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It is not all about mouths you know
Mhari Coxon discusses a new perspective to consider on the business of dentistry

I have always attended CPD courses ever since I qualified as a hygienist. I often worked as the only hygienist in a practice and enjoyed the interaction with my peers initially, using it as a reunion with my college buddies. Clinically I felt it refreshed my basic skills, added new thinking and research into my work ethos and allowed me to attempt to keep my patient care at a consistently good standard. Recently, I have been looking at trying to improve my customer care and business sense to help with my practice life and my role as director at CPD for DCPs.

I have just attended my first totally non-clinical dental conference. Run by the uniquely named Marketing Pirates of Dentistry; I was privileged enough to be one of their guest speakers. This was with the promise, by me, of not going all clinical. That was a lot tougher than I thought.

To name but a few there was a blend of speakers; the brilliant and “not vanilla” Tony Gudge on the marketing strategy used in dental practice; Paul Howe on selling, which was extremely useful, and a superb motivational speaker called Clive Gott. I was sad to miss hearing Nadim Majid talking on website development for the dental practice. But, being technically minded, he has recorded it so I can watch it at my leisure.

From this event, I have a full mind that keeps throwing up ideas, about 12 pages of notes to write up, and a very new perspective on the business of dentistry. I am still mainly a clinician in my job, and was trained to do just that. I then spent a lot of years attending lectures and courses on how to develop and hone those clinical skills. Now I can see the importance of the team understanding the business of dentistry, understanding the forecasts and targets and knowing what a HNW patient is and how to recognise one.

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A great toe in the water so to speak. For those with their finger on the pulse of modern dentistry there; it is ok if you didn’t know that). (That is return on investment and its importance.

There are two routes you can go down that I can see, or how to develop and hone your skills independently, without the support of your principal and the list goes on. Make notes furiously. I will be the one in the front row for DCX, which provides CPD courses ever since I qualified as a hygienist. I often worked as the only hygienist in a practice and enjoyed the interaction with my peers initially, using it as a reunion with my college buddies. Clinically I felt it refreshed my basic skills, added new thinking and research into my work ethos and allowed me to attempt to keep my patient care at a consistently good standard. Recently, I have been looking at trying to improve my customer care and business sense to help with my practice life and my role as director at CPD for DCPs.

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Most of my customer service skills come from being a waitress in Troon a few years ago now! By working in different environments I have tried to learn from the things that work and also the things that don’t. Being self-employed I am used to having to justify costs and am coming to terms with ROI and its importance. (That is return on investment and it is ok if you didn’t know that).

What impressed me most was the number of teams that were attending this event. There were only two principals that had attended on their own. I can understand how they feel. As principal and sole owner, they feel the running of the business is down to them. In a way it is. It is how I felt for a long time about my little training business. But if the team can’t see what your vision is how can they begin to implement the changes you want? Also, after attending experience has shown me, you can take the horse to the water but they have to be thirsty, no doubt it is a skill, but that this will give the best result. In this situation the principal is instigating the change and development in the team and therefore you are part of something ready to action change.

Route one is that you would like more business training and your principal may not be seeing the value just at this moment. There are many courses you can attend independently and perhaps your principal will see the benefit of a work based qualification, such as an NVQ. It is worth growing your skills independently, without the support of your principal.

A great toe in the water solution would be to sign up to the dentistry show in Birmingham on March 4th and 5th. They have two whole days of business speakers that the whole team can attend. And, best of all, it is free to attend most speakers sessions. To register you and your team visit www.thedentistryshow.co.uk.

I look forward to seeing all those with their finger on the pulse of modern dentistry there; I will be the one in the front row making notes furiously.

About the author
Mhari Coxon is a dental hygienist and therapist practicing in Central London. She is chairman of the London British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (BSBDHT) regional committee and a regular contributor to dental publications committees of the journal, Dental Health. She is also clinical director of CPD-firstSCP, which provides CPD courses for all DCPs. To contact her, email mhari.coxon@smtpdist.co.uk.