The first impression is the final impression, but…?

By Dr. Ebah Heikal

From a fancy looking clinic to a friendly smile, first impressions are no doubt the most vital impression you will ever make in business so it is important to get it right first time.

But no, this does not just mean making sure that your feet aren’t too smelly or whatever it is that you think a customer or making sure there is a permanent smile imprinted on your face at all times. It is more about the other details.

First impressions are really important in any industry, but in the current economic climate they are more important than ever before. Our patients are continually faced with making so many decisions that we have to make the right impressions in their minds to make it easier for them to choose us. This is a vital part of any dental practice management program.

Shifting away from an obsession with first impressions is vital as it can be so overwhelming and it’s quite well clear of only treating your patient or making sure there is a permanent smile imprinted on your face at all times. It is more about the other details.

The success of your practice is in the hands of everyone within it and depends on their delivering a good service. Any weak link in the chain will have a negative effect on your practice and on your ability to deliver a good service to patients and run a successful dental business. The point of managing performance is to make sure that the performance of your team contributes to the overall performance of your practice, and taking action to improve things when this does not happen.

If you manage performance effectively it will mean that every- one in your practice understands:
• what the practice is trying to achieve,
• their role in helping the practice achieve its objectives
     • what they need to know and what they need to be able to do to fulfill their role
     • the standards of performance required
     • how they can develop their own performance and contribute to development of the practice
     • how they are doing, and if there are performance problems what can be done about them.

However, good performance management looks at how people do their job as well as what they get done. So, how a person approaches their job, or the way they behave as part of a team or communicate with patients and the rest of the team is just as important as what tasks they ac- complish. For example your receptionist might make appoint- ments with unfailing accuracy. Their performance might be described as good. However this receptionist might be routinely unfriendly to patients. In the lat- ter case we are highly unlikely to describe her performance as ‘good’, as we are measuring it on how she behaves towards their patients (how they are behaving) and not solely on what they do (their activity).

Performance management how- ever is more than simply trying to get staff to do things which will help the practice achieve its objectives. Handled well it can encourage both the giving and receiving of feedback, and un- lock ideas for improvement and innovation, clarify standards, and foster greater communica- tion.

Clarify and communicate the aims of the practice
You want people to deliver the objectives you have set for your practice. Your staff’s perform- ance can only be measured in terms of the practice’s perfor- mance. Things often fall down and business performance can falter because the objectives of the practice have not been clari- fied and established by the prac- tice owners. Everyone needs to know what the practice objec- tives are, and you need to re- mind people of them frequently to keep them focussed. As you achieve certain milestones, don’t forget to tell your staff about what they have achieved.

Clarity of leadership roles
Make sure that you have clear and detailed job descriptions and person specifications and update them when working practices change. Job descrip- tions describe what you expect people to do. Person specifi- cations outline the qualities and qualifications that your staff need to have in order to fulfill their roles effectively and focus on the ‘how’ people carry out their role.

Make sure that you have clear policies
Your policies are your ‘book of rules’, clear statements about the way your practice should operate. If you do not tell people what they should be doing you cannot complain if they don’t do it.

Know how to get good perfor- mance
Make sure that you know how to help people improve through training, coaching and develop- ment opportunities to get them to the standard you want.

Provide honest and construc- tive feedback
Give open, honest and direct feedback regularly so that people know what they are doing well just as much as what they are not doing well, and establish a performance review system which allows for two way dis- cussion.

We all want staff who are en- gaged, take pride in their job and show loyalty towards the practice. If your team can see the bigger picture and how their role contributes to the success of the practice they are more likely to do their best for you. Performance management is about continuously improving the performance of individuals and in so doing improving practice performance.

And that’s not just good for the practice – it’s good for patients too.

How are we doing? Getting the best from your staff

By Fiona Stuart-Wilson

It is well known that having a good practice management consultant can help you to achieve your aims and objectives.

Your practice consultant will help you to:
• Analyse your practice’s existing systems and processes
• Look for areas of your practice that need improving
• Help you to implement needed improvements
• Work with you to achieve your aims

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Dubai – 12th June, 2015
Fiona Wilson will be presenting a great seminar on the Dental Business Management Conference in Dubai – 12th June, 2015

Middle East & Africa Edition | May-June 2015

Practice Management

DENTAL TRIBUNE Middle East & Africa Edition | May-June 2015
Look at the bigger picture

By Eniko Simon

Analyse data to understand the performance of your dental business

There are many important decisions we have to make when managing a dental clinic - we make these decisions on gut instinct or based on previous experiences or by analysing data that is available for us.

Most of the dental clinics I have been working with had some understanding of the power that data can add to their business. It is essential that you regularly track a wide range of data across your clinic to allow you to have a good understanding of your business. Nowadays there are fantastic dental software such as Software of Excellence or R4 very well known on the market. These dental software can assist dental businesses to analyse important key performance indicators gain a better understanding of their business.

Some data that you need to look at – who are your patients, how did they hear about your clinic, nationality, age group, your chair occupancy in your clinic, the hourly turnover your associates generating, how many new patients you have monthly and many more KPI's we can look at. Undeniably collecting clean and reliable data and analysing it in a consistent way is part of 21st century management.

Data is the fundamental ingredient in decision making, figuring out where to focus your resources, create your targeted marketing approach.

Taking control of your data

The data on its own has no meaning, it can not provide the full picture, it does not take into account the values you stand for and the culture you trying to create in your dental business or your patients' personal feelings they feel about your clinic.

Practice data alone can not be used to guide the success of the clinic. In order to fully utilize the facts and figures they need to be put into context. Hours spent collecting data is wasted if the bigger picture not taken into consideration.

The clinic's short and long term goals needs to be agreed upon and once you are on your journey the collected data can demonstrate if you are on the right track to achieve your goals.

The numbers provide an effective tool to help manage and control the growth and development of your dental business but do not set the strategy you need to adopt.

Constantly analyse your data – look at how your clinic is performing. The right data at the right time will aid your decision making process regarding your finances, marketing, operations of your clinic - but be ensure that you control your data and put it into context.

Always understand the “whys” to know the way forward to the “hows”.

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