

Revitalizing the Passion of Dentistry

Having been involved in dentistry for nearly thirty years and a management consultant for sixteen of those years, I have noticed that there are increasing numbers of consultants, consulting organizations and management seminars. This is in response to the increasing concern dentist's have regarding overhead, marketing, system organization, communication, team building, and leadership skills. There is no question that by improving skills in these areas, a practice will meet the needs of the team and its patients. However, it appears that with increased attention to management issues, practices have not given equal time to clinical coursework. By maintaining a balance between managements and clinical concerns, you and your team can hold onto the passion of dentistry.

This passion is very important to maintain. With passion, we are motivated and enthusiastic about what we are doing. We are truly able to identify our purpose and articulate that purpose within a mission statement that has meaning.

Our teams must also feel this passion because the passion will motivate them. One of the greatest advantages of understanding our purpose is that it allows us to demonstrate the value of the care and service we provide. The verbal skills needed to explain the advantages of dental treatment flow automatically when those words come from the heart.

By attending a course on esthetic dentistry, implants, endodontic therapy, and periodontal disease, we can again get in touch with the tedious and often difficult task of completing a detailed case. I often wonder if even the dentist is aware of the care, skill and judgment it takes to complete an often difficult procedure. By getting in touch once again with these procedural steps, you will no longer struggle with a decision about a fee or hesitate when a patient says, "Well, if my insurance pays, maybe I will consider it." Because you maintain a clear vision of the difference dentistry can make in someone's lifestyle and health, you can take advantage of the opportunity to give the patient more information. Your response to a patient's objection can be, "Mrs. Jones, by brining your concern to my attention, it gives me an opportunity to show you how this treatment will make a significant difference to you."

To give you an example, I recently attended a course given by Dr. Vince Kokich, an orthodontist from Seattle. He shared with the audience what he and a team of four dentist's were able to do for a 13-year-old young lady. She had a serious accident on water skis. The handle on the ski hit her in the mouth and knocked out her upper right and lower right posterior teeth and portion of bone. Due to her age, and the amount of damage, it was not possible to restore her mouth with implants. This team, consisting of a periodontist, an orthodontist, an endodontist and a restorative dentist spent four years restoring the mouth of this lovely young lady. When I heard this and saw the slides, it brought tears to my eyes. It was moving to see what this young lady went through but it was also moving to see the possibilities we have in dentistry. Although we do not see cases of this nature every day, it is important to remind the dental team of what we are capable of doing. It was very clear to me, once again, what my purpose is in dentistry.

When evaluating your team goals, I encourage you to take into consideration the clinical time given to all members, especially those involved in administration and those who come to you without a dental background. In addition to clinical courses, information about comprehensive exams and periodontal screening must be conveyed. It's always surprising to me that the team members involved with financial arrangements and answering questions about the treatment plan have not had first-hand experience regarding exams and treatment.

I first caught my enthusiasm for dentistry and the fee for service practice from the mentors I was fortunate to have in earlier years. My enthusiasm continues every time I meet a clinician who shows us how we can make a difference.

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