NEW-LOOK BDPMA
The BDPMA is preparing to offer even greater support to its body of dental practice managers, as the demand for commercial skills grows. The Association’s marketing co-ordinator Vikki Harper, gives us a taste of what’s new for 2009

The BDPMA has long been considered the leading body for support of dental practice managers (DPMs). What began many years ago as a forum for managers to meet and share common issues and solutions has now become a forward-thinking association that seeks to advise, encourage and champion managers to up-skill and have a louder voice in the industry.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE
Having gone through a strategic review itself, the BDPMA has made preparations for a new journey in 2009. Its vision is to be the first port of call for DPMs with a desire to improve their commercial skills and to be more effective business managers. Having analysed the role of the dental practice manager in its many guises, and taken into account the rapidly emerging need for higher levels of commercial ability, the BDPMA seeks to be the greatest supporting body for managers.

Over the last six months the BDPMA has gone through considerable soul searching and fact finding: what are the skills needed by modern practice managers and how can the Association position itself to be the first choice organisation for equipping and advising managers to be the best that they can be and to grow them for tomorrow’s challenge? In order to achieve its vision, the BDPMA has not only thrashed out its strategy for the next three years, it has restructured its executive to ensure it has the capability to deliver its goals.

DPMS ARE SKILLING UP
In essence the role of the practice manager can be divided into eight core competences (which can be downloaded from the BDPMA website at www.bdpma.org.uk) and while the general management and clinical aspects of the role have seen less drastic changes, the demand for commercial skills has never been so vital and is not going away.

The problem has been that there is no one definitive route to practice management. DPMs hail from many walks of life and bring with them different levels of skills across each of the required competences. Add to this the numerous flavours of the role as a consequence of different structures practices ranging from single chairs to large corporates, and you definitely don’t have a one size fits all situation. Some managers have sought further education via the diploma route and while all learning is beneficial; some

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managers have discovered that achieving great results in exams and assignments doesn't necessarily translate into the ability to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical sense back at the practice. It's the same with attending many of the CPD courses available in our market: the speakers may be fabulous and give some great generic advice but putting what they say into action on a day-to-day basis isn't easy.

A PRACTICAL SOLUTION
All education is great for development; the problem lies in being able to apply that knowledge in a practical way. For this reason the BDPMA has structured its agenda to deliver the prescribed competences to its members in a unique way. To start with, the Association has launched a series of training forums that deliver an integrated approach to learning by building up the necessary business skills in a co-ordinated way. These events focus on giving the managers 'hands-on skills'. Delegates will return to work with a practical understanding of how to apply their new-found knowledge, and armed with hundreds of tips and tools from each training event.

The events were launched under the generic heading of, ‘Running a Business’ and they began in Taunton on September 26, 2008, with the first of five UK regionally-based, finance seminars. The Taunton event was sold out with over 60 delegates in attendance and numbers for York, Midlands, Cheadle and London filling up fast. The demand has been so great that that the BDPMA is considering the need to repeat the courses for managers who were unable to attend.

Finance is the basis for every business decision and is the language of business, so no development of commercial skills could occur without a sound understanding of numbers. Delegates attending the finance events will be in a stronger position to continue building their business skills and knowledge in subsequent events commencing in spring 2009.

APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT
The plan for 2009 is to work through the main commercial competences of a DPM with training events on Business Planning and Performance Management, followed closely by Marketing, Change Management, and IT. Those delegates attending all events will definitely be more commercially astute, aware and capable of managing a business by Christmas 2009 and they will have literally hundreds of tips, useful models and notes to support their continual development. In addition delegates will have the opportunity to benchmark their skills against the various levels of competence. It is imperative that we understand what it is we don’t know so that we are in a position to honestly appraise our skills and determine our skills gap.

BUILDING ON A SOLID FOUNDATION
For members of the dental community with an excellent grasp of commercial knowledge, the BDPMA is launching a series of business classes aimed at practice managers and principles who would like an understanding of the tools and skills widely used in the wider commercial world. Looking outside our industry helps us to acquire broader skills and knowledge that support us in our quest to continually out-manoeuvre the competition and to successfully take our business to the next level. Details will be announced towards the end of 2008.

For details of the BDPMA’s training events and to find out more about membership visit www.bdpma.org.uk, email Denise at d.simpson@bdpma.org.uk or phone 01452 886364

DPM pay scale
The new strategy encompasses those vehicles that members value and that means once more, in January, the BDPMA will release its recommended pay scale for 2009. As a highly valued member benefit, this document presents a clear and consistent basis for principals and managers to discuss and negotiate remuneration in line with experience and performance. It provides a consistent platform of pay and benefits for the industry allowing principals and managers to negotiate from a common footing.

So with a clear vision, and a strategy and structure to deliver it, the new-look BDPMA has never been more strongly positioned to deliver what its members need most of all – practical, business skills.

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