



Achieving top performance from a new staff member

By Julie Parker

It takes great effort, time and money to introduce a new staff member to your practice. Consider advertising for the position, assessment of resumes, interviews, orientation, training, getting other staff to support the newcomer, assessment of performance, adjusting behaviours to the practice standard... and all of this takes weeks and attention away from your clinical work.

Getting your process of implementing a new staff member right is vital to successful team development. Following the process below will ensure you are providing the right environment for your new staff member to achieve a top performance!

The importance of communication

The objective is to provide the new employee with all that they need in order to succeed. Effective communication is paramount to success. It is THE ONLY path to both the employer and employee being aware of each other's needs and expectations. Be clear and straightforward. Establish regular opportunities for discussion so both parties remain aligned with the practice goals.

What an employee needs to know

Anyone who enters into a new environment will be confused about everything from where to park their car and where to eat lunch to expectations around their performance and an awareness of business goals.

How your practice conveys all of this information to a new employee is in itself setting a standard in the employee's eyes. Show them the attention to detail and commitment to the task that you expect of them, through your management of this process.

The following are a list of documents that are important in establishing the practice expectations. If you do not already have these documents, I encourage you to develop them. Julie Parker Practice Success have developed a set that you are free to request and use as a guide. Email us on julie@julieparkerpracticesuccess.com.au to have copies emailed to you. Make the information relevant to your practice and issue it to all new employees PRIOR to their first day.

- 1. Welcome new staff member** - Details such particulars as staff parking, where to store belongings, access keys and alarm, policy around making personal calls and who to contact if having to call in sick;
- 2. Staff responsibilities** - Lists the tasks that make up the staff member's job description;
- 3. Behaviour policy** - How staff are to behave and communicate with each other;
- 4. Customer service policy** - Describes how your practice serves your patients; and
- 5. Appearance code** - Outlines what your practice considers to be acceptable attire and appearance.

Once you have the expectations established and communicated effectively, it is important to create and foster the environment for top performance.

Care

One of the top reasons employees quit jobs is that they feel uncared for. You are working with people, not machines. Be considerate and friendly. Routinely ask how they are going in terms of their integration into the practice.

Support

Learning new processes and improving performance requires support. Continually check in throughout the day to ensure the new staff member is clear on what needs to be done. Inquire whether additional training is required. Are they experiencing any barriers to succeeding? Ask what else the practice can do to assist them. Acknowledge the new staff member when they are performing well, so they know they are on the right track. Offer support every step of the way.

Feedback and encouragement

Institute regular meetings for feedback. This is your opportunity to check in with the new staff member with your observations on how they are progressing. Acknowledge their achievements as well as offering up areas to be improved upon. This is an important process to get right. In order to have the recipient walk away from a feedback meeting feeling encouraged and empowered, it is best to use the "sandwich technique". That is, constructive feedback sandwiched between positive feedback.

Don't simply tell the staff member what they are doing wrong. Send them off with practical guidance they can put directly in to practice so they can improve.

Always then flip the feedback meeting to be one of 360 degree feedback. This is when the employee is encouraged to discuss what they find effective with the practice and your leadership and what they would like to change in order to garner a better performance. It is a scary notion to be open to "criticism". However your performance will improve enormously if you do.

Formalise the points of discussion by writing them down. This helps to create importance and accountability and also provides a reference for future meetings to gauge progress.

With a new staff member, we initially suggest weekly feedback meetings. As the employee becomes competent in the systems and processes of the practice, these meetings can drop in frequency to monthly then quarterly.

Developing a trusting relationship with staff is fundamental to effective leadership. This staff induction process will

facilitate the early stages of this. Get started off on the right foot by doing all you can as a practice to make way for every new staff member to perform at their best! Just remember how you feel when you are stepping into a new environment, such as a cocktail party: you can feel unsure, hesitant and worried about how you will cope. Anxious states such

as this can cause your new staff member to react in ways that can hinder long-term top-level performance. Remember:

"Any company trying to compete... must figure out a way to engage the mind of every employee"...
Jack Welch, former chairman and CEO of General Electric.

About the author

Julie Parker's whole career has been devoted to the dental industry, starting in 1987 as a dental nurse. In 2003, Julie became the first non-dentist to buy a dental practice in Australia. She owned and managed her practice in Brighton, Victoria for 10 years. During this time, she more than trebled the turnover and her staff base grew from 3 to 12 members. Julie successfully cultivated a winning team and a winning business. Her business programs on how to accomplish a dream dental business are gleaned from her wealth of experience, intensive education and an inquisitive business mind. Julie is a Certified Practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Time Line Therapy and Hypnotherapy.

Julie Parker Practice Success offers a subscription based program that educates all dental staff in the building and managing of their practices. Members receive monthly audio CD's and workbooks that lead them along the path to personal and team success. All team members, including the dentists, receive Certificates of Completion each month for submission for non-clinical CPD points and inclusion on resumes. Memberships are available for \$395 per month. For more info, see www.julieparkerpracticesuccess.com.au.