Growing pains
Getting a new team of people to respect you takes patience as you learn to reward them, praise them, lead and motivate them, says Sharon Holmes

I have been in management for 25 years and sometimes forget how painful it can be. Recently we incorporated two new practices into the Dental Arts Studio; I had a feeling we may meet with some resistance, but I hadn’t anticipated just how painful it was going to be for everyone involved, particularly one of the new practice teams.

After much crunching of teeth and a few sleepless nights, it occurred to me that perhaps the team from one of the new practices was worried about being separated from their departing principal dentist. To overcome this problem, I had to establish trust in them, to enable me to pass on our vision of what we want the Dental Arts Studio to represent.

Future vision
To encourage them to follow our lead I realised that I had to set the scene for them and make them feel comfortable; I had to create a reliable and attractive vision for the future that they would respect and believe in.

As managers and leaders we should never forget that staff look to those in leadership roles for confidence, a sense of calm and direction. The most important thing to remember is to make good decisions when under pressure; with confidence you have done the necessary work needed for these decisions to be right. To make a judgment without investigating the implications can lead to serious disharmony among your staff.

One can never determine the outcome of investing in a new practice; this is something that should be exciting and a challenge - as I have now realised, it is exciting for the purchaser, but not so much for the team left behind.

Best customer care
We took over two practices at the same time and the second by both practice managers on a large scale. We have been developing our administration system over seven years now and it is comprehensive, but very effective. Again, this means dealing with stressed staff. The training, however, must continue until they are able to work single-handed without too much micro-management.

You have to show patience and you have to continually encourage your team as they grow into the new systems put before them. It is not only about systems and progress; it is about giving your new team the time they need to adjust.

A happy environment
Creating a good atmosphere is not only easy; it is also essential.

As Peter F Drucker says: ‘Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things’. As managers and leaders we could utilise part-time staff to develop a larger team to manage. You have to show patience and show that you are there to help the team grow and develop, even if you have a larger team to manage. You could utilise part-time staff to cover for people to go on courses to further their self-development.

Not very long ago I met a nurse at a dental function and most of our conversation was based on how miserable their practice manager was; as a result, the staff were too frightened to approach her on practice issues to such a degree that the staff were unable to self-develop.

I asked her why they did not approach the principal dentist and she sadly informed me that he was not interested as she did a good job with the administration.

Note to self: I never want to be described as “miserable”. My motto is and always will be, to ‘lead by example’.

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