



Really useful team training solutions when times are tough

By Julie Parker

When times are tough, dental practices often reduce spending to the basic essentials, such as wages, rent, consumables and laboratory costs. Any plans for team training are the first to be struck off the list, as “optional costs or expenses”.

Team training is seen by most unthinking businesses as a cost. A cost in dollars, time and energy. But I say that such a view cannot be more wrong!

Team training is an INVESTMENT. An investment in your team members and an investment in your practice. It is an investment in your practice success!

There are substantial benefits and really useful strategies that will arise by running team training when times are tough.

1. Tough times often mean gaps in the appointment book. Use this downtime to plan for and prepare your team and systems for busier times.
2. Team training fosters team engagement and team member loyalty.
3. Tough times can be unsettling. Creating a structured path of improvement provides your team with stability and hope for, and confidence in, a brighter future.
4. When you are busy, you may be less inclined to close a fully-booked day for team training. Any current downtime is the ideal opportunity to spend time upskilling your team.

The financial outlay for training your team need not be overwhelming. There are many options available to you that have little or no cost.

Role playing

Role-playing is one of the most effective methods of team training. It creates a safe environment for team members to practice and rehearse new behaviours. This helps team members be

prepared and effectively initiate these new behaviours when called upon during usual operations. Just like sport, team members need practice and repetition to refine their skills and be successful.

Online courses

Websites such as Udemy and Coursera have an enormous range of online courses that can support team members in THEIR self-development. I encourage you to invest in the development of your team's self-awareness. As team members' self-awareness improves, so do their communication skills, their ability to form strong relationships with colleagues and patients and the responsibility they are willing to take in their work.

My own website has a large range of online development courses that will train and guide your team in the successful management of key areas of practice, patient and team management. Go to the Development Centre page and take a look.

Books

Books are one of the cheapest ways to gain knowledge, develop self-awareness and become better; surely you want every one of your team members to become better? Consider establishing a book club for your practice. Team members take turns in choosing titles, the practice purchases the books and you give team members a month to read them. Then come together for a Brainstorming Meeting and share insights and ideas. Choose titles that have solid reviews and strong relevance to your team. A few examples of books that will help team members in their personal life, as well as their work, are:

- Passionate People Produce - Charles Kovess
- How to win friends and influence people - Dale Carnegie

- The Four Agreements - Don Miguel
- More work-focused titles are:
- Influence - Robert Cialdini
 - Excellence Wins: A no-nonsense guide to becoming the best in a world of compromise - Horst Schulze
 - The Dental Practice Profit System - Angus Pryor
 - How to build the dental practice of your dreams. (Without killing yourself) - David Moffet

Online research

Select a topic, let's say how to more effectively educate patients on their oral conditions and advised treatments and search online for tips and techniques that you could incorporate into your practice. Sites such as *YouTube* are particularly useful for discovering new ways of doing things. Remember:

"We don't rise to the level of our expectations, we fall to the level of our training!" Archilochus (Greek poet and philosopher circa 680BCE).

I repeat this quote frequently and for good reason. Your team is your business. Your team members are the ones involved with the delivery of your dental services and who are responsible for a substantial amount of communication with your patients. By ignoring the power and benefits of training your team you risk failing in your dental practice goals and you increase the chances of making life for yourself much more difficult than it needs to be.

About the author

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