

PUTTING THE 'T' IN TEAMWORK

Jo Banks, Denplan Training Manager, discusses how great teamwork can be the key to taking your team and your practice further than you ever imagined.

Good team building and team planning means involving all team members in decisions wherever possible. This is particularly important because employees in your practice are often uniquely positioned to see where improvements to working methods can be made or when patient demands are changing.

Furthermore, team members who have been involved in planning are more likely to get behind any changes made at the practice, whereas teams that have change imposed on them are more likely to be negative and resistant. Making strong teamwork and effective team planning a priority for your practice can really pay dividends and help bring your practice goals within reach. With your team working effectively together, who knows what you might achieve?

For many people, terms such as 'team building' and 'team planning' mean sound suspiciously like 'management speak'. It is therefore all too easy to think they are for larger companies rather than suitable and relevant to all. If this opinion has mirrored your own thoughts, it is definitely worth reconsidering.

Communication is the key

Developing a strong and cohesive team can be a particular challenge for dental practices employing part-time or contractual workers. Many practices have a number of team members working on a part-time basis and, with a disparate team, communication can suffer. Holding regular team meetings and ensuring good day-to-day communication can help to bind team members into an effective unit. This will also make your staff feel more involved with the practice and they may even come up with solutions to a problem that you had not thought of.

Another particular challenge for dental practices is to prevent a split developing within the practice team. When team structure is too rigid, for example, it is not uncommon to see a split between receptionists and nurses. Building flexibility into job roles and keeping the lines of communication open will encourage team members to help each other out and give them a better understanding of the problems other team members face.

Get to know your team

It may sound like a bit of a cliché, but the team that plays together stays together! Organising a team-day out of the office environment can both educate and stimulate your team and bring them closer together. They can also improve communication and make your team feel more valued.

If you are thinking about having a team-day for your staff, it is important to remember that it does not have to be anything extravagant or expensive. Whether it is an afternoon bowling, a team lunch or a day at a theme park, getting to know your team better and showing them that they are appreciated can really pay dividends when it comes to motivation and productivity in the workplace.

Team building in practice

Some companies offer tailor-made training days, which are specific to your practice's needs and can even incorporate a modules focused on Team Building and Team Planning. Some of these courses can also count towards verifiable Continuing Professional Development (CPD) when undertaken in accordance with GDC requirements. This type of event provides an ideal opportunity for staff in similar roles to meet and learn together, and will benefit both your employees and your practice.

The Denny Wright & Associates Dental Centre in West Yorkshire is one practice that understands the value of developing a strong team. The practice recently completed the Team Building module as part of their Training Day with Denplan:

“As a practice, we’re fortunate our team members have all been here a long time,” explains practice manager Elaine Stafford. “But it’s still important we keep everyone motivated and informed of what’s going on. We’ve used the information we gained from our training to make positive changes at the practice,” she says.

These changes included posting an agenda for staff meetings, taking turns to take minutes during meetings and providing staff with feedback books. The team has also worked together to develop a solution to the problem the practice had been having with telephone enquiries. Elaine and her team are big fans of the training days. “We came back refreshed and raring to go,” she says. “We really bonded!”

Team Involvement

A well-functioning, cohesive team can not only make a real difference to your practice team’s performance, but it can also improve its ability to achieve your practice goals, whatever they might be. Both your staff and patients will benefit from good team building and effective planning. In fact, proper team planning can encourage your staff to feel more valued and involved and, as a result, they’ll take ownership of tasks and responsibility for developing their own skills. They’ll also help move the practice forward by suggesting their own ideas for improvements.

Furthermore, a committed team will create a great atmosphere in the practice, which your patients will pick up on too. If everything is running smoothly because your team is working well, patients will have a better experience altogether and will be more likely to both stay loyal to you and recommend you to their friends.

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Notes to Editors:

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