

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

## MEMBER FEATURES



### MEET THE MEMBER

Sharon Garner has been a Practice Administrator for over 10 years and AADOM member since 2016. She has a degree in Business Management, was inducted as a Fellow in 2017, Master in 2020, and nominated for Practice Administrator of the Year three times. In 2018 and 2019 she was awarded Practice Administrator of Distinction. She and her family reside in Maryland, where she is an active volunteer with Special Olympics and the Charles County Volunteer Rescue Squad.

Do you want  
to be my friend?  
Check  Yes or  No

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY SHARON GARNER, MAADOM, CDSO, NREMT

I don't know about you, but I am a people-pleaser. I want to be liked and feel included. I don't enjoy feeling as though someone doesn't like me (even if it's simply my perception) and I definitely do not like feeling as though I'm on the outside of a group. I tend to worry when someone doesn't respond to me positively, even if it has nothing to do with me. I second-guess myself, trying to figure out what I did to make the person not like me. It's honestly kept me awake at night on occasion, believe it or not.

One of the biggest rookie mistakes I made when I became a Practice Administrator was working hard to be friends with the team members. I've since learned that while it is important to be liked by the members of the dental office team, it is not crucial to the Practice Administrator's professional success to be friends with them. In other words, there is a difference between being "friends" and being "friendly". Mutual respect is crucial, but being a personal friend is not.

In the past, being seen as a "friend" actually undermined my position in several ways. When a friend/team member was told about a corrective action they needed to

take—or worse, was terminated—it went to a personal level as a result of our relationship. It affected our friendship and had a rippling impact on relationships with mutual friends. It was harder for me to be unbiased on evaluations. It also affected other team members' perception of fairness, when personal interaction with the friend/team member was seen as favoritism.

Then I worked really hard to lean the other way so that the individual didn't get special treatment when they deserved it, which wasn't fair to that person either. And I won't even talk about the "friend" who resigned for another job, giving no notice and leaving our practice high and dry. That was a bitter pill to swallow, both personally and professionally.

Yes, there are some team members who can be friends with their supervisor and still maintain a professional relationship in the office, but doing so can definitely make things more challenging.

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## ...FRIEND CONTINUED

It's also important for team members to bond with each other in order to form a cohesive team. Some refer to it as "storming, forming and norming". The storming is when a new team member comes on board, the forming happens when the team members develop positive ways to work together, and the norming is when it all settles into a groove. That bonding process involves being able to commiserate with each other about work issues.

It's difficult to participate in bonding as the Practice Administrator, because I want to solve problems, while the team wants to vent. A lot of problem-solving occurs in our office because the team members have grown and matured together and are empowered to solve any challenges among themselves. The

problems are brought to me only when they can't be resolved, which is very freeing for me. I don't need to know that Suzy thinks Ann doesn't pitch in enough at the end of the day. Suzy has learned to talk to Ann directly with a problem-solving approach, and Ann steps up her efforts because she doesn't want the team to think she isn't contributing her share.

It's okay for me to walk down the hall and see dental assistants chatting about work or their weekend while flipping a room. I may make a quick comment, I may stop and join the conversation for a minute, or I may walk on by with a smile. Often, someone makes a comment that draws me into the conversation (I'm included, yay!) and I willingly join. But I no longer get hurt feelings if I'm not invited. I'm okay with that. ■

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