

take on the problems of mentees beyond their ability to cope, which can be counterproductive. Mentors also require training in skills such as time management, defining roles, and managing expectations. Who will provide such training becomes an important concern. Training also requires time, and the motivation to put in such time may require incentives to be offered.

DISCUSSION

Evidence supports the ‘humanization’ of relationships between dental professionals and patients, but also stresses the need of

leadership to support dental team members. A servant leadership model and the use of mentorship programs can help to achieve better team cohesion and unity, which will result in better patient care.

Hayer N, Wassif HS: A lonely business: Reflections on the well-being and morale of dental teams. *Br Dent J* 226:559-561, 2019

Reprints available from H Wassif, Univ of Bedfordshire, Putteridge Bury Campus, Hitchin Rd, Luton, UK; e-mail: hoda.wassif@beds.ac.uk

Creating a custom culture



BACKGROUND

Culture is an important part of business. Successful consumer companies emphasize company culture because they understand that the positive mindset of an organization extends to its customers and encourages them to do business with them. Culture should also matter to dentists because it exists in a dental practice whether or not effort has been put into creating it. The dentist needs to determine what kind of culture is desired and take steps to create that culture.

DEFINING CULTURE AND CREATING THE ONE YOU WANT

Culture permeates every aspect of the dental practice. As the dentist juggles his or her various roles—doctor, manager cheerleader, visionary, and business owner—the practice tends to depend on specific processes and systems to clarify expectations and performance. The culture applies first to the dentist and then to the team. It guides the decision making and actions of each team member, ensuring that they do things the way the dentist wants, even if he or she isn’t present.

Creating the office culture desired is possible through specific actions. However, it takes consistent work and commitment. This foundational piece to business establishment and conduction is linked to the money the practice makes, the cohesiveness of the dental team, and the sense of fulfillment and personal achievement that is experienced. Great patient care is the ultimate outcome. Building a strong, positive culture is based on some specific shifts in mindset.

MINDSET SHIFTS

Accountability

Being accountable is a major component in culture. Without it, culture can turn toxic and become characterized by making

excuses. Accountability must begin with the dentist because it’s impossible to expect the team to do something the dentist is unwilling to do.

Making excuses for everything that goes wrong can create a culture where the dentist has no control over anything. Outside forces are blamed for every outcome. The fact is that dentists have control over themselves. This requires that they make sure that they take on the role of the problem—and the fix. Once the dentist has taken responsibility, positive things can be achieved.

Invest to Achieve

Wanting to get something for nothing is a dangerous attitude and does not build a winning culture for the practice. For example, it’s unlikely that a well-functioning team can be achieved without investing time communicating the dentist’s practice vision to them and providing constant reinforcement. The dental practice is a reflection of the dentist, so his or her attitude has an important impact on everything that’s done. If the dentist wants something for nothing, the team will reflect that, as will patient care. Results will require action and yield a positive impact. Not only will it be possible to think up new ideas for improving the culture, this approach also helps to implement these new methods.

Develop a Founder’s Mentality

Practice owners begin with a vision of the type of practice they would like to build, including how they would interact with the team and patients. If reality hasn’t lived up to that vision, the problem may be a lack of the ‘founder’s mentality.’ This is about setting the tone and creating a standard for what the dentist believes in and how he or she wants the practice to perform, even when the dentist is not physically present.

Part of being a founder is learning to accept that the practice is a business and regarding it as such. As a business owner, the dentist can choose the culture of the workplace to reflect his or her unique values and beliefs. No one else should be allowed to define or decide what the practice culture should be. It shapes not only the dentist's life but the lives of all those who work in the practice, those cared for there, and family members.

INSTITUTING CHANGE

Change will require retraining of the dentist's mind and taking the steps to develop a different mindset. When things go off the rails, the dentist should return to the mindset changes and determine what needs to be restored. The focus must remain on the dentist and what he or she desires.

Clinical Significance

Customizing a practice culture is the dentist's job and should reflect his or her values, preferences, and ideals. Making certain to stress accountability for all actions, keeping a clear picture of what needs to be done to ensure good outcomes, and maintaining a firm grasp on the vision that led to the practice being created are important parts of the customizing process.

Geier J: Custom culture: 3 steps to creating a winning experience in your practice. *Dentaltown*, April 2019, pp 93-95

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LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Providing for a breastfeeding employee



BACKGROUND

Suppose you had a valued employee who had taken maternity leave and was about to come back. She comes in and asks where in the office she could express milk for her newborn. After asking questions to define what exactly is needed, you look into it. The health side of the situation favors breastfeeding as a positive choice. The legal side of the matter has been addressed by many states, with Illinois serving as a recent example. What's the verdict?

HEALTH BENEFITS

Breastfeeding is widely supported by health professionals as well as public health officials as a choice with benefits for both the child and the mother. Because breast milk contains antibacterial and antiviral antibodies, the child is less likely to have ear, respiratory, and urinary tract infections. Children who are breastfed also experience diarrhea less often, tend to need fewer visits to doctors for care, and require fewer prescriptions and hospital stays than children who aren't breastfed. As a result, the medical costs of postnatal care for a breastfed child are lower than for children who aren't breastfed.

Benefits for the mother include an earlier return to pre-pregnancy weight as well as a reduction in the occurrence of premenopausal breast cancer and osteoporosis. About 80% of mothers begin breastfeeding their child, but by 6 months just 20% are exclusively breastfeeding their child.

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Nursing Mothers in the Workplace Act is an update of the Illinois Compiled Statutes, 820 ILCS 260. Section 5 defines an

employee and an employer. Section 10 then discusses break time, noting that employers must provide reasonable time to an employee who needs to express milk when she needs to do so and must continue to provide this time for up to 1 year after the child's birth. The break time can run concurrently with any break time the employee is already entitled to take. All of this must be done unless an undue hardship would be created, which is defined as an action that is prohibitively expensive or disruptive when considered in the light of various factors pertinent to the employer's conduct of a business.

Section 15 states that an employer must provide a private place for nursing mothers in close proximity to the work area. It specifies that the area cannot be a toilet stall or bathroom, but it must provide privacy for the employee. The federal Fair Labor Standards Act adds that the space can be temporarily created or converted into a space for expressing milk or made available as

Clinical Significance

When an employee comes to her employer requesting a place to express breast milk for her infant, the employer should take on the task of providing such a private room so that she can feel comfortable doing this. It may require a bit of creativity but it will likely prove to be worth it in the long run. It's simply the right thing to do.