



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

Four Easy Ways to Pivot from Passive to Active Leadership

Leading a successful pediatric dental practice requires teamwork. Like every great team, there must be a captain, a leader, a person that steps up to ensure the team wins! For some, the idea of leading a team sounds exciting; however, the practice of becoming a great leader can feel quite intimidating for those who do not feel like a natural born leader.

Leadership, much like anything in life begins with a simple decision. A decision to be proactive instead of being passive. In the immortal words of Hall of Fame football coach Vince Lombardi, "Leaders aren't born; they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work."

The genesis of outstanding leadership is found in a simple decision to actively lead a team instead of passively managing a group of individuals. Successful pediatric dental practice leaders decide to proactively lead in four cornerstone areas.

DECISION 1: DECIDE TO SCHEDULE AND LEAD OUTSTANDING MEETINGS

If the morning huddle, team meeting, or department meeting is not outstanding, it is time to ask why. Why does the team seem bored? Why isn't anyone taking these meetings seriously? How can we get more engaged and more connected to the purpose of this meeting? Where is the energy and excitement? Helpful Practices:

- **Set a clear agenda:** A well-structured agenda outlining the meeting's topics and goals will help keep everyone on track and ensure all essential items are covered.
- **Encourage participation:** Encourage all team members to participate and share any thoughts and creative ideas. Reward participation in a fun or meaningful way to help each person know how valuable insights and ideas are to the team.

- **Follow up:** Follow up on action items and hold individuals accountable for assignments. This could be accomplished through follow-up emails, team reminders, or team check-ins.

Leaders looking forward to meetings and bringing positive energy and expectations is an excellent start towards having outstanding meetings.

DECISION 2: DECIDE TO ACTIVELY INVEST TIME AND ENERGY IN KEY PLAYERS AND LEADERS

Like many families, top performers and dependable team members are often overlooked, and the focus is shifted to "problem children." Investing time with the team members who share the responsibility for the practice success is not always an obvious decision. So, decide today to Invest time in mentoring and connecting with these team members instead of waiting until there is a problem.

Helpful Practices:

- **Set clear goals:** Clearly outline the practice's objectives and what is expected from each team member. Communicate how goals align with the practice's mission. This adds meaning and significance to the tasks.
- **Provide regular feedback:** Feedback is crucial for growth and development. Feedback should be provided consistently to keep the team motivated and engaged. Feedback should recognize what is already being done well and what could be improved in the future.
- **Recognize success:** Celebrate team members' successes regularly, as this can go a long way in elevating team morale, not only for the person being recognized but for the rest of the team. When one person wins, the whole team wins.

DECISION 3: DECIDE TO EMBRACE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS AND CONFLICT

Having challenging conversations with team members is common, but many leaders avoid these conversations whenever possible and hope that the issue magically improves in the future. A strategy that rarely if ever works. This passive leadership behavior can inhibit team growth and result in poor team performance. Conversations about poor performance, asking team members to change habits, or confronting difficult team politics can often be uncomfortable. This is why many leaders choose to ignore these issues.

Helpful Practices:

- **Prepare ahead:** Set time aside to prepare for the discussion. Determine the goals of the conversation, the specific problems that need to be discussed, and any potential solutions to offer. Preparation allows a leader to be clear and concise instead of “winging” this important interaction.
- **Schedule a time:** Scheduling time on the calendar to have a difficult conversation increases the odds that it will happen and not be procrastinated.
- **Start with positivity:** Begin the conversation with positive feedback before addressing the problematic behavior.
- **Address the problem not the person:** If there is an action or behavior that needs to be addressed, focus on the problem instead of the person. For example, instead of saying, “You always are late to the team huddle, and you need to be on time.” Consider saying, “Starting our huddle on time is important, but what is most important is us all feeling like a complete team. When someone is missing, the team is incomplete. We need you to be our best! What could support timely attendance to morning huddle?” The problem is that the team is not a team when all members are not present.

DECISION 4: DECIDE TO COMMUNICATE MORE

It has been said that repetition is the mother of skill, and too often, important messages are communicated once and then filed away. As a leader, taking the responsibility to become a champion of the practice mission statement, to repeat priorities to the team, and to call out the practice core values will empower the team with the key messages of the practice. These messages cannot be over communicated.

Helpful Practices:

- **Keep communications clear and concise:** Be straightforward and clear when communicating information. This will help avoid confusion and inspire correct action.
- **Utilize various channels:** Deliver key messages using a variety of communication channels, such as email, team meetings, or even social media.
- **Reinforce frequently:** Repetition is the key to retention, and constantly reinforcing vital messages or goals is an excellent way to keep everyone on track. If the team has heard the practice mission statement once, it will not be retained. However, if every team meeting highlights someone who demonstrated a core piece of the vision and the mission statement is repeated daily, the odds that the team will not only know but live out the practice mission and vision increases significantly.

Passive leadership, while comfortable for the moment, will eventually give way to larger problems. When leaders abdicate the responsibility to lead, other less savory forces will direct the team. In the absence of good leadership, chaos will reign. Sometimes, several leaders must work together to take ownership of all four of these cornerstone decision areas. The wonderful thing about leadership is that it does not need to be a solo activity.

Making these four decisions—to have outstanding meetings, invest in key team members, have difficult conversations, and communicate more—sets practice leaders on the path of proactive leadership. This allows practice leaders to recognize issues before they become big problems.

Seth Godin said, "If you throw a bucket of water on a small campfire, you'll succeed in putting it out. If you pour a bucketful of sake into one of those little glasses, you'll waste most of it and ruin the table setting. If you try to use a bucket to refill a dried-out lake, not much will happen. Relativity is everywhere we look." What does this mean? It means paying attention to the team and what is needed. Often,

leaders feel pressured to bring a large bucket of resources and answers to a small sake glass problem, and they waste valuable energy. The same is true when a leader passively avoids addressing minor sake glass size problems, which can quickly turn into large bucket problems.

Decide to be proactive. Decide to lead!

"You cannot make progress
without making decisions."

Jim Rohn

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