

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

## MEMBER FEATURES



### MEET THE MEMBER

Jennifer Steadman, BSDH, RDH, FAADOM, is the Director of Affiliations and Business Development for a growing DSA, Dental Support Alliance, New England Dental Partners. She specializes in business operations, team development, and communication. Her career has evolved from dental assisting to dental hygienist, practice manager, director of operations, and now her current role! She aims to empower dental professionals to hone into their strengths and be a positive light in the dental community.

# HOW DO YOU DO IT

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY JENNIFER STEADMAN, BSDH, RDH, FAADOM

I'm often asked, "How do you do it?" As the Director of Operations for a growing 12-practice group in New England, keeping my team motivated, happy, and productive isn't as challenging as you might think. Don't get me wrong, managing multiple practices does have its challenges but many of the things I do, you are probably already doing too!

### PLAY TO STRENGTH, NOT WEAKNESSES

Having a team means you're in it together! Although it may be easier to see weaknesses, be sure to focus on each team member's strengths. There are many tools and quizzes available that you can use to determine a person's areas of excellence. To me, the most important thing is to get to know my team on a more personal level. This helps me identify where their strengths and passions lie.

A few years ago, I conducted an interview for a dental assisting position in one of my practices. I asked the interviewee why she chose a career in dentistry and where she wanted to be three years from now. She proceeded to tell me that she wanted to do more in the field and maybe become a dental hygienist. I told her that it was admirable that she wanted to grow professionally, but that there were other growth opportunities

available without ever stepping one foot into hygiene school. I saw something in her. She was committed, driven, and had great leadership qualities. I hired her for the role of dental assistant and patient coordinator, and we worked together to develop the strengths that I initially saw in her. She is now a multi-site manager and oversees two very productive practices! But if I had just listened to what she was verbally saying and didn't probe further, things might have turned out differently. I am so proud of her. She took the opportunity to shine. She went on to get her business degree and is getting her Fellowship with AADOM this year!

### ACCOUNTABILITY

Having a large team or multiple offices makes it impossible to know what's occurring every minute of every day. The good thing is that you don't actually have to, as long as you set your guidelines and expectations early. One thing our team did was bring in a practice coach to outline expectations and get everyone on the "same boat," all rowing in the same direction.

During the time with a coach, we set our non-negotiables and discussed

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## ...HOW DO YOU DO IT? CONTINUED

core values of the practice. Now, if a challenge does come up, it's solved more easily because we already set the foundation. We promised to always exemplify our core values for ourselves, our team, and our patients. If there is a time that we did not epitomize those values, we talk about what we could have done differently to uphold our promise to each other. Each of us understands that we need to meet expectations and be accountable for our actions.

### SUPPORT YOUR TEAM

Sometimes, all your team needs to know is that you have their back and will be there for them. At your morning huddle, share a quote to get them excited for the day, or tell them about something they did the day before that demonstrated your core values. Go into the clinical area and check on your team, see how they are doing, and ask if you can do anything to help.

The most important thing is to continually thank your team and show appreciation for them. As managers, we get pulled in many different directions and sometimes forget to do the little things that create the most impact. Call or meet up with each team member to express your gratitude for their dedication and hard work. You may even take them out of the office for a coffee, lunch, ice cream, or just a little something to show you care and acknowledge their achievements.

### VALUE TIME

We value our patients' time and we want them to value ours. It's important to value our team's time as well. Being consistently present and available for them does not mean you need to be on call 24/7. Set

the expectation by not running late at the end of the day so they can get home to their families...and don't call them during off hours. By valuing your team's time, they will value yours and hold off on calling you on the weekend, because it can usually wait until Monday!

### BUILD A NETWORK

Join your local AADOM Chapter to build a network of local practice managers who know what you're going through. It's important to have a tribe that you can lean on—one that understands your challenges and successes! Not everyone comprehends what it is like to manage a dental office during a pandemic, but your tribe does.

Be sure to attend an AADOM conference. The level of understanding, support, and camaraderie is unlike anything you've ever experienced. Once a year, we all come together to learn, grow, and empower each other. I met my best friends at the AADOM Conference through being a Chapter President!

### SUPPORT SYSTEM

What we do as practice managers can be extremely challenging. We operate small businesses without actually owning them. We're plumbers, dental equipment repair technicians, and cheerleaders for our team, doctors, and each other. At the end of the day you need a great support system at home so that you can conquer the world during the day.

There are so many things we accomplish on a daily basis that are innately part of who we are. This characteristic makes you an amazing practice manager! Take some time to sit down and ask yourself, "How do you do it?" Because you are doing it too! ■



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