Are you managing your practice or just practising?, asks Seema Sharma

Stepping up from management to leadership

While leadership and management are key skills for dental practice owners and practice managers, accessibly affordable “real world” management training relevant to today’s genre of dental practices is hard to come by.

Management programmes for practice owners and managers are often based on writing reams of boring essays which do not feel connected to everyday life at work, or on sales, marketing and increasing profits without addressing how to align the changing CLINICAL environment and the changing COMMERCIAL environment that we operate in.

Now, however, CQC have the power to close down practices that do not meet their expected quality outcomes – all 28 of them! Add to this the key performance indicators in new NHS contracts and the state of the economy and it becomes clear that a new vision and action plan are required.

In the past it has been possible to “get by” with in-house training, but variation in the abilities of both owners and practice managers will become very apparent from next year when the time comes to tick the boxes for this section of the Care Quality Commission registration form.

CQC Outcome 18 – Leadership

Outcome 18 requires the registered manager to have the necessary qualifications, skills and experience to manage the regulated activity. If you are a practice manager, are you ready for this? You are the person being delegated to, and that makes you the busiest person in the practice. The practice owner will expect you to help him or her to achieve all 28 CQC outcomes, as well as lead the team and manage the day to day machinations of the practice.

Here are 12 tips to keep you sane:

1. Keep sight of the big picture: Don’t let fire fighting eclipse day to day routine management of your practice to uncharted success!
2. Delegate: Under pressure to produce, the last thing you should do is take on subordinates’ tasks because you fear losing control or overburdening others - they will need to demonstrate that they understand the outcomes too.
3. Give constructive feedback:
4. Get clear objectives: Do not establish ambiguous or unrealistic goals for your team – go for bite sized chunks of learning.
5. Network with other managers:
6. Keep your team informed: Share what you are learning about CQC with your team – don’t let them be ostriches and say they did not know when it comes to registration time.
7. Keep your boss informed: Don’t let him or her be an ostrich either!
8. Ask for help: Don’t view yourself as in servitude to the practice owner, act more like you are in partnership and work together.
9. Receive feedback: Gather feedback about your performance.
10. Project confidence: There’s plenty of time yet – you can make things happen!
11. Don’t neglect your personal life: Don’t become consumed by the demands of CQC – start planning now.
12. Know how to cope with stress: There is good stress and bad stress – know the difference!

Who is appraising YOU?

When you schedule your next round of appraisals for team members, take a moment to think about who is appraising YOU. Both the Care Quality Commission and the General Dental Council, through their Revalidation scheme, will be looking for evidence that practice owners and practice managers have the appropriate “competencies” to lead and manage the dental practice.

The 80/20 rule

Now is the time to start thinking about personal development plans for practice managers and practice owners. If all this sounds daunting, remember that change can bring about unexpected benefits.

By concentrating on leadership, and delegating 80 per cent of the day to day routine management of your practice to a skilled manager, you can free yourself up to concentrate on clinical work and lead your practice to uncharted success!

Dentabyte and Smile-On are launching an exciting Practice Management Programme “for practice owners “by” practice owners, which promises to be fun and to provide real time solutions to make life easier.

About the author

Seema Sharma is the founder of Dentabyte.co.uk, which provides practice management and core CDP courses for all dentists and practice managers, in private or NHS practice.

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