



ESTHETIC TEAM

THE WISDOM OF SHARED KNOWLEDGE



by Bobbi Anthony, R.D.H.

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Team Advantage: The Purpose-Driven Practice

Team training in a busy dental office is key to creating a financially successful business. Each employee's actions and behaviors significantly contribute to the organization's overall success. Doctor and team involvement in the organization's culture—its vision, purpose, values, and goals—is imperative. It is easy to sell something and/or *someone* you believe in.

When a person feels that they are doing something that is not in alignment with their values, it can create negativity, stress, and low productivity for the entire practice.

On the other hand, incongruence of vision, beliefs, and values usually results in distrust, disharmony and, ultimately, failure and burnout. If a hygienist values herself only for her ability to be liked by patients, she may not want to tell them when they have specific treatment needs; no one wants to be the bearer of "bad news." Additionally, she may believe that the patient would not want or cannot afford the treatment. In contrast, the doctor may believe that every patient deserves to choose whatever level of care they feel is appropriate or fits within their budget.

When a person feels that they are doing something that is not in alignment with their values, it can create negativity, stress, and low productivity for the entire practice. For this reason, it is critical that the team be involved in planning the work that affects them. Team development of trust-based relationships is imperative. Dentistry is a relationship business—it is our relationships with each other that create trust, respect, and shared values; and it is our relationships with patients that create the overall practice success. Patient retention, referrals, and case acceptance are all created through quality trust-based relationships. Additionally, patients are more likely to keep appointments when they trust and respect you.

Management guru and business philosopher Peter Drucker believed that if you do the right things right, a healthy profit will follow. Profitability is an important component to the success of any business, but there are other measurements for success, as well. When teams are in alignment with each other's values and believe in a common purpose they are in a much more positive state of mind. Author Harry Beckwith writes, "*People don't lead... purposes do.*"¹ He calls this the "leadership fallacy." When teams rally around a purpose—for example, when they are passionate about changing smiles and changing lives—you may create an environment that team members want to be in. When team members feel good about themselves and what they do, their positive state of mind can improve their work performance. According to Jon Katzenbach,

*"The most noticeable difference between the higher-performing workforce and a normal workforce is in the level of energy and emotional commitment that employees exhibit... People move faster, interact with more visible animation, communicate with more palpable emotion and excitement, listen more intently and respond more vigorously—and really enjoy themselves in the process."*²

For example, making financial arrangements and collecting fees can be uncomfortable for some team members. Much of this discomfort, however, stems from the attitude we have going into these conversations. If I were thinking, "*How can I help this person to have what they want?*" rather than worrying, "*How can I collect the money from this person?*" I would feel that I am doing something commendable. Therefore, I likely would feel much better about myself, and also less self-conscious.

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Many hygienists, and even some doctors, do not like discussing fees with patients. This can be unfortunate, because without all of the pertinent information it is very difficult for the patient to make an informed treatment decision. If the patient does not hear the fee quoted until he or she reaches the front desk or consultation room, the case will not be closed. Once they reach the counter, it is likelier that their decision will be made based on financial considerations rather than on health. Again,

if the focus is on doing what is best for the patient, it will be much easier to discuss the fees. You can support them no matter what decision they make. The less you are personally attached to the outcome, the less pressure the patient will feel and the less chance that you will feel rejected.


STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FEE PRESENTATION:

- Determine who in the practice will handle financial arrangements, agree on the attitude that this person should be able to embrace; and, finally, ask whether this person truly values the services.
- Begin by advising the patient that your job as the financial coordinator is to help to make the dentistry affordable for them so that they can have what they want.
- Use a written form that lists all of the financial options available. This way the focus is on the form and not on the financial coordinator. You may wish to incorporate a "consent to treat" section on this form for the patient's signature. In addition, you now have a written agreement regarding the patient's financial understanding.
- Present the form with all options to all patients. This will help to create consistency in the way the cases are presented and won't give you the opportunity to make superficial judgments on a patient's desire or ability to accept treatment.

- Present the monthly third-party payment plan first. Give the patient a range, as they will have several choices based upon the amount of time on the loan. By presenting the payment first, you help the patient to “hear” you without tuning out. If you present the entire amount to the patient and they were not expecting a large amount, they might not even have heard you when you mentioned the monthly fee later.
- Ask the patient which option they would like to choose.

Total team participation in creating practice financial success is critical. However, concentration on profit alone may create a perceived incongruence of vision and purpose. Financial success is an excellent goal and is necessary to the overall success of the practice; it is the purpose-driven practice that energizes workforces to deliver higher peak performances and creates a sustainable competitive advantage for the future.

References

1. Beckwith H. *The Invisible Touch* (p. 39). New York: Warner Books, Inc.; 2000.
2. Katzenbach J. *Peak Performance* (p. 17). Boston: Harvard Business School Press; 2000. 



THINKING ABOUT TAKING THE WRITTEN EXAM?

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE WRITTEN EXAM:

To take the Accreditation Written Exam during AACD San Diego 2006, candidates **must** meet the following requirements:

- AACD membership in good standing (dentist and lab technician).
- Registered to attend the Annual Scientific Session.
- Completed application and paid all applicable fees prior to beginning the exam.

PRE-REGISTRATION FOR THE WRITTEN EXAM IS REQUIRED

The opportunity to submit an application for the 2006 Written Exam will end when conference registration closes on Wednesday, May 17, at 7:30 pm.

Please be sure to complete and submit your application prior to this time.

Applications will not be taken the morning of the examination. Please arrive prior to 8:00 am, as the exam will begin at 8:00 am sharp.

