12. Limit your responsibility. Although he continued to remind patients about the need for better plaque control, proper brushing, and flossing, if the patient then developed caries or periodontal disease after these reminders, Dr. Culver felt no further responsibility. Obsessive-compulsive dentists tend to think their work should never fail even when circumstances are beyond their control.
13. Get help from a study club. Dr. Culver joined a study club to help identify what changes were needed and how to make them. The group met regularly to critically assess each other's offices in a way that none of the members could have done alone.

Culver NC: Don't shut down—reboot. *Dentaltown*, Oct 2018, pp 82-84

Reprints not available

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Dental practice plans for success

BACKGROUND

Strategic planning is done by businesses to help them identify where they want to go and what will be needed to reach that goal. Dental practices rarely engage in this practice, but it can help to provide a clear blueprint for the near future and what it will take to get to that objective. The major aspects of strategic planning are the vision statement; the mission statement; a statement of core values; the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis); establishing goals; formulating action plans; and committing to success.

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

The vision statement declares where the dentist wants the practice to be in the future, usually projecting about 5 years out. The vision statement should identify the "what" and "why" of everything that the practice intends to do in the next 5 years.

The mission statement describes today's purpose for the dental practice. It focuses on what is the core business of the practice, who is being served, and/or how the practice plans to serve their customers. It's usually much easier to craft this statement than the vision statement because it reflects what is being done now.

CORE VALUES

Core values are the deepest-held beliefs and the behaviors derived from those beliefs. The dentist and team believe these values will allow the achievement of the vision and mission.

Sample core values are as follows:

- Teamwork: Everyone contributes to improving practice each day.
- Accountability: Team members always do what they say they will do.

SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis is among the most powerful and meaningful aspects of the strategic plan. In this analysis, the dental team takes a realistic view of the practice to create a viable pathway forward.

Many factors can be identified through the SWOT analysis. For example, the skill set of the team, the years of experience they bring, or the practice location can be strengths; areas that can be improved such as customer service, limited hours, or loss of clients through insurance participation can be weaknesses; opening of a second location or expanding through the purchase of the practice of a retiring dentist in the area may represent opportunities; and new competition, lower insurance reimbursements, or team members who are nearing retirement can be seen as threats.

The SWOT analysis should be done every 6 months by the dentist along with the entire dental team. Both internal and external factors need to be understood for their impact on the practice if the exercise is to set appropriate objectives and action plans. When everyone understands what the situation is with respect to SWOT, decisions can be made to address them into the future.

The SWOT analysis can also help the practice reexamine its business principles relative to all factors. When the dental team realizes the implications of the changes needed to improve the situation, it's possible to act more expeditiously and possibly avoid negative outcomes.

GOALS AND ACTION PLANS

The tactical aspect of strategic planning is represented by setting goals. The specific endpoints desired are set out at the times that they are desired, such as in the next 12, 24, 36, or 48 months. From goal setting will flow timelines and action plans to accomplish the goals.

Clinical Significance

Committing to success is the final step in a strategic plan. It takes into account all the aspects that have been identified in the strategic plan and represents the practice's willingness to take the necessary steps to achieve what has been planned, if at all possible. This commitment brings the strategic plan to life and shapes the type of activities that the practice will undertake. It's a vital step that should be renewed annually, after a careful review of how well the practice has done in meeting goals to that point and what remains to be done to achieve success.

Action plans represent the details of the strategic planning process. It's important to assemble the team and determine what steps need to be taken in order to achieve each goal and ensure that each one aligns with the vision and mission statements. Action plans include details about how to achieve the objectives identified and deadlines for their achievement.

Outside advisers can be invaluable to help in creating action plans. These individuals can guide the team to ensure that the plans are progressing logically and in an organized fashion. It's important to recognize that having a vision without action plans typically results in failure to achieve the vision.

Levin R: Creating a strategic plan. *Inside Dentistry*, Nov 2018, pp 14, 16

Reprints not available