

# Achieve Greatness by Helping Your Team Be Great!

By Erika Pusillo, Practice Optimizer | Spodak Dental Group



Erika Pusillo

I always wanted to do something great. When I was younger, I thought in order to achieve greatness and make a difference you needed a title or position. What I've learned over time is that greatness isn't achieved by having your name on the outside of a building; it's achieved by the positive impact we have on one another each and every day. Today, I'm the Practice Optimizer at Spodak Dental, a 13,000 square foot facility with 18 operatories, 9 doctors, 7 dental hygienists, and about 43 team members. Here are a few ways I learned to achieve greatness.

## 1 TREAT PATIENTS LIKE FAMILY

When you think of patients as members of your Practice's family, you're more in tune with what their needs are before they ask. That consideration can make patients feel really special. We try to be very aware and attentive to our patients' needs and improve their experience throughout their treatment journey. If we sense somebody is a little nervous we try and make them more comfortable. They might not say anything but you can pick up on those subtle cues. Instead of focusing on the patient *process* — the process of getting the patient from the waiting room, bringing them back to the treatment room, treating the patient, having them pay and they're out — focus on their experience and connecting on a human level. That's what creates loyalty and longevity. There is so much competition around nowadays that anybody can go anywhere, five steps this way or five steps the other. Why would the patient continue to come back and choose you? Because you created a stronger relationship with patients through rapport and the experience you delivered. That's the key to patient retention.

## 2 ADDRESS COST CONCERNS

When it comes to finances it's not "one size fits all." As consumers, we all have different preferences in the way that we want to pay for things, what we can afford or beliefs around what we "think" we can afford. What patients are looking for today are options and flexibility, including the opportunity to pay over time. It just makes sense when you think about it — everything we do in our lives is broken up into monthly payments over time. Your car payment, your mortgage, your cable bill or your electric bill. Everything is in terms of a monthly payment. Why should it be different when it comes to dentistry? Most people don't budget for dental work. No one says, "Hey, you know, in case I happen to break a tooth this year, let me set aside \$1,000." For that reason, we make it a point to educate our patients about the payment options available to them. We provide different options for them to choose what fits best in their lifestyle. They can choose to pay in full upfront with a 5% courtesy. They have the option to choose our in-house membership plan or choose financing with the CareCredit credit card. It's all about options — figuring out what works best for the patient and educating them on what's possible.

### 3 ENCOURAGE TEAM COMMUNICATION

When we on-board a new team member, I set up a meeting with Dr. Spodak, the practice owner, within the first couple of work weeks. He shares his vision, gives the reason why he created the practice, and communicates what he wants to create for his patients and his team. That meeting allows the new team member to start a working relationship and create a rapport with him. We have several leaders within the practice, each representing a different department. If it's a business team member that we've hired, we'll have that new business team member meet with that business team lead at least once a quarter. The purpose is to dedicate quality one-on-one time between the team lead and new team member, even if that meeting is as simple as, "I just want to check in and see how it's going. Is there anything you see that we can do better?" We strive to encourage open communication. That's really important. Everyone has a voice here and it's one reason why we are so successful; everybody gets to speak freely about what's working well and what's not working well. Just because one person is the office manager, it doesn't mean that someone else in the organization doesn't have great ideas. In a lot of cases, the people who are actually on the front lines doing the work day in and day out can see the areas of possible improvement more readily than the office manager can see them.

### 4 SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

Two important lessons I've learned is to never stop learning and be an example for your team. We, as leaders of the practice, set the bar. If you're expecting your team to be or act a certain way, you are the first and prime example of what that behaviour should be. We have an opportunity to show the team that it's okay to change, it's okay to grow and it's okay to be human. Don't fall into the trap of having to think you have all the answers. It's okay to not have all the answers. In fact, it's been my experience that you can actually build more trust with your team when you can say, "Hey, you know what? I don't have an answer for that, but I'll either find it for you or I can point you in the right direction." Nobody is perfect; so don't believe that you have to be. The more that we invest in other people having the knowledge and skills to perform their best at work, the better off we all are. I find the best leaders are the ones who invest back into their teams, because when we are all great, we can do so much more. You don't have to look far to find purpose within your career. Bringing people up versus holding them back provides a whole new perspective on how leadership can change a team in the most positive way.



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