Finding the right coach for your practice

Chris Barrow discusses the benefits of the right business coach

There’s no doubt that a business coach can go on for quite a long time, whereas qualitative relationships tend to last in the region of two or three years.

The benefits of business coaching can be the difference between success and failure, or a ‘tumour’ out of a difficult situation or problem. Ultimately, the ideal business coaching strategy is ‘more profit, less time at work and happier people (team, patients, suppliers and family)’.

‘Happier people’ above all should mean a happier dentist. Dentists have got the second highest rate of suicide of any of the other professions, and the highest rate of alcoholism. The reason being that a lot of dentists are unhappy people; part of the business coach’s role is to try and get them as happy as they can be.

When appointing a business coach, it’s imperative to check their formal qualifications, to ensure that they have been trained in the formal procedures of how to conduct a coaching relationship, as well as to read testimonials from their clients. However, it’s not only about qualifications and experience; it’s also about ‘the magic’. If you don’t feel good about each other, then no amount of qualification or experience will make any difference. The coach and the client are effectively interviewing each other and the dentist has got to ask him or herself - does it feel right? Am I enjoying myself?

A lot of it is intuitive. I think that’s why women generally make better business owners than men, because they follow their intuition, which is usually very accurate. When bravado and ego get in the way, it always goes wrong.

A business coach becomes part of the team, and importantly, a team member with the experience that the dentist does not yet possess. Whatever the business venture, whether it’s a dental practice, florist or pub, it’s going to be a good idea to have someone around who’s got a 10 to 15 years’ head start.

There’s a fantastic quotation attributed to North American Indians,’ wisdom enters through the wound’. In other words, if you’re going to open a business, you need a battle-scarred veteran on side; someone who’s run their own business and experienced both failure and success. They and what are you paying the extra for? Let’s face it, if you want to be a dentist who is grossing £4,500 a day doing implants, do you really want a consultant who is grossing £500 a day? Surely, you want to hire a coach that charges £4,500 a day because they know what that feels like. They understand that conversation and know how to look someone in the face without blinking and say ‘that’ll be £4,500 please’.

In the mid-1990’s, there were probably three UK dental business coaches. Nowdays, there are a huge number to choose from. Also during that time, the demographic of dental practice ownership has changed. Previously, practice principals were between 45 to 60 years old, now people start buying practices at 55.

Specialisations have also begun to creep into coaching in the same way that you get specialisations in dentistry. There are now coaches focusing on areas such as marketing, team training, financial controls and management, social media marketing, treatment coordination, front desk and telephony, and so on.

Dentists need to determine if they need general business advice from a strategic perspective, or very specific tactical implementation, or both. Take a good look round the marketplace to see what’s available and decide if individual help is needed or a blended solution from more than one provider.

As with any business, a dental practice is at its most productive when principals surround themselves with the right people in the right roles and delegate accordingly. How can you move to the next level if you can’t see the bigger picture? Having a skilled team in place – including a business coach - is the difference between being down in the trenches and sitting in a hot air balloon with a clear view all around you.

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About the author
Chris Barrow has been a consultant in the dental profession for seventeen years. He is the co-founder and Managing Director of the BKH Group of Companies and runs Chris Barrow Live At BKH, a high level and exclusive coaching expertise to take advanced dentists and their teams to the next level. For more information about Chris Barrow Live At BKH please call 0161 820 5466 or email Chris Barrow at chris@bkh.co.uk. Chris is in touch with the Barrow Kwong Hing Group? Connect with us here Facebook.com/www.youtube.com/BarrowKwongHing: LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/barrow-kwong-hing-group: Twitter: Chris Barrow @chris@bkh.co.uk Barrow Kwong Hing? @DrAIKW

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