Effective administration

Keeping on top of your paperwork helps prevent all kinds of problems says Sharon Holmes

I recently presented my first public PowerPoint presentation at the Dentistry Show in Birmingham. This was a huge challenge for several reasons. Firstly, I had never used PowerPoint as a tool. Secondly, the thought of public speaking was daunting. Finally, I had to make the subject of administration and financial management in dentistry sound interesting.

So, how does one make administration interesting? The answer's simple. You keep it…simple. Over the past seven years or so I have learned to make use of Excel spreadsheets and Word.

I demonstrated this during my presentation by sharing the company’s three most important spreadsheets used at the end of each month. These are also the same documents we give to our bookkeeper monthly and our accountant yearly. They show turnover for the month, a bank deposit report and petty cash report. All three spreadsheets are used to collate against each other. The system is so closely monitored, should there be an error in any particular area of a transaction on any particular day, the three sets of figures will not match, which is an indicator the administrator needs to locate the error and correct it.

Monitoring performance

The above reports are only three out of 17 month-end reports produced. I use these reports to monitor all the required Key Performer Indicators that inform me of the performance of Dental Arts Studio.

At the beginning of my presentation, I wasn’t sure what my audience would take away from my talk to assist them in monitoring their financial performance. I become encouraged to share my experiences when I noticed some of my audience scribbling away on notepads. I assumed that what I had to share was being valued. This I greatly appreciated – managing a dental practice is not easy if you are attempting to follow good practice principals, never mind all the PCT requirements being met to hold onto our much needed NHS contracts.

Firm but fair

It is important to be direct and honest as well as approachable. I have always had a good working relationship with our staff, based on these two fundamental parts of running a successful practice and a happy team. There is always a solution to every problem, as long as you address them in a professional manner.

What I did learn about using PowerPoint was that if you kept it simple, clean and uncomplicated it held the attention of the audience in quick bursts of information instead of them trying to read your slides. I have since carried in-house training on customer care and for the second time, I used PowerPoint, which proved to be effective. It sets a tone for learning, which made the training more focused and more enjoyable.

As Winston Churchill once said, ‘Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference’.

About the author

Originally from South Africa, Sharon Holmes has worked in the field of dental practice management since 1992. In 2003, she moved to London City Dental Practice where she, for the next 18 months, was responsible for managing four practices in the group. The London City Dental Practice is now part of a mini co-operative group called the Dental Arts Studio, of which she has been instrumental in its creation.

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