The 10th Dimension – The power of 10...
...a series of articles by Dr Ed Bonner BDS MDent, Sloan Fellow
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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. A way to find a balance to meet 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. Several motivational theories are based on the premise that, given the opportunity and the right stimulation, people work well and positively. The basic component of a motivational environment is co-operation, which you should give to, as well as expect from your staff.

3. Emotion is co-operation, which you are based on the premise that, even when it is not motivated, it is possible to create a fertile working environment, which allows others to flourish and grow. Several motivational theories are based on the premise that, given the opportunity and the right stimulation, people work well and positively. The basic component of a motivational environment is co-operation, which you should give to, as well as expect from your staff.

4. For most individuals, the maxim ‘I will only do as much as I have to do’ (also stated as ‘I will never do more than is absolutely necessary’) applies. Motivation is directly proportional to the answer of the question: ‘What’s in it for me (WiFi)?’ Unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise, most people will always take the path of least resistance.

5. Motivation used to be in one direction only – downwards, the superior motivating the subordinate. Today’s management is increasingly accepting of good ideas and enthusiasm from employees, as long as it suits their purpose, which should be congruent with those of the organisation. Ensure staff know both their roles and its importance.

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 rewards once they do their work. These rewards can be non-financial in the form of recognition, certificating, 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:
   a) Analyse what it is by recognising needs and understanding behaviour
   b) Build it up by assessing your own attitude, improving communication, creating a no-blame culture at work, winning co-operation, and encouraging initiative
   c) Get the best from people by motivating individuals and groups, preventing de-motivation, enrich jobs, empower staff, and build careers
   d) Reward achievement by recognising excellence, rewarding exceptional performance, and motivating through positive change.

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

Keeping your patients informed

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 specialties
- 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 with 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 only point where you have control is if you failed to meet your patient’s expectations, i.e., if their wants were not met, you would be able to redress the disappointment faster before they voice their dissatisfaction to others. Or worse.

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GDC, 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 incentive (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).

Start shouting about your practice!