Running a successful dental practice calls on not just your expertise in dentistry but also on your leadership abilities. Being an effective leader will help you focus your staff and your partners on creating and maintaining the kind of dental practice that you can be proud of.

The following eight areas of focus can help practice owners and other dental professionals develop and strengthen leadership skills:

1. **Promote creativity.** When employees are encouraged to express their creativity, they stretch their limits.

2. **Display your passion.** Employees see that you care about your work and your practice.

3. **Listen.** If you don’t know what’s happening in your practice or among your workers, you can’t fix problems or address concerns. Ask questions, check in on staff members in different areas of your practice and find out what’s going on. The more you know, the better you’ll be able to reach your workers and address their needs.

4. **Be honest.** If things have gone wrong or are less than perfect in your practice, own up to it and look for ways to improve. Effective leaders don’t deny weaknesses and mistakes; they learn from them.

5. **Communicate.** People who work with you need to know what direction things are headed. Be sure employees are informed about changes and developments in the practice, particularly those that affect them.

6. **Be a role model.** If you’re asking people to work longer hours, don’t clock out early. If you want staff to abide by a new workflow practice, be sure you’re taking part. Build trust by practicing what you preach, and employees may be increasingly receptive to your leadership.

7. **Be positive.** People will likely be more agreeable if they feel your guidance will lead to something good. Be confident about the direction your practice is taking.

8. **Be open.** Every day you have the opportunity to learn something new, either from your surroundings, what you read, what you observe or the people you work with. Being a leader means continuing to grow and change so you can take your practice with you on the journey.

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