



Common Threads

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The past year, through the Pankey/Gallup Patient Satisfaction Survey (PSS) program, I have had the opportunity to study more than 130 offices from a behavioral point of view. This perspective was generated through the perceptions of over 5,000 patients and 600 staff members. The PSS program provides the opportunity to discover your patients true attitudes and perceptions of your care, as well as to find out how your staff feels about their workplace environment.

Measuring the impact of your efforts as a dental team gives you insight, which is profoundly important in charting your course for a preferred future. Recognizing and acting upon the recommendations of the Executive Report portion of the PSS final analysis greatly enhances the patient's bond to your practice and infuses your staff with a new sense of purpose. A new perspective develops as well; one that begins with the patients'

point of view and not the doctors' or staffs'.

Can we develop systems that allow us the freedom to individualize our perception in our interchange with and for people, staff or patients, and still get "things" done? By using the arms of the "Management" cross as a conceptual guide, we allow for some overlap in systems.

As "Alumni" you are a part of a unique group at The Pankey Institute, a group that believes in change, growth and the development of persons and enterprises. Peter Drucker says, "Measurement improves performance;" the measures and monitors of your business give you important feedback necessary in the "business of dentistry". Following is an overview of my findings to give you an idea of some areas of strength and the issues where impact is more difficult to achieve.

Good News: we live in a closed behavioral system. As we develop ways of learning and growing between the participants in that system, we impact it entirely. It was described to me years ago as a **Behavioral Triangle**.

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Anytime you impact the relationship between any two points of the pyramid, you impact the whole.

In our attempt as Dental teams to develop patient loyalty and referrals, we need to move beyond our gestalt-type behaviors to higher-order relationships. The term gestalt refers to behaviors that focus on schedules, policies, sterilization, timeliness, neatness (“tidy-Heidi”) and administrative tasks. These behaviors as strengths, are foundational and necessary to afford our patients the assurance that their expectations in terms of cleanliness, sterility, appointment making and office operations are being met. In order to have an impact on our patients we need to earn the right to be heard. Many times if these foundational behaviors are not in place from the patient’s perspective, we have not developed a platform from which to move to higher-order relationships. How do your patient’s perceive the foundational issues in your office?

As we move into higher-order, individualized relationships, areas for development begin to appear. How are we at seeking our patient’s opinion about their treatment program, or getting to know

them as individuals and creating treatment programs to meet their individual needs and wants? This takes a proactive/intentional approach with people and relationships. As we continue to assist staff members in establishing and developing relationships with patients into higher-order, individualized, trust-based relationships, such interaction will improve the patients’ health and loyalty.

The dentist as manager needs to continue activities with staff that facilitate recognition and appreciation for work well done; in other words, celebrate as well as create learning opportunities. Talk to staff about their progress and ask them for their opinion about how the office can improve to meet our patient’s needs. Remember the behavioral pyramid, these experiences are transferable to your other relationships. The best part is that you don’t need to learn or know separate skills – one for patients and one for staff; they are interchangeable.

Overall, staff feels very positive with regard to their work environment in most dental offices. They feel they are able to use their talents appropriately and the dentist cares about them as individuals. They feel they have opportunities at work

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to learn and grow. However, talking frequently with each staff member (management development is one on one) about his/her progress is an opportunity for future development on the part of the dentist. As each staff member experiences these one on one opportunities for growth, they are developed and empowered to facilitate similar experiences with your patients.

I have been told by some alumni, that they have been doing “everything” The Institute has recommended through the years to “know their patient”. Why would they need to survey their patients? My response usually includes a question like “**You** have been **doing**, but what has your patient been **perceiving**? By gathering authentic feedback you will be more affective in developing long term relationships with your patients, directed to specific actions that will unify your staff in pursuit of your vision.

“Who is more foolish, the child afraid of the dark, or the man afraid of the light?” – Maurice Freehill.

Though the fear of “knowing” sometimes gets in the way of our doing what is best for ourselves, better “knowing your patient, your staff and yourself,” continues your growth and development as you seek to influence others through your role as dentist/educator. This is an attribute of a true Leader.

I would genuinely enjoy assisting you in this important step forward. Fax or call me so I can help you begin to grasp what you need to do to increase the loyalty of your patients.