Training the superior team

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

You’ve probably heard this before: Training is very important. While most clinicians will “talk the talk” about the need for training, they don’t always “walk the walk” when it comes time to actually implement it. That’s a big mistake.

Levin Group has seen over and over again that an untrained staff can be dangerous to an implant practice’s bottom line. At a minimum, a lack of training will result in an unmotivated staff. More frequently, inadequate training results in dissatisfied patients, lower production, higher stress and a whole host of undesirable training results indissatisfied for ways to improve the practice or able conditions.

An unmotivated staff doesn’t look for ways to improve the practice or team members’ own knowledge base. Consequently, a bored team will not contribute very much toward practice productivity. Even if they aren’t unmotivated, their lack of knowledge can be just as problematic. What happens if team members give patients an outdated answer to a particular question about implants? What if team members can’t reinforce the information patients receive from the doctor?

More than ever, training is critical to the future of implant practices. Whether it’s the uncertain economy or implant technology, things are changing constantly. For implant practitioners, the only way to keep team members up to speed and contributing to practice productivity is to continually upgrade their skills.

Train, train, train!

To improve your team through training, you should identify specific continuing education career paths for each staff member. Be sure that the training is appropriate in each instance. Different employees have different needs and these should be identified and a career path determined. It makes no sense to drag front desk personnel to in-depth clinical seminars where they will be bored. Conversely, many dental assistants are not as interested in insurance coding or other issues that do not pertain to them directly.

Don’t sour team members on education that doesn’t suit each person’s particular skills and responsibilities. Identify specific career path investments for the team and set up a three-year skills enhancement plan.

The need for training is two-fold. First, staff members who are more knowledgeable will obviously be able to perform more effectively. Then, as team members become better educated in their specific areas of expertise, they can take on more tasks and responsibilities off the clinician’s hands. That is necessary for the clinician — or more specifically, for the clinician’s sanity!

**Deciding your training objectives**

What should training accomplish? Do you want your implant treatment coordinator to have greater clinical knowledge to better communicate with referring offices? Do you want the front desk to better understand the benefits of implants so that they can be reinforced with patients? Do you want your staff to be better cross-trained? These questions and others dictate the direction you want your practice to go and how to educate your team accordingly.

Many solid and reliable team members are often undereducated regarding their job responsibilities. This leads to tremendous stress, frustration and, often, staff turnover. It is important to understand that an underperforming staff member can often be turned into a superstar employee. All it takes is effective training.

Although clinicians are leaders and should be willing to train their team, they simply do not have time. Consequently, it is far less expensive and time consuming to send team members to specific courses or seminars to encourage growth.

Effective training:

- Improves patient care and satisfaction.
- Motivates the team.
- Results in higher levels of team retention.
- Enhances knowledge and skills.
- Increases productivity and production.

Training’s return on investment is huge!

For every dollar spent on training, practices can expect to earn three times that amount back — at a minimum. In fact, this investment pays back on an annual basis, much like an insurance annuity. You recoup the investment not only in the first year, but year after year, which allows the practice to continue to place more implants while decreasing stress throughout outstanding staff performance.

And here’s the best part — a well-trained team can easily train new members who join the team over the life of the practice. Even as team members come and go, practices accomplish four vital things:

- The office won’t be thrown into disarray when someone leaves.
- New members will get up to speed faster.
- Practice culture and systems remain intact.
- Patients and referring clinicians remain loyal to your practice.

**Conclusion**

Every implant clinician can turn a good team into a great one. In fact, even a great team can always get better! You can make this happen. Continuing education, skills and knowledge enhancement are key factors for implant practices to grow in today’s economy.

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**About the author**

Dr. Roger P. Levin is founder and chief executive officer of Levin Group, Inc., the leading implant practice management firm. Levin Group provides Total Implant Success™, the premier comprehensive consulting solution for lifetime success to implant clinicians in the United States and around the world. For more than two decades, Dr. Levin and Levin Group have been dedicated to improving the lives of implant clinicians.

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