

and their practice behaviors. To gain more personal and family time, it's possible to change work schedules and delegate some clinical tasks to staff so that the dentist can have more time at home. Rather than remain in a rut of dental procedures, dentists can select and train for some new clinical procedures to do, incorporate more continuing education courses, or become a part-time faculty member at a local dental school. These activities can also lead to new friends and colleagues, which can enliven both the dentist's work and family life. In all of their life activities, dentists should plan to be out of their comfort zone at least 10% of the time. Learning new concepts is both intellectually stimulating and socially rewarding.

Volunteering is another way to add interest to the dentist's life. This could include joining a service club that adds diversity and stimulating activities. In any case, it's important that the dentist dial back on the time spent on the internet. In fact, this would be a time to use electronics to simplify life but not dominate it. Instead, the dentist can enjoy the new friends and relationships that have been formed, take pleasure in volunteering and helping others, and relax more with family while pursuing recreational activities.

Clinical Significance

It's easy to feel motivated and enthusiastic when you first begin practicing as a dentist, but that can fade after a couple of decades. Instead of being challenged, you feel comfortable, which can soon lead to burnout. Taking steps to actively engage with others and to challenge yourself both intellectually and personally can reignite your passion for dentistry. Remember—you have the awesome privilege of practicing the best health care profession in the country.

Christensen GJ: Staying motivated in the profession. *Dent Econ* 109:45-46, 2019

Reprints not available

STAFF MANAGEMENT

Rest and meal breaks



BACKGROUND

No federal law mandates that an adult employee must receive meal or rest breaks when at work. However, a number of states do have regulations pertaining to these breaks, and dentists need to be aware of the rules as well as the penalties for breaking them.

FEDERAL LAWS FOR BREAKS PROVIDED WHEN NOT MANDATED

Federal rules are in place for employers who provide meal and rest breaks at their own discretion. All breaks that last 5 to 20 minutes must be paid, whether it's defined as a rest or a meal break. The time also counts toward overtime for the week. If an employer's policy clearly states the duration of the break and clearly indicates that extensions of that time will be punished or not paid, unauthorized extra break time could be unpaid.

For a meal break in which the time taken will be unpaid, the break must last a minimum of 30 minutes and the employee must be fully relieved of all work duties. A gray area exists when the break is just 25 minutes, so it is recommended that only meal breaks lasting 30 minutes or more be unpaid unless there are special circumstances.

Employers are required to clearly communicate their meal and rest break policies, ideally in writing in a policy manual. The elements to be covered include a clear distinction between meal and rest breaks, definition of expectations regarding the duration of each one, and clear indications of the penalties for not following the rules.

STATE LAWS

Meal Breaks

Most state laws regarding meal breaks mandate at least 30 minutes for an unpaid meal period that must occur within the first 5 hours of work. Employees must be relieved of all job duties and usually can leave the premises. The meal period

Clinical Significance

Dentists need to be aware of the rules and regulations regarding meal periods and rest breaks for their employees. Although not all states spell them out, dentists should be familiar with what their state law says and follow the rules to avoid having to pay steep penalties and fines.

cannot be used to shorten the workday, with some states more restrictive than others. Employers who do not comply with these rules face penalties and fines.

Rest Breaks

Rest break laws usually mandate at least a 10-minute break for every 4 hours of work. The employee must be relieved of work duties and paid for the rest break. Some states allow employees to leave the premises. Rest breaks cannot

be added to meal breaks and cannot be used to shorten the workday. Some states impose more restrictions than others. Noncompliance with these rules leads to penalties and fines.

Boartfield R, Twigg T: The truth about meal and rest breaks. *Dent Econ* 108:37, 2018

Reprints not available

SUCCESS STRATEGIES

Starting fresh



BACKGROUND

If last year wasn't your best in terms of production, income, team development, or any other way you measure success, now is the perfect time to plan for this year's success. You must recognize that the common denominator in all your failures—and all your successes—is *you*. You need to learn from failure to have a great source of growth potential. The process takes work, patience, and persistence as well as a strong desire to change how you're currently doing things. Some areas to focus on for growth this year were outlined, as well as some strategies for making this your best year yet.

SETTING GOALS

Any desired achievement begins with setting goals to get there. Most dentists are quite conservative when dealing with risk and set their goals based on what they know they can accomplish. These aren't goals; goals are ideal outcomes you would experience in an ideal world. They're supposed to stretch us and even feel unattainable at first.

Without having goals that demand more than you think you can do you won't grow. The office will be stagnant and will suffer from a loss of control, excuses, low energy, and absence of engagement and excitement in learning. Goals that are stretching shift the focus from problems to solutions and empower people to create amazing results. As a result, you and your team have the opportunity to win.

A short list of what to do when setting goals begins with “write it down.” Taking this step makes the goal real in a way it wasn't before. It becomes an entity to be pursued. In addition, the goal should be specific. When you write it down, specify benchmarks to be used so that progress can be measured. Add in numbers, dates, and deadlines.

Based on the goal, plans need to be made. These must be in place to move the practice forward in pursuit of the goals you've set—they go hand in hand. You also need to prepare to fail. Goals don't

keep you safe; they take you somewhere you've never been before. They require hard work and the willingness to make mistakes in pursuit of the desired end.

Staying accountable can be difficult if you keep your goals to yourself, so it's important to share them. Select a few people and let them know what your goals are. Try to select people you don't want to disappoint and you'll be more motivated to stay on course.

CREATING A 'YES' OFFICE

In a 'yes' office, you find ways to make things doable. When patients ask you for help, you find creative means to accomplish what they need. You may already consider yourself a 'yes' office, but you probably have situations when you say 'no.' For example, if a patient asks whether you accept certain insurance, you may answer 'no' and end the discussion. In a 'yes' office, the answer would be more like, “We accept a lot of insurance programs but we don't work with the one you've mentioned. However, we do have several financing options that patients have found helpful. Shall we look into one of them?” Cultivating a 'yes' mentality not only increases production and revenue but it also leads to any number of profitable business opportunities that would have remained unknown otherwise. You just need to be creative about how you can meet patients' needs rather than focusing on how you can't do so.

Clinical Significance

Challenging yourself to be great in the coming year is a way to invigorate both yourself and your dental team to be the very best they can be. Maybe last year wasn't so great, but this approach lets you leave last year behind and move forward with optimism and excitement for what the new year can bring.