A good team is for life, not just Christmas

It's a good idea to treat staff little and often throughout the year, says Sharon Holmes, as a way of showing appreciation

Moving into a new year is like starting afresh. It gives you a chance to forget how busy you've been and move on to new things.

When I joined our first practice as manager, we used to celebrate at the end of the year by going out for a mini corporate dinner with practice owners, Dr Malhan and Dr Solanki. Once we moved into the corporate environment, arranging this became a bit more complex, and celebrations too many. None of us in upper management wanted to eat four expensive meals in a space of one week – this would surely increase our waistlines before Christmas Day even arrived – so on our first year, I decided to ask individual staff members how they best liked to celebrate the Christmas period.

As it turned out, most staff chose to have individual dinners with their own staff and associates and to receive gift vouchers from the Dental Arts Studio. So out I went to buy M&S vouchers, which I sent to all the staff with a Christmas card, thanking them for their contribution throughout the year. We did this for two years running.

Now we have been established for nearly six years to become a mini corporate group of four practices and a low level of staff and associate turnover, we all know each other very well, so have chosen to have one huge Christmas bash at the end of the year with staff and their partners from all the practices combined. We've successfully done this for three years now with staff talking about it for weeks afterwards.

Our first joint Christmas Party – the “Pink Party” – was affiliated to a charity event where the Dental Arts Studio raised £5,000 from ticket sales and a further £1,000 from raffles and prize draws on the night, for Breast Cancer Awareness. Not only did we have a lot of fun on a Thames River Boat, we were also able to contribute to a worthy cause.

Last year, we hosted a party at the Hilton Hotel in London’s Docklands, which was also a success, and once again this year we will return to the Hilton Hotel, but this time in Mayfair.

I am starting to feel the buzz in the surgery and the ladies are already talking about finding the perfect outfit for the occasion. These are the moments we all look forward to, and for a short while we can all forget about root canals and pain and realise that life does not have to always be fast and furious.

We don't only celebrate at Christmas time here at the Dental Arts Studio. Recently, we've started having regular social get-togethers on Saturday evenings at either one of our principal dentists' homes.

We also have staff member of the month award where the highest performer is rewarded for doing more than is required of them, a lot of the time in difficult situations that may arise in the practice. Let's not forget “Fatty Friday”, which involves buying sweet treats every Friday.

Each practice has its own Secret Santa event at Christmas, and we always make sure we carry out collections for birthday presents.

As Albert Einstein once said: ‘A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depend on the labours of others, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving.'