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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 Gedge 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.

A busy one or two-day event do you feel you can pass on the information in a suitable way to your team? Could you have taught someone to drive after one driving lesson?

I remember saying in a column last January that we needed to work together to keep our businesses fresh at the beginning of 2010. Well 2011 will be another year of finding solutions and building service to keep your businesses improving and succeeding.

It could be really beneficial for teams to define their roles, do a swot analysis and make a training plan purely based on their business skills. Once you have decided who needs to improve what then you can implement a training programme with a definite “done by” date.

There are two routes you could go down that I can see, or use a blend of the two perhaps.

Route one is to take the team through coaching and support of a well known and proven business advisor in dentistry, such as Chris Barrow, Kevin Rose and of course Tony Gedge and his pirates. The really important bit of this is that the principal is the leader and instigator of this; as then this is commendable. This will also almost certainly lead to you moving on if the circumstances do not change. I am learning slowly that work satisfaction has to be a team experience. So get out there and develop your skills.

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.

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About the author

Mhari Coxon is a dental hygienist practising in Central London. She is chairman of the London British Society of Dental Hygienists and Therapists (BSDHT) regional committee and publications committee of the journal, Dental Health.

She is also clinical director of CPD FortSCP, which provides CPD courses for all.DCPs. To contact her, email mhari.coxon@yellowdove.co.uk