, the happier and more productive the team will be because team members will feel recognized and appreciated.
- When the doctor shows vulnerability and kindness, it lets team members know that they are cared for as more than just employees.

APPRECIATE, RECOGNIZE AND GIVE FEEDBACK

- Employee's personality, emotions and strengths all impact their work and productivity.
- Offering guidance and recognizing each employee's contributions, accomplishments and positive behaviors creates confidence in the employee that their job performance is aligned with the practice's goals and values.
- Recognize positive behavior instantly by telling employees how you value the behavior and how it makes a positive impact.
- Publicly celebrate success. Hold monthly award ceremonies for employees when they have accomplished goals or have made a difference in a patient or parent's day.

ENGAGEMENT

- Doctors can empower their team by regularly asking for ideas and feedback for practice improvement.
- Include co-leaders in business decisions. Get them involved. If the team feels that their ideas are heard, validated and implemented, the more invested they will be.
- Employees want stimulating work. Keep growing and introducing new ideas to the team.
- If you find an employee seems unfulfilled, find out what their work-place goals are, if appropriate, offer more challenging tasks or tasks that align more with their skills and personality.

INCENTIVE/REWARD PROGRAMS

- Engaged employees 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. If the goal is unattainable, the incentive will not produce the desired result. An effective rewards program must be attainable to engage employees.
- Doctors ask whether financial or non-financial incentives are more effective. Although everyone enjoys receiving financial rewards, money alone does not buy happiness and it does not retain employees. Wages and benefits are the equalizer when an employee is considering where to work. It is the sense of value the employee feels from the leader and team that will make the difference in staying or leaving. Research has shown that when employees 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
 - Team events: catered lunch, dinner and play, shopping afternoon, family day at an amusement park
 - Non-financial: team member of the month award, notes of appreciation, advancement opportunities, additional leadership role, continuing education

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

- Health insurance is a top necessity for an employee. A strong medical plan can help retain an employee who otherwise would not have access.
- An annual benefit towards dental cleanings and treatment for the employee's children.
- 401k and profit sharing plans can help with employee retention because the longer the employee stays with the practice, the more vested they are and will receive a higher benefit from the retirement plan.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CONTINUING EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP COURSES

- Professional development is more than continuing education courses and leadership exercises. Employees want a true career path with advancement opportunities and options for learning and developing new skills.
- Continuing education courses should be sponsored and paid for by the employer. This is true for both the clinical team and front office team. HIPAA, OSHA, CPR and first-aid are mandatory regulations that by law should have scheduled trainings provided by the practice.
- Leadership courses for practice leaders (doctors, practice administrators, office managers, front office coordinators and clinical coordinators) encourage personal growth and are instrumental to developing leaders within the team.
- Hands-on clinical trainings for clinical staff should be encouraged by the practice to maintain current standards.
- Cross-train some clinical and the front office team members. This will increase employee availability and benefit the team member by continuing to learn new skills.

SETTING GOALS

- Set practice goals using the March *PMM* article on business metrics. Communicate and monitor these goals as a team. When a team understands a clear benchmark that is to be met, it creates a strong work environment as they work toward a common objective together and they are more likely to achieve the goal.



- At a monthly team meeting, celebrate the goal numbers that were met and discuss the goal numbers that were not met and what the team can do differently in the next month to try to meet those goals.

TEAM RETREATS AND TEAM BUILDING

- The purpose of a team retreat is to get team members focused, encourage bonding and energize and refresh the team. Team retreats are different than team building exercises; they create an opportunity to collaborate in a more concentrated setting to celebrate success and problem solve to overcome areas in the practice that need improvement. Some ideas for off-site team retreats are spending two days at a resort and have part of the day discussing practice items and the rest of the day enjoying the hotel, spa, local museums and art galleries, going for hikes and much more.

- Team building activities are important because they 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 a ropes course, cooking classes or inviting a coach that specializes in team building to spend an afternoon with your team.

There is a high financial cost to employee turnover. Studies have shown that replacing an employee can cost 1.5-2 times the employee's annual salary in lost productivity. The integral components in employee retention is to understand and value each individual team member, to help them develop skills for personal and professional growth that benefit both themselves and the practice as a whole. Investing in employees is vital to an enjoyable and prosperous dental practice.

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader”

John Quincy Adams

Published four times a year, Practice Management and Marketing News is a featured column in Pediatric Dentistry Today.

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(Registration available for a limited time! See all details and register at JulieWeir.com)

If your response is YES to any of the following questions, then you and your leaders will not want to miss this event!

- ◆ Could communication be better between your administrative team and clinical team?
- ◆ Would you like to know which software reports you should be reviewing and what all those numbers mean?
- ◆ Want to know the best return on investment in regards to Marketing?
- ◆ Would you like to increase staff morale, learn to train employees, and create a cohesive team?
- ◆ Do you see leadership potential in a team member but not sure how to develop that within them?

Training is for all office leaders: Dentists, Practice Administrators, Office Managers,
Clinical and Front Office Coordinators



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