

ADDING A NEW TEAM MEMBER



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By Debbie Evans

**Diplomat in the American Association of Dental Office Management (DAADOM)
and AADOM's 2020 Practice Administrator of the Year**

So which came first: the chicken or the egg?

I'd argue you can't have one without the other. It's the same in healthcare. You can't have happy patients without having a happy, empowered team.

As an office manager, I know just how busy a practice can be. So busy, in fact, that it's easy to focus on the little things and de-prioritize the most important functions that drive business success. Of course, clinical production is critical to the practice, as is new patient acquisition, patient retention and referrals. Without happy patients and a happy, empowered team, all those goals become harder to achieve. An investment in the team is an investment in patients' health and practice success. All it takes is prioritization, organization and imagination.

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Cast a Wider Net

Hiring talented people has been a challenge for small businesses lately, including dental practices. Because the team often has more interaction with patients than the doctors do, hiring the right people is critical. A healthcare practice can often be a multimillion-dollar business so it's important to hire the right people.

In addition to online employment sites, consider your own network of peers and patients. Let everyone know you're looking for that special person who can deliver an exceptional patient experience. Yes, it is easier if the candidate has worked in dentistry before. Or even healthcare. But don't limit yourself. Look outside healthcare into key service industries – from food service to banking.

Service With a Smile

Healthcare is not for everyone because it is truly a service industry; a great healthcare team is one who enjoys serving and wants to make an impact in patients' lives. Serving requires a specific type of attitude. It's not an easy job – ask any food server or hospitality professional. Attitude matters because your team members have to “serve with a smile” even when a patient is stressed and having a bad day.

You can teach technology and dentistry. In fact, there are a LOT of training courses online that can help with training new hires (check out dentalmanagers.com) and a LOT of industry partners who can help new hires succeed. And it's also nice to know that in times like

these we can rely on industry partners to also provide

training and get new hires up to speed. For

example, our CareCredit representative is available to share best practices on how to help make financing simplified for both our team and patients.

It's also important to hire people who know – and are comfortable with – money and business. And to hire people who are looking

for a career, not a job (as long as you're willing to provide them a career path, not just a job description).

Together, those attributes are a unique combination. Investing in attracting and hiring these types of individuals is crucial – because they impact success.

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Show Off the “Home” Team

When you have a strong candidate, it’s important to realize you may be competing with other companies for their attention and, ultimately, their acceptance of a job offer. That’s where your “home team” can help. The truth is we often spend more time with our colleagues than we do our families, so the idea that we create a team who feels their work is a second home is a good one. One of my most important job responsibilities as the office manager is to create an environment that people love to work in and be in; one they consider their “home.” When they do, it’s easy to motivate, empower and manage them because they want to be here, want to make a difference and want to be part of the team. Just like plants, people grow best in the right environment (which again, starts at hiring).

During the interview process, make sure the applicant has the opportunity to get the feel of your practice culture.

Encourage your team to engage with the applicant and share their perspective of why your practice makes a great work home. Of course, it’s important that you also invest financially in new hires (and the team as well) and provide great compensation and benefits commensurate to their value and contribution to the practice’s success.

With everything an office manager or administrator has to do, helping you team fill in while you’re trying to fill an open position can be challenging. That’s why every day I write down what I need to do that’s most important to the success of the business. And consistently at the top of that list is creating a work environment people and patients love. Sometimes I sit in my office with the door open (as it always is) and just listen to the laughter and the interactions between the team and patients. It’s magic when a potential candidate hears the joy we have serving with a smile.



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Debbie Evans has been in healthcare for more than 30 years and currently works as the Practice Administrator and Vice President at Wainright & Wassel, DDS in North Carolina. She has earned her Diplomat in the American Association of Dental Office Management (DAADOM), is co-president of the AADOM Triangle Area Chapter and was one of AADOM’s 2020 Practice Administrators of the Year.

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