



LCP Dental Team Coaching is recognized as the premier consulting firm specializing in pediatric dentistry since 1996.

Actionable Steps for Optimal Leadership Performance

A doctor should always assume and demonstrate leadership skills to positively influence their team. Most doctors do not realize the power leadership actions have on the level of team stress, job satisfaction and practice profitability. Over our many years of coaching pediatric dental practices across the country, we can emphatically say, when a doctor is not performing leadership actions, they experience more stress and lower profitability due to lack of planning and low employee job performance, thus resulting in poor functioning systems and teamwork.

Doctors can delegate leadership actions to co-leaders (i.e., office coordinator, practice administrator, clinical coordinator, etc.), however, the doctor must hold these co-leaders accountable. In today's economic environment of increased competition and reduced insurance reimbursement, strong leadership is vital for enjoyable and profitable practice performance.

According to the book "The Attributes" by Rich Diviney:

- Leadership is not a position. It's a behavior.
- Leaders are defined by those whom they lead.
- People follow leaders willingly and eagerly, because leaders motivate and influence.

Anyone can be a great leader, regardless of their personality type if they consistently and successfully carry out the following leadership actions:

Leadership Actions

Continually evaluate if things can be done better. Do not settle for the status quo.

- Strive to improve efficiency, systems, and team members.

Procure excellent advisors, mentors and support system.

- These may include an accountant, attorney, practice management consultant/coach among others.
- Find successful professionals who are willing to share their knowledge. Create a support system with colleagues that you can meet with regularly or call for advice.

Lead by example and cultivate a healthy practice culture.

- A doctor is in control of the practice culture. It can be a healthy environment that is fun and productive or a dysfunctional environment that is stressful and unproductive. The doctor's behavior sets the standard and defines this culture; therefore, doctors must hold themselves to high standards.

- Team members can safely communicate openly and honestly.
- Expressing a different opinion is not feared. A discussion between parties can take place and a solution or compromise reached.
- Employees are not afraid to take risks and try new things. They are comfortable in taking ownership of a mistake and learning from it.
- Praise and support of each other are shared daily.
- Gossip is not tolerated.
- Problem employees are held accountable in a timely manner to improve their behavior, or they are dismissed.
- Problem patients/parents are dismissed from the practice.

Define your practice vision and share it with the team.

- When all team members are working toward a common vision and goals, the probability of success greatly increases, and the team's energy becomes symbiotic.

Have strong fiscal management.

- Create an annual business plan and set goals that are monitored regularly.
 - Define goals for breakeven point, daily producer production (doctor, hygiene, hospital, in-office GA or IV Sedation), number of producer workdays/month, new patients/month, monthly collections, collection ratio, accounts receivable, overhead expense budget.
- Utilize reports in the practice management software.

- Update fees annually.
- Begin saving for retirement early and regularly.
 - Create the habit of making a monthly deposit (no matter how small) into a retirement account. The amount of the deposit can increase as the practice grows.

Be “People Smart”: understand people’s different behavior traits and strengths.

- Managing teams effectively and with low stress is one of the biggest challenges doctors face. Being “People Smart” is a powerful leadership tool that helps a doctor better lead, manage and hire people by understanding:
 - People possess different mixtures of behavior traits and how this impacts their job performance.
 - A person’s strengths and limitations to be able to hire and coach effectively.
 - Each person’s motivators that empower them to be more productive and experience greater job satisfaction.
- After extensive research, Professional DynaMetric Programs (PDP), www.pdpglobal.com, 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 (detail/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 natural behavior and responses.** It is almost like people come from four different “planets”; each “planet” with its own natural way of behaving and communicating. After learning about the four “planets” and work style approaches, doctors have a better insight as to why employees function the way they do.

Hold employees accountable.

- Many doctors find it difficult to discuss job performance issues with employees. Many doctors will either avoid this necessary leadership skill or carry it out unsuccessfully because it feels confrontational.
- When a doctor does not hold team members accountable for proper job performance and attitude, it becomes discouraging and in turn, the industrious team members will lose respect for the doctor. Team morale and productivity drop and eventually the hardest working among them become frustrated and leave. However, when employees are promptly held accountable for proper job performance, the doctor’s reward will be an enjoyable, high-functioning team that supports the practice vision and where everyone looks forward to coming to work each day.

Motivate with praise, appreciation and recognition.

- Know each employee’s goals and motivators and encourage their development and growth.

- Make employees feel part of the team, it is essential they feel like they matter and make a positive difference.
- Give recognition and praise to each employee for a job well done at least once a week.

Hold regular meetings.

Clear and consistent communication is the only tool a team has to improve how they work together. Teams should meet regularly to discuss the status of the practice; what is working, what is not working, and how they are going to resolve challenges they are facing. Meetings should take place in the office and not in a restaurant over lunch. It is more difficult to discuss confidential practice information or address team issues in a public atmosphere.

• Morning Meetings

- Sets the tone and level of productivity for the day.

• Monthly Team and Marketing Meetings

- Discuss areas that need improvement, goals, and educate the team on new practice information or pediatric dentistry.
- Evaluate marketing efforts and decide on new actions.

• Quarterly Department Meetings

- Departments may include; front desk, restorative assistants, hygiene, and leadership.
- Departments should meet quarterly with the doctor and/or practice coordinator to discuss job duties, problem solve department-specific issues, and evaluate systems.

Celebrate success.

- It is important to recognize the team’s efforts and celebrate milestones and goals. Celebration activities can be:
 - Dinner or lunch.
 - Surprise spa day.
 - Cash bonus.
 - Special gift at five, 10, 15, and 20 year employment anniversaries. This shows other employees how you honor loyalty and a job well done.

Leadership Styles

Two common leadership styles are the **task-oriented** leader and the **transformational/relational** leader. Each style has positive attributes but is not the full set of skills for successfully completing the above leadership actions. A combination of both styles is needed to assure employees complete tasks, follow systems, and pay attention to detail while also creating for the employee a sense of belonging and recognition for the positive difference they contribute. A doctor will be more effective as a leader if they create relationships and build trust with their employees.

A Task-Oriented Leader

- Has high standards for themselves and others.
- Leads the team by setting specific goals for the practice and each employee, then evaluates, and trains the team to ensure results are achieved.
- Is detailed, loves structure, standard operating procedures, and step-by-step plans in place.
- Is logical, analytical, and completes tasks in a timely manner.
- Is fair when rewarding or requesting a performance change from team members.
- Can be conflict-avoidant and not hold employees accountable promptly.

Transformational/Relational Leader

- Shares their vision for the practice with the team so the team is working toward common goals.
- Focuses more on the big picture.
- Likes to delegate to co-leaders who are attentive to detail and organized.
- Is a risk-taker. Always looking for new and better ways to get things done effectively and efficiently.
- Supports and develops employees beyond formal job descriptions by knowing their motivators and goals.

- Encourages employees to think forward, be creative and contribute ideas that can positively impact practice performance.

What is Your Style?

Take a few minutes to ask yourself the following questions and look for ways to optimize your leadership:

- Am I fully embracing the leadership role?
- What is my natural leadership style? Am I task-oriented or transformational/relational?
- Do I perform the leadership actions listed above? What can I start doing or do better?
- Do I regularly share my vision for the practice with the team? Are we moving in that direction?
- Is there a healthy practice culture?
- Do I help foster a sense of belonging with employees?
- Do I hold employees accountable in a timely manner?
- Do I recognize individual employees for their contributions?
- Do we celebrate successes?

Based on these responses, take a few minutes to visualize and write down what it would look like to be the optimal leader your team needs to inspire them to function at their optimal performance.

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At LCP Dental Team Coaching, we offer a comprehensive, results-oriented, phased approach to systems and processes that help dental practices achieve the tangible results they have been looking for!



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