Managing small businesses with BIG requirements is not easy

Seema Sharma reflects on the skills sets required

A ll NHS and private dentists have to register with The Care Quality Commission (CQC) in 2011, and will be expected to comply with 50 regulations which can be grouped into six sections:

1. Involvement and information
2. Personalised care, treatment and support
3. Safeguarding and safety
4. Suitability of staffing
5. Quality and management
6. Suitability of management.

This article explores how Dentabty can assist your practice achieve the key outcomes and performance indicators expected by the CQC for section six: Suitability of Management.

Suitability of Management

A recent study associated with Invester in People showed that management has an important role to play in delivering company performance in terms of the improvements in quality, service and customer satisfaction. The good news is that it also showed that sound management structures lead to higher levels of profitability.

The more a dental practice embraces a management structure, the better its performance will be. This is because a good practice leader:

- Allows managers greater freedom and discretion to perform
- Supports the development of a learning culture for team members
- Enhances the effectiveness of the management processes being implemented
- Creates an environment where there is more focus on performance
- Ensures employees better understand their goals and their contribution to the practice.

Unfortunately, dental practices are often not big enough to accommodate a leader and a manager, so the practice owner/practice manager needs to have characteristics of both to have the ideal set of strengths for building a winning team.

So who’s going to do it?

And so the challenge begins – getting the whole team on the same bus is a manager’s biggest headache. You’re right, it’s not easy!

There are four basic styles of interaction:

- The Director - driven and focused; can be impatient
- The Socialiser – Friendly; thrives on compliments
- The Thinker – analytical, enjoys problem solving
- Relater – Approachable, warm, loyal.

Inherent styles never really change, so my tip is to start by selecting the right personality style as well as the appropriately qualified person for the job during recruitment. Relaters make great nurses, socialisers are good on reception and thinkers and directors have management and leadership skills respectively.

With an existing team, get the whole team to try out a personality test when you are all in a staff meeting, to help team members understand that they will all see things differently. It’s a lot of fun and it breaks the ice!

The 80/20 rule

If all this sounds daunting, remember that:

- 80 per cent of your practice successes come from 20 per cent of your efforts
- 80 per cent of your practice headaches certainly come from 20 per cent of your patients or staff!

By concentrating on leadership, and delegating 80 per cent of the day-to-day routine management of your practice, you can lead your practice to uncharted success!

Leadership – can we do it?

A leader provides strategic vision, engages, motivates, inspires and aligns the practice team with the owner’s core vision. By defining the practice’s vision and setting out aims and objectives clearly, he or she empowers the team to work together towards end goals... and then he does not actually have to be there all the time!

The worst thing a practice owner can do is to try to be all things to all people – it’s time to learn how to delegate. More than ever before, leadership skills are required in the new world of dental practice management – there are a lot of goals to be achieved for CQC, and the vision needs to be developed now to get the whole team doing their bit!

Leadership styles can be:

- Dictatorial
- Authoritative
- Consultative
- Participative

A good leader applies the right style to the right situation – there is no right or wrong style. Not sure what your style is? The good news is that leadership traits can be acquired with the right mentoring and coaching.

Management – yes we can!

A manager on the other hand implements the strategy outlined by the leader by building teams, setting up systems, organising workflow and solving problems.

A great practice manager will get to know the individual strengths and weaknesses of each team member then know how to harness their strengths and reduce the impact of their weaknesses with support, training and sometimes firm action.

Delegation (not abdication) is a key tool in a manager’s armamentarium too. The manager’s role is to translate vision into action by empowering individuals to take on roles and generate results, but to stay at a close enough distance to provide assistance or guidance when required.

Relevant CQC Regulations

The following regulations are relevant to this section:

Regulation 5: Fitness of service provider

- Do all your team members have the necessary qualifications, skills and experience to fulfil their roles?

Regulation 5: Fitness of registered manager

- Does your leader or organisation have the skills to supervise management of your service?

Regulation 6: Registered person: general requirements and training

- Can you demonstrate that each team member carries out the service with appropriate training, competence and skill?

Regulation 28: Notice of absence

- Can patients and the CQC be confident that if the person in charge of the service is absent it will continue to be properly managed and be able to meet their needs?

Regulation 27: Notice of Change

- Can patients and the CQC be confident that if there are changes to the service, it’s quality and safety will not be affected?