High-performance teamwork

To achieve your goals, you need a hard-working and motivated practice team behind you. Petra Jones, David Bloom and Jay Padayachy of Senova Dental Studios on how to boost morale so staff work well together.

The key to creating a successful practice team is good leadership. Leading by example and working with your staff to deliver your practice’s key objectives will encourage all members to interact and get involved. Although strong leadership is an important factor, there are other important features, such as common goals, self-confidence, open communication, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, mutual respect and trust, attention to detail and decision-making, that combine to create a successful practice team.

Time to change?
You will always achieve the same result if you do the same as you have always done. So how can you change the way you and your team work, not only to meet the expectations of your clients, but also exceed them?

Thinking about what your staff already do and know can open a clear pathway for personal development plans. How many of your staff has an individual personal development plan? When did you last appraise your staff? Do you know what each staff member wanted to achieve in the year? What is their career aspirations?

By doing this, you can give each member of your team a clear understanding of what is expected of them in the practice, to make sure that achievements are made right the first time in support of your practice revenue.

Developing your staff
But do you monitor the progression of your practice goals and identify your mission and vision? One of the easiest ways is to make sure that each staff member has a copy of their performance contract specific to their role. This will enable them to look at how their own targets and performance standards merge with the practice objectives.

Discussing the priorities with each member of the team will allow everyone to plan. Planning an individual’s learning direction will show what can be achieved realistically within the time scale. We have, and will always use the SMART model when agreeing and setting objectives—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound. This is a fair, but firm way of appraising the performance of any individual.

Their own personal development plan will help them identify their learning and development needs. It will set clear target dates for completion and provide an opportunity to show individual progression. It creates an ‘I can do it!’ spirit and staff will support each other. They will possess objectives and become involved in the decision-making process.

Remember that tracking their progress is paramount and reviewing objectives is crucial to working towards and achieving practice goals. Questioning individuals on what went well, what you would do differently next time will encourage staff to succeed in their roles.

What’s your style?
Coaching individuals will unlock their potential, which can in turn maximise their performance. Senova’s management style is to monitor and coach each member of the team to help them improve their performance and allow them to solve their own issues. What is your management style? Are you directive or non-directive? Do you tell or do you coach? We believe coaching can make such a difference to the outcome. We like to build on opportunities and use interpersonal skills to unlock individuals’ potential.

‘Planning’, ‘doing’ and ‘reviewing’ are critical steps to ensure team members are effective and efficient in the practice. It provides focus and direction for all in the team and clarifies roles and responsibilities. This outlines for all of the team the approach that will be used and will list specific team deliverables. Does your team know what the deliverables are? Have you ever caught a member of your team working with no outcome? The art of empowerment makes a huge difference.

Empowering people to act must accompany accountability. Someone must be responsible to do the work. All roles and responsibilities must be documented and communicated. This creates the ownership and the pride in their role. Focusing on the positive will make it easier to work on the opportunities.

By identifying and overcoming the barriers with individuals’ learning and development plans, it will help manage performance, review progress and track benefits and learnings from successes and failures. Gaining ownership will allow the team to become high performers. Challenges then become exciting instead of a barrier. Providing the right tools will also alleviate barriers.

Feed-good factors
Meeting objectives is rewarding and satisfying, so appropriate training and coaching will always encourage self-management. Celebrating success will always raise morale and can change an individual’s behaviour. When did you last listen effectively to a member of your team? Effective listening will allow you to try and understand other people’s opinions. This is a positive factor that is satisfying to many individuals. A little praise goes a long way. When did you last praise a member of your team? Have you praised a member of your team? Positive coaching can be so much fun.

A high-performing team will work together with clear objectives, having those regularly reviewed and where freedom of expression is encouraged.

Having the right person in the right place at the right time will support your revenue. You are only as good as your team, after all. So if you manage the resistance to change now and give them the opportunity with their own personal development plan to be involved, own their objectives and implement them to a high standard and show other practices that they are a high performing team. Are you proud of your team? We are extremely proud of ours and they perform to a high level and take satisfaction and pride in delivering the practice mission.

No mission is impossible. High performing teams can be achieved with the right training and guidance.

About the authors

Petra Jones joined Senova Dental Studios as practice manager in 2006, having worked previously for 24 years in retail. As the company diversified, Petra helped in open a local dental practice for this company. She later became practice manager for the company’s dental centre of excellence. Petra is a member of the BDPOA and The Watford Chamber of Commerce.

David Bloom has been a principal at Senova Dental Studios since 1990 focusing on comprehensive restorative and cosmetic dentistry. David was appointed President of the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, in 2007.

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