



In Practice

WITH DR. RONALD GOLDSTEIN

How Can You Maximize Your Staff to Achieve the Best Quality Care for Your Patients?

Without a doubt, one of the most frustrating problems we have found in dentistry is finding enough talented people to keep our offices staffed to maximum capacity. Wherever I travel throughout the United States and even in many foreign countries, the answer is the same. A certain percentage of turnover is the norm, however, the less frequent the turnover, the more effective and efficient practices become. In no other country have I found the problem to be more prevalent than in the United States. I think we have suffered considerably by not having enough training programs and motivation to bring talented young people into our profession.

We all need to be doing work that we enjoy. I remember the superintendent of our largest state mental hospital saying that half of the 29,000 patients that he had in the system would not have been there had they been doing work that they enjoyed. The key factor has to be that our staff loves to be in this profession. They have to love our patients (maybe not all of them) and find pleasure and enjoyment in the day-to-day activities of the job.

Like it or not, no dentist is an island and we depend on our team of talented auxiliaries to make us look good. So how do we get the most out of these team members? I remember asking a famous clinician many years ago and his answer was, "I give them a book to read and quiz them later." Well, that may work for

some, but we have found that hands-on training is the very best. We teach by example, and all of us have to set the example. The training and motivation are much more. In this column we have asked three talented clinicians what they have found effective in motivating their staff in their most successful practices.

What is the most important training process you have used to improve staff effectiveness?

William Becker, DDS, MSD—Staff meetings on a regular basis and cross training of staff members to "cover" other jobs.

Jeff Morley, DDS—There are two key elements to my staff-training program. First, I have sent the entire staff to the Diagnostic Box course multiple times. There is absolutely no substitute for training the entire

patients currently involved in treatment, key verbal skills, projects, issues related to our in-office course and much more.

Jules B. Paderewski, DMD—We use well-organized participation continuing education courses to improve staff effectiveness.

What characteristics do you look for when hiring staff in an esthetic-oriented practice?

William Becker, DDS, MSD—In Arizona the first characteristic is, "are they breathing? Are they people oriented? Are they neat (hair, nails, shoes, etc.)? Are their teeth in good health, do they have a pleasant smile, are they interested in quality dentistry?"

Jeff Morley, DDS—I like good communicators and people willing to take responsibility. It is absolutely essential that my staff members have a sense of account-

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time [QA: 'time' or 'team'] in verbal skills, comprehensive care, and systems for repeatable [QA: 'repeatable' correct?] clinical excellence. This has enabled my team to effectively communicate with patients, operate outside the insurance network, and take ownership for delivering a higher level of service. Second, we have a regular team meeting every Monday. You might call this meeting a weekly huddle. We discuss the practice numbers, all

ability. Give me those qualities and I will teach them the dental stuff.

Jules B. Paderewski, DMD—When hiring staff, we look for intelligent, attractive self-starters, preferably with experience in an upscale practice.

Have you created a special position of treatment coordinator, or does one of your staff members serve in this role? Explain who does your treatment coordination if it's not a special position.



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William Becker, DDS, MSD—The dentists are responsible for treatment and treatment coordination. We have one person assigned for implant coordination. She interfaces with referring dentists, makes sure provisional appliances are present the day of surgery, and assists the referring dentists when choosing implant components.

Jeff Morley, DDS—In my office, every member of the staff can and does serve as treatment coordinator. I have been using the advanced computerized treatment planning system developed by Box Learning Systems. This innovative system maps out treatment by appointments instead of by tooth. It also helps me determine the right fees for comprehensive care and big cases. My staff and I would be lost without it. None of us could imagine going back to the old way of moving patients

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through treatment.

Jules B. Paderewski, DMD—The No. 1 chairside assistant serves as treatment coordinator.

The No. 2 chairside assistant is acting in this capacity.[QA: in capacity of treatment coordinator or chairside assistant?]

How do you continuously motivate your staff? Do you have a special bonus arrangement or incentive program in place?

William Becker, DDS, MSD—We give extra time off with pay for extra hard work, uniforms, paid continuing education, a grooming allowance, but most importantly we tell them they are doing great and we are happy

they work for us. People usually don't work totally for money. They need to be praised and love their work.

Jeff Morley, DDS—I've given up on production-oriented bonuses because they misappropriate people's intentions to money instead of what really counts: service and quality. Each of my staff members now enjoys a private annual trip to Maui with his or her significant other.

Jules B. Paderewski, DMD—We motivate our staff with excellent working conditions, very good office hours, and good compensation with bonus time off. There is also a pension and profit-sharing policy with annual bonuses.

What continuing education programs have you found that keep your staff up to date in their development?

William Becker, DDS, MSD—This varies depending on the position. Hygienists go to various scientific and hands-on programs, CPR training, etc. Business folks attend programs on how to improve collections, proper insurance coding, employee benefits programs, etc.

Jeff Morley, DDS—The Diagnostic Box weekend is by far the best. There is nothing else like it and if it works for my team, it will work for any practice.

Jules B. Paderewski, DMD—One large continuing education program and meeting per year with smaller programs targeted to individual needs keep the staff up to date in their development. We go to programs sponsored by individual private practice clinicians, by the Academy of General Dentistry, The Pankey Institute, local study clubs, industry-sponsored programs, Academy-sponsored programs[QA: Which academy?], and dental-school-sponsored programs. ○

