



## Strong Leadership Takes Place in Many Different Ways

### Communication is the Key to A Well-Oiled Dental Machine

- Clearly communicate your vision and practice goals to your team. If a stranger asked your team what are the top three practice goals, what would they say? Would their answers be consistent? At your next team meeting, ask this question, their answers will be your leadership mirror.
- Share your vision regularly so that it becomes engrained in the team. This will be their guiding light when the going gets tough.

### Be Open to New Ideas

- Staff members see what you as the dentist cannot. They have a unique view that is not burdened by bills or administrative issues. Use them as your internal consultants. In turn, they will feel further invested in the practice.

### Set Clear Goals and Hold Employees Accountable

- Teams need practice goals clearly communicated so they can meet and exceed them; daily production (doctor, recall, hospital), collection ratio, number of work days/month (doctor, recall, hospital), number of new patients/month and overhead expense percentage.
- Hold employees accountable in a timely manner, otherwise the team is playing without rules which causes teamwork and morale to break down.

### Have Strong Practice Management Systems

- A strong set of systems helps maximize the skills of each team member, there is less stress and higher productivity and collections because of increased efficiency.

### Show Appreciation

- Being a part of a dental team can feel like a thankless job at times, as a leader you are only as good as the team around you. Show appreciation to your employees by praising a unique strength of theirs on a weekly basis. These comments to individual employees will create job satisfaction and loyalty.

### Involve Your Team in Future Goal Setting

- Most dental teams are not aware of the amount of administrative work it takes to own a practice. Do not hold the total weight on your shoulders. Your team wants to be a part of growing your business so invite them into the process of setting future goals.

### Give Regular Feedback

- Typically, doctors do not give frequent feedback which leaves the employees disillusioned when they are given a less than perfect review. Employees crave feedback; they need it to grow and continue to be a contributing part of the team. The more frequent the feedback, the easier the annual review process will become.

### Hold Annual Reviews

- The annual review is separate from a wage increase consideration. The annual review is a time to share with the employee what you appreciate they are contributing and to talk about the next growth areas and goals that you and/or the employee may have and how to achieve them. It is a leader's job to help each employee grow to their full potential. Both parties win with this philosophy.

### Motivate Team Members With Incentive Programs

- An incentive program should be metric based. Typically this is built around a collection, production, and new patient goal, but can be customized to whatever metric needs the most attention. This program can not only boost staff morale, but the bottom line as well.

### Delegate Non-clinical Tasks

- Doctors are the CEO, CFO, manufacturer, customer service department, and the marketing/sales rep all wrapped up into one very exhausted package. To be able to dedicate the time and energy needed to patients, doctors must clearly delegate non-clinical duties to others in the office and hold them accountable to complete the tasks correctly and on time.

### Train New Team Members Well

- Most turnovers that occur with new hires are due to poor training. Make sure a senior team member is dedicated to the training of the new hire. Have an up-to-date Standard Operating Systems (SOP) manual to use in the training process. Set clear and concise expectations and provide regular feedback on their performance. The investment spent in the beginning will pay off with a long-term productive employee.

### Practice Strong Financial Management

- Many dentists do not have checks and balances for their daily deposits and office costs, making them prime targets for embezzlement. Work with a consultant or an accountant to set up a system to mitigate the opportunity for loss.
- Know your break-even point and tie production and collections goals to this number to meet overhead expenses, doctor income and retirement savings. A good CPA or consultant can put together a business plan for your practice.

### Make the Leadership Delineation Clear Between the Doctor and the Office Manager

- When leadership tasks are unclear, staff will not know who to approach with questions and whose leadership to follow. Therefore, having a detailed leadership organizational chart illustrating all tasks involved is very important.



**Make Necessary Staff Changes**

- Sometimes employees simply do not fit into your vision. When these issues arise, ask yourself; is this a question of training or work ethic? If the employee needs further training, provide it and move forward. If the employee has had thorough training, then it is a work ethic issue and cannot always be changed. Remember that crazy and lazy are like cancer, they spread; cut them out and cut them out fast.
- It is never easy to deal with the discipline or termination of a team member. However, teams appreciate the leadership it takes to do what is necessary with employees who are not fitting in and will feel the doctor is being authentic to the practice vision.



What does all this mean for the stand alone dental practice and the new front line of doctors charging out of school with their drills high in the air? It means it is time for doctors to get their game face on. It's time for doctors to do all they can to help shape their future instead of dreading it. It's time for doctors to learn and demonstrate strong leadership skills in their practice. Though we are not sure what the future of practicing dentistry brings, we do know the stronger one is going into battle, the more likely they are to win. Doctors armed with strong leadership skills will be ready for whatever battles come their way.

“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.”

~ Socrates

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