

VIEW FROM THE PRACTICE

This month PPD's clinical editor Rahul Doshi discusses how to achieve premium practice

We live today in a 'knowledge' economy. Knowing what to do and how to do it - and more importantly when to do it, is the main engine driving practice success. Harnessing the capabilities and commitment of team members is one of the main challenges of a premium practice and requires knowledge of good team management.

According to the *Harvard Business Review*: 1) Work plays a smaller role in individual fulfilment than ever before; and 2) Work demands more from individuals than ever before.

Many team members are caught in a conflict because of the work/life paradox that exists, causing employee disengagement. Efficient principal dentists and/or practice managers need to create a successful work/life balance for their team members, where personal goals are being linked to the well being of the practice. So how do we mesh individual personal goals for each team member with the long-term goals of the practice?

The following 'Harvest' analogy will enable senior management to create a premium dental team. This will create a team that is participating in practice success - a team you can 'lead' as opposed to 'manage'. The core principal steps are:

- **Seed** - set clear meaningful goals for each team member then reward them for their achievements.
- **Plant** - maintain an open and consultative communication at all times.
- **Nurture** - build trust within the team, by the principal and/or practice manager

keeping their word/commitment and owning up to mistakes. Also you need to surround yourself with team members who can be trusted.

- **Weed** - hold everyone accountable for their own goals and actions and hence, indirectly the practice vision.
- The 'Harvest' that is created by the above process will lead to employee engagement, employee satisfaction, higher patient loyalty and a premium dental practice.

The fertiliser to accelerate the harvest is recognition. When talking to colleagues, I often hear the following. 'When I make a mistake I am recognised 100% of the time; when I do something great, I am not recognised 99% of the time.' Recognition and developing the potential of each team member is the accelerator to a premium practice. Recognition provides reinforcement of self image and proof of accomplishment, which are the keys to the wellbeing, pride, achievement, clinical or non-clinical skill development, responsibility, advancement and the growth of each team member within the practice.

The building blocks enabling recognition to fall in sync with the practice values and vision includes some of the following concepts:

- **Day to day recognition.** This should be frequent, specific, timely, low cost and highly gratifying. For example, a pat on the back with verbal recognition, handwritten notes, praise and gratitude.
- **Beyond recognition is to award for the implementation of an innovative idea.** Your staff may be providing exceptional patient care consistently or achieving



outstanding performance in relation to the core practice values. Here the value of the team member is reinforced, through personal and specific praise, often including the impact of a gift or bonus.

- **Career recognition** through a formal programme involving checklists of skills learnt and consistent progress of achievement.
- **Celebratory events** to reinforce the practice values and brand by thanking everyone in the team. Events can include practice anniversaries, launch of a new type of treatment, achievement of record results.

A premium dental practice needs a premium dental team. However, in order to create such a team, the analogy of harvest and nurturing your team is very important. Following these core concepts will enable the principal dentist to lead the way to long-term success.

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