



Strategic management and professional well-being

“Management,” a sober concept that withstands all your attempts at escape. If you were able to focus on dentistry and your patients, everything would be better, you say.

But in fact, practicing your trade well means serving your patients well. And serving your patients well means managing your clientele well. Managing your clientele well means managing your sources of revenue. Managing your revenues means managing your financial capacity well. Managing your financial capacity well means being able to afford your high-quality human and material resources. And being able to afford adequate resources at the right time ultimately means providing yourself with the means to practice your trade well. The circle is complete.

Experience has taught me that when people are satisfied by their work, they are happier. Making management a priority is therefore an appropriate way to improve your professional well-being.

However, rigorously managing the everyday realities of an office is not easy for dentists who have to make their patients their top priority. That is why I recommend you use an alternative approach that will help you create an indirect, or minimal, management framework and gradually help you improve the well-being of all members of your office.

Management of an organization usually involves three levels of action:

Operational: Management of activities and routine tasks, such as invoicing for example.

Tactical: Monitoring of the expected results, such as monthly validation of the financial statements.

Strategic: Definition of the major objectives and determination of the ways to achieve them, such as when the office changes its orientation.

It is completely natural for an office to apply more rigor in its basic activities before focusing on its major

strategic considerations. However, this very rational idea means that dentists need to save some of their time for management so that they can validate and monitor operations (tactical level).

To make the most of the time you spend on management, I suggest that you consolidate your tactical actions into a single periodic team meeting, which could be weekly or monthly at least. The date and time should ideally always be the same.

Next, I recommend that you include topics of discussion in order of strategic importance. The agenda of the meeting, which would last one to three hours depending on its frequency, should cover the following topics in this order:

1. Validation of objectives (revenues, missed meetings, rearrangement of the waiting room, specialized training, new equipment, etc.) set in the previous weeks or months.
2. Suggestions for improving the patient experience at the office, or their well-being in other words.
3. Suggestions for setting the office apart from its competition.
4. Suggestions for improving the office environment and the quality of life for those who work in it.
5. Suggestions for improving team productivity.
6. Review of objectives and short-term action plan (who is doing what?). These items will be reviewed first at the next meeting.

The main point of my suggestion is to religiously respect the date and time of this periodic meeting. As a manager, if you try to achieve this simple objective and succeed in making this meeting an exciting weekly activity, you will soon notice some changes in your office.

The second point of my suggestion is to indirectly provoke strategic thought about general topics such as “How can we improve patient welfare?” Thanks to discussions on this kind of topic, you will be surprised to observe just how easily your staff will be able to support you in the determination of the major strategic development objectives of your office and management of the action plan.

I cannot conclude this column without emphasizing the importance of high-performance computerized management in this process. In fact, your management software is the best tool for measuring and confirming whether an action suggested by your team will provide the expected results. The rapid feedback you obtain sparks interest and promotes the adoption of the process in question by your team and therefore ensures its continuity.

Good methods, good tools and a good team. You have everything you need to create a working environment in line with your expectations, an environment ultimately based on greater well-being for all and as a result, your own.

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Legal Viewpoint

The problem with root canal treatments

In the calls I receive, I have noticed that root canal treatments are often a cause of misunderstanding between patients and dentists.

Let me explain: although root canal treatments are risky, few dentists have their patients sign the informed consent form in this case. That’s because they believe that by explaining the risks of this treatment, their patients will become worried, refuse the treatment or even go as far as consult a different dentist. However, that is very unlikely. A good patient, who is concerned about his dental health and wants to keep his teeth at all costs, will not refuse to receive a canal treatment. Those who go to a different dentist when informed of the risks will ask the right questions and very likely get the same answers.

What happens in practice when a root canal treat-

ment fails in a patient who was not informed in advance of the risks. You and I know that the failure of a root canal is very often caused by an accident due to the physiology of the tooth or its fragility. For patients, it is an entirely different story. In that case, they are usually referred to an endodontist and when they learn what that will cost them, they say: “My dentist really let me down, I am going to pass the bill on to him.” And their dentist refuses because it would mean admitting his liability and ending up in the unfortunate position of having to pay for an implant.

That is when the disagreement begins, with a complaint and court proceedings and everything else that follows. You cannot blame the patient, since the risk of the treatment failing did not even cross his mind. That is why, in my opinion, you must take precautions with all risky treatments.