

PEER-TO-PEER ARTICLES
WRITTEN BY YOU
OUR MEMBERS!

MEMBER FEATURES



MEET THE MEMBER

Teresa Spence, MAADOM has been in dentistry for 31 years, most of which she has spent with Amelia Dental Group in Fernandina Beach (Florida.) She began her career as a dental assistant, then gradually learned more of the ins and outs of practice. She has held the position of Practice Administrator for the past 11 years. Her first AADOM Conference was in 2011; when she came home, she got to work on developing what is now the AADOM Northeast Florida Chapter. Teresa became a Fellow of the American Association of Dental Office Managers in 2012 and is a two-time recipient of the Office Manager of Distinction award.

5 WAYS TO INCREASE COMMUNICATION IN YOUR DENTAL PRACTICE

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY TERESA SPENCE, MAADOM

Communicating with your team is crucial to a successful business, successful staff, and in our case, a successful dental practice. Communication is key in everything we do!

I'm part of a dental practice that has more than 30 team members, including four doctors. You can only imagine the challenges of making sure things are communicated properly and everyone is "in the know". That knowledge might be regarding protocols or procedures or happenings in our community. Every year, I hand out a team survey so that they can score us on our leadership/management style in the office. And yes, every year for the first couple of years, the lack of communication was always the number one thing that we could improve. Of course, that didn't sit

well with me; I knew I had to figure out how office management could better communicate with our team. So, I went to work to figure out the best way to make that happen.

Here's what I developed:

1. TEAM E-MAIL PLATFORM

Establish a platform that allows for communication among the team and doctors. Google Groups is what we use. We have an e-mail that is overseen by one of our doctors, and it allows anyone in the group to send e-mails to the entire group. Benefits of using this platform is that all of the e-mails are in one place. It's easily managed for adding, removing or changing employee e-mails.

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Another platform we use is GroupMe, and we seem to only use this option when we are in crisis mode, such as hurricane season (since we are in Florida,) and now the COVID-19 pandemic. It's an easy system to create open lines of communication between your team and the doctors.

2. MONTHLY CALENDAR

A calendar is created for each month. This central piece of information allows your team to see—at a glance—what is happening in that month. The calendar will include dates such as payday, scheduled vacations, birthdays, holidays, days the office will be closed, team meetings, lunch & learns, community happenings, and reminders that pertain to clinical items.

3. WEEKLY E-MAIL FOR OUR INACTIVE, ARCHIVED PATIENTS, AND CARDS SENT

Like most offices, we track the status of our patient base. Each week we have a report that is created to communicate which patients were made inactive, who has passed, and to whom cards were sent. This list is then e-mailed out to the team each Friday. This helps in communicating to the team about what is happening with each of their patients.

4. SUNDAY E-MAIL

This is my favorite of all! An e-mail is sent out every Sunday morning for the upcoming week (Sunday-Saturday.) I draft this e-mail every Tuesday and add to it as the week goes by. This routine keeps me from taking personal time away from my family on Saturday or Sunday.

The e-mail includes each day's happenings, such as birthdays, vacation of employees, etc. It's basically taking the monthly calendar you've already created and breaking it down for that week. We include our month-to-date production, collections,

and any procedures or protocols that need to be communicated to the group that cannot wait until our monthly team meeting.

Personally, I always try to add an inspirational quote and let that be a point of focus for the week. I share several of Judy Kay Mausolf's or Jon Gordon's quotes, and if we are reading a book as a team, I will add snippets from the text.

Side Note: Currently, we have a team member that was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. She came to me and asked if she could add a little note each week to our e-mail, to keep the team informed of her treatments and progress. This addition has been a great way for her to share her journey with us and everyone hears the same information. In return, the team knows how best to support her, because she is not fighting this battle alone.

5. INFORMATION BOARD

This can be a white board or bulletin board that's located in a general area of the office, preferably at the entrance where your team comes in each morning. Post day-of events on this board, a copy of the monthly calendar, print-out of the weekly e-mail, or even a funny/motivational/inspirational quote for the day.

With communication being a key factor in everything we do, I encourage you to ask your team how they feel about your communication with them. It's so important to keep the lines of communication open in both directions. Our team has shared with me over and over how much they appreciate the communication avenue we established. Everyone feels connected, prepared and ready for the day ahead.

Since the onset of COVID-19, I am so thankful we already had a series of communication platforms established in our practice. Our practice never missed any communication or had a lack thereof. ■