Motivating employees in a tough economy

Ownership, empowerment and appreciation can do the trick just as well as, or even more than, money

By Scarlett Thomas, President, Orthodontic Management Solutions

Times are tight and so are orthodontic budgets. Staff raises were low or non-existent last year. Bonuses that employees have always looked forward to were not given. Bonuses that employees have always looked forward to were not given. Employees are downcast, and some are outright angry. The work still needs to be done, and productivity has decreased.

So what can you do as their boss to get them motivated again?

First, always keep them in the loop. Communication cannot be underestimated. Hold meetings. Keep them apprised of the state of the practice to whatever degree is permitted. Keeping them in the dark is only going to cause more resentment and anxiety. Be as open as company policy allows.

Find cost-effective motivators. Money is the primary reason most get out of bed and head to work in the morning, but it is not the only motivator. Hold contests. Plan low-cost parties. Try to have fun.

Show empathy. Listen to your employees. This is an uncertain time for them, and perhaps for you too. Show them you care by listening to their concerns and acknowledging their fears.

Thank them. Tell them you appreciate their hard work. Most employees’ job complaints are that they are treated poorly, not that they are underpaid. Treat them well, respect them and make sure they know you appreciate them.

Motivate your employees by delegating tasks. Delegation is one of the most powerful motivation tools for empowering employees in the workplace. The sheer act of your delegating a task shows your employees that you have the confidence in them that they can do the job.

Ask your employees their opinions. Many times during our busy work days, we find it difficult to ask for opinions from our employees. But just the act of asking for their opinions tells your employees you value their input, which motivates them to accomplish more.

Motivate your employees by letting them run your meetings. One of the best ways to motivate and empower them is to involve them in running your meetings. Of course, you will set the agenda, but there are many opportunities for you as a leader to let your employees run portions of, if not the entire, meeting.

Always give your employees credit for the ideas they express. Nothing will decrease employee motivation and dry up the flow of ideas quicker than having managers take credit for their employees’ ideas.

If your employees are coming up with ideas, reward them publicly. You will be amazed how the flow of ideas from motivated employees will increase with each public recognition.

Motivate your employees by rewarding initiative. Create rewards for employees who take initiative. Publicly recognize employees during meetings, with reward boards, etc., so that other employees are motivated to take the initiative.

One of the biggest things you can do to motivate your employees is create and set goals. Your employees will be far more motivated to achieve your goals if they are allowed to help develop those goals. Involving your employees in the goal-setting process and get their input so it becomes believable for them. Once your employees feel ownership of your goals, they will be motivated to move quickly to help accomplish them.

Motivating your employees doesn’t always have to be money related. Often times, employees are more motivated when they feel ownership, empowerment, appreciation and respect for their input and ideas. Try a few of the previous ideas and welcome the changes you will experience within your practice.

To learn more regarding motivating employees, increasing case acceptance, marketing your practice and management issues, visit orthoconsulting.com and sign up for one of the monthly Webinars.

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