



A Great Place to Work!

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An office environment where patients receive the best care requires staff members who can work efficiently and affectively – and are motivated to do so. To be motivated, staff members must feel good about themselves, feel what they are doing is important, feel respected by their dentist/ manager, feel they are being treated equal to others, and be allowed to do what they do best every day.

Staff development involves acceptance of each staff member by his or her manager, patients and other staff, and it involves imparting knowledge about the job and how it is done technically and behaviorally. As you impart knowledge and guide the new employee, it is important to keep in mind the new staff

member's need to be accepted in the new workplace environment.

Here are some pointers for maximizing your effectiveness:

When teaching someone, start with the basics. Assume nothing. Explain in clear, simple language exactly what the job is and how it is to be done. You are setting up your expectations.

The easiest way to lead is to give orders, make demands and threaten punishment. However, this way creates an unsettling atmosphere that is not conducive to a cooperative, self-motivated staff. Make requests.

Seek to identify the unique strengths and talent of each staff member. Develop dynamic job descriptions and delegate tasks that amplify their strength and minimize their non-strength. People tend to grow more from focusing on success and strength than on non-strength and failure.

Assume no staff member intentionally does something wrong. Do not be dogmatic or negative when you point out

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mistakes. Help them correct the error and show them how to avoid making the same mistake again.

Treat each staff member with respect. Their time may be less valuable to your business, but their worth as an individual is equal to yours.

The words “please” and “thank you” can make a staff member feel much better about working for you. It is an easy way to say what they do is important and appreciated. Learn to recognize positive behaviors on the fly.

Do not give the hard, unpleasant jobs to the same staff members time after time. The entire team should share such tasks.

When a staff member asks you a question, give them an answer, and explain how you got the answer so the next time they can figure it out for themselves.

You are a leader and manager, not a therapist, but your attitude toward your team will have a positive effect in this regard. Staff members who take pride in their skills and teamwork will invariably

produce quality work and take great pleasure in it.

Keep in mind that every task, no matter how small, is necessary to create an experience that is best for the patient and all members of the team. Communicate that individual tasks are important, and match them to your staff’s individual talents.

Take time to listen. If you are called upon to solve a problem, it is better to prompt staff members to propose a solution to you first and, if it is an acceptable solution, let them do it their way. There are often several ways to solve a problem. If you have a way that is more appropriate than theirs, explain why. You want to avoid two situations: (1) your staff expects you to solve all problems and waits for you to do it, and (2) they jump to a solution that is not acceptable to you. Certain types of circumstances will occur over and over again. As your staff learns the acceptable solutions, they should feel confident and responsible to pursue them.

Directions should be given in terms of the job, not the individual. For example, you shouldn’t say, “I told you five minutes ago



to seat the next patient.” Instead, you should say, “We need that patient seated right away so we can complete treatment.” Staff members like to feel their dentist/manager cares about them and is concerned about what they think and how they feel. Convey this through your words and actions.

Don’t show favoritism when assigning tasks, creating one-on-one time, developing skills within your office, or providing continuing education. Make every effort to treat all staff members fairly, and take time to impartially deal with any complaints that might arise on an individual basis.

Goals are excellent motivational tools. When assigning a task, specify an amount of time for its completion. Define who, what, where, when and why of a task. Doing so will help you: determine how fast work is getting done, maintain workplace energy and enthusiasm, and over time seek more efficient, effective and “affective” ways to accomplish a task. (Your objective isn’t just to get things done but to get them done with resulting positive feelings.) I recommend you develop three sets of goals:

- Task Goals to be accomplished over a two to four hour period.
- Daily Goals to be accomplished that day and discussed in the “morning huddle.”
- Project Goals that are long term with a timeline of weeks or months.

Each staff member should learn to set daily goals in concert with the dentist/manager and other team members. In that way individual goals become motivational and a synergy occurs over time that allows the team to work more efficiently and effectively.

A staff member’s value to the business and compensation package should correspond with ability to accomplish quality, predictable work that is valued by patients. If the business is more profitable by the staff member’s efforts, this should be reflected in the compensation package. Organizing your business to benchmark and track results in a motivating system in itself.



Developing a Great Place to Work

I have identified seven broad goals for the dental practice:

1. To produce high-quality dentistry.
2. To provide an enjoyable work environment.
3. To provide income for staff and the dentist/manager, and at the same time, create a profit.
4. To develop the skills and abilities of each staff member and doctor.
5. To create camaraderie among the staff members.
6. To help the patient attain Optimal Oral Health.
7. To reach for the best, to be “outstanding” in each area of service.

It's great to have a team working together, doing high-quality work and developing high-quality relationships with themselves and patients. The team feels good about their efforts, themselves and the practice of which they are a part. This creates a desire to continually improve themselves and the practice because they receive feedback and are fairly compensated for their work and the growth they engender in the practice.

Developing a great place to work requires commitment to identifying talented staff members and developing them to encourage an individual relationship, define unique expectations and provide meaningful forms of personal recognition. Choose a positive attitude and intentional behaviors that support your vision for your team.