The 10th Dimension – The power of 10...

...a series of articles by Dr Ed Bonner BDS MDent, Sloan Fellow London Business School, practice coach & development consultant

10 things you should know about motivation

1. To inspire people to work – individually or in groups – in ways that produce the best results, you need to tap into their own personal motivational forces. Individuals working as part of a group may (and probably do) have needs that are different from the needs of the group as a whole. Find a way to balance the needs of the individual with those of the group. The art of motivating people starts with learning how to influence individuals' behaviour. How do you find out what motivates individuals? Simple – just ask them!

2. Motivation is the will to act. To realise the full potential of employees, organisations (including dental practices) are rapidly moving away from ‘command and control’ to ‘advise and consent’ as ways of motivating others. It used to be believed that one could not motivate another, but it is possible to create a fertile working environment, which allows others to flourish and grow.

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5. Always ask your staff for their opinions about decisions that affect them. Two key motivational questions to ask your staff are: ‘What should I do to help you perform better?’ and ‘What do I need to do from doing a better job?’ Remember, however, that not acting on such feedback will de-motivate them.

6. You can improve communication by keeping your staff informed wherever possible – uncertainties are very de-motivating. The ideal is that everyone should know everything that affects them directly or indirectly as soon as possible. You can never communicate too much, but take care over the content and delivery of a message so that it inspires motivation upon its reception.

7. Create a no-blame culture: anyone, including yourself, can make mistakes, or fail to accomplish an objective or complete a task satisfactorily. However, no blame should be laid for failure. Rather, errors should be recognised, then used to improve chances of future success.

8. Motivation by or through others lasts only as long as the stimulus lasts. Self-motivation, by contrast, is long-lasting. Give people the opportunity to use their initiative when possible. The ability to take initiative depends on empowerment as well as an environment that recognises contribution. The more you expect of people, the more they will give, provided you support them. A sure sign of high motivation is a lot of initiative. On the other hand, high staff turnover and absenteeism are sure signs of de-motivation.

9. Staff members are paid for the work they do, but you should consider the possibility for re-warding exceptional performance. These rewards can be non-financial in the form of exceptional performance, certificates, personal and professional training, or special events; or they can be financial in the form of salary increases, bonuses or performance-related pay. Whatever the reward, they should only be given for achieving more than the basic level expected.

10. To understand and employ motivation, you need to:
   - Analyse what it is by recognising needs and understanding behaviour
   - Build it up by assessing your own attitude, improving communication, creating a no-blame culture at work, winning co-operation, and encouraging initiative
   - Get the best from people by motivating individuals and groups, preventing de-motivation, enrich jobs, empower staff, and build careers
   - Reward achievement by recognising excellence, rearding exceptional performance, and motivating through positive change.

Keeping your patients informed

The sixth in the series of managing information articles, by Dr Ed Bonner

You should be telling your patients about current advances in dentistry:
- Prevention of oral and dental disease
- Dietetics
- Aesthetic and cosmetic dentistry
- Dental whitening
- Facial aesthetics
- Implantology and other dental specialities
- Orthognathic surgery
- Orthopaedic orthodontics and orthodontics for adults
- Prosthodontic and periodontal reconstruction
- The prevention of oral cancer.

All of the above is the outward dissemination of information, and all of it is aimed at one objective; getting bums on seats. As a society evolves, the wants of its members expand. Creators of products and services try to connect what people want with what they, the professionals, are able to deliver, which effectively is what they, the prospective purchasers, need. This is how the process unfolds: problem recognition -> information search -> evaluation of alternatives -> treatment purchase decision.

The point where you have influence in this scenario is providing the necessary information for the prospective patient to make an informed decision. It is essential that this information be provided in a language the patient can understand, and that they should not be overloaded with facts. A surfeit of information is no more welcome than an insufficiency.

Patients should be informed about how to afford and fund the smile they’ve always wanted; extended payment plans and interest-free credit are a major influencer of patients’ treatment-up-take decisions.

Positive feedback

Once the patient has taken up treatment, the flow of information needs to be reversed; you need to and should want to know whether your patient was satisfied or not. The simplest way of obtaining this information is to ask your patients whether their treatment met, exceeded or failed to meet expectations. You can achieve this via a post-treatment questionnaire or by personal communication. The benefit is that if you failed to meet your patient’s expectations, i.e. if their wishes were not met, you would be able to readdress the disappointment face-to-face where they voice their dissatisfaction to others. Or worse.

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In the last article, I looked at how information can be obtained to keep abreast of current trends. This article will look at how we can use that information for marketing purposes. If we believe that our purpose is to help the public to prevent oral and dental problems and treat dental disease, then there is a wealth of opportunity via the printed and spoken media to disseminate information to existing and prospective patients that will allow us to fulfill our mission. Here’s a list of ways:
- Brochures
- Leaflets
- New patient information packs
- Website
- Blogging
- Newsletters
- Telephones
- SMS text messages
- Advertorials in magazines
- Articles in newspapers.

What should you be telling existing and future patients about yourself?
- Your name and qualifications
- Education and places studied
- Experience and services worked
- The practice name, address, phone number
- Website and email
- Membership of organisations:

DGC, BDA, Academies, Societies, study groups
- Photographs of self or family
- Particular expertise, for example, implants
- Diagnostic skills
- Specialised interests.

You would want to tell about your practice:
- Times of opening
- Dental philosophy
- Mission statement
- Unique selling points (USPs)
- Special considerations: great with kids/phobics/disabled, extremely hygienic
- Any special financial inducement (extended credit plans available)
- Any claims to fame (practice of the year 2007/special awards for service, prizes)
- Hi-tech equipment
- Testimonials
- Photographs of practice and team members (but not of treatment rooms or before and after, as these are not necessarily what patients enjoy looking at).