



LIGHT A FIRE &

Fan the Flames

| BY JULIE MOREAU, FAADOM

There is much to be said for getting out of the office, rubbing elbows with colleagues, and hearing experts share fresh perspectives on topics covering our daily dental grind, professional growth, or hands-on patient treatment.

There may be some challenge in working a full week and then “working through the weekend” at a CE course or industry meeting, 8 to 5, in a classroom or laboratory. But the real challenge is what to do with all that after the curtain drops, the lights go out, and the janitor shuffles in to sweep the floors and empty the trash.

It’s easy to put away the handouts and get caught in the whirlwind once you return to the office. But the truth is, the fortune is in the follow-up.

There’s a price to be paid, sometimes a hefty one, for transportation, room and board, tuition, and ride share. But there’s also a price to be paid on the back-end. Paying the credit card bill after the CE may seem easy compared

to the challenge of change. After a solid CE experience, it’s reasonable to expect that some change should occur back in the office; otherwise, the CE is just entertainment, as the saying goes.

Here are four suggestions to maximize your CE budget and create a lift to the practice.

CHOOSE WISELY

Be intentional about the topics. Proximity to home, least expensive tuition, or best vacation venue should not be the driving criteria for selecting CE.

Look for content and speakers to inspire you and add tangible value to your life. If “what happens there stays there”, what a tragedy to leave behind all that new knowledge. Be inspired to pack it up and bring it home with you.

This is more likely to happen with worthwhile content that fills a void in the practice, enhances skill, or refines systems and relationships.

Consider the focus and direction of your practice.

If nothing comes to mind, some soul searching may be in order. What new service would most benefit your practice and your patients? What deficits might be resolved? What do you enjoy most? What do your patients want?

Expect to encounter the unknown and choose to improve your practice, your team, and the care you provide your patients. That’s hard to do if you’re just there to get the donut and coffee and then bug out to hit the ski slopes or the beach. Enthusiasm breeds motivation and leads to action. Results will follow. So invest wisely—time and money—in something that stimulates you to action.

**MEMBER
FEATURE**

PEER-TO-PEER ARTICLE

[LIGHT A FIRE CONTINUED | PAGE 34](#)

REAP WHAT YOU SOW

Cultivate an environment in your practice that creates fertile soil (your culture) to grow tiny seeds. Make sure your team is engaged



MEET THE MEMBER

Julie Moreau, FAADOM, is Practice Administrator for her husband Jim's dental practice, MoreSMILES Dental, located on New Orleans' north shore. She earned a journalism degree from The University of Alabama and landed at Tulane Medical Center as a publications editor. As newlyweds, the long daily commute seemed counterproductive to building a life together. So, with his only two team members on back-to-back maternity leave, the decision was made for Julie to enter the practice and learn both clinical and front desk to fill the void. As a force multiplier for her husband, the practice took off, adding team members, new patients, and eventually a new office with double the capacity. Julie had been in dentistry for 35 years before she found her way to AADOM during the Covid shutdown. She earned her Fellowship designation (FAADOM) in 2021 and is completing the requirements to receive her mastership (MAADOM) designation in 2023.

and understands your purpose. After a recent conference, my husband/doctor, office manager, and I compared notes on the flight home. We were excited about three or four specific things we were returning with to implement, but pondered how to best present it to the team. Since two of the things directly impacted the hygiene team, we decided to give them a preview before a full team rollout. As producers, they have much at stake in the practice's success, and it's important to have their support first and foremost.

We planned a luncheon at a nice restaurant on a Friday after work. We sent out a text invitation, which itself created some anticipation and wonder. We welcomed them with a fall-themed bucket containing a bright colored, long-sleeved shirt to wear under their scrubs, and booklets on nutrition and well-being, since oral systemic health is a focus for our team this year.

We had prepared a short PowerPoint presentation to walk them through the new tools we were implementing, allowing them to ask questions. We then asked them which tools they liked the best or thought could be most impactful. They were open and engaged, and the luncheon ended with an impromptu discussion of our BIG goals and how we'll celebrate when we achieve them.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Team members who attended the CE should make a plan to hold each other accountable in the coming days and weeks. Trudging up a hill doesn't happen by itself. It's counter to gravitational forces and requires charting a path and taking

one step after another, sometimes pulling others along with you. Do not come home thinking you'll just work on things as you have time during the day. It won't happen. Again, be intentional in setting aside time, even if it's an hour after the last patient has left. If others are involved, make it fun with snacks or a meal, or plan a quick in-office yoga class to break from the day, and then go into a brief planning session. Whatever it takes, schedule a debrief meeting to decide how to use the information you brought home.

Write things down and share them with others who can hold you accountable. Building the PowerPoint presentation itself forced us to reference conference materials and keep things front of mind. Set a timetable for implementation, and put somebody in charge of ensuring each step is achieved.

If extra energy or encouragement is needed, stay in touch with someone you met at the conference, share ideas and talk about what's working or not working. Text a word of encouragement to someone, and it will return to you tenfold. Email a lecturer to get more information. Do a little online research to stimulate thought and action.

LIGHT THE FIRE AND FAN THE FLAMES

Ever heard of the song, "This Little Light of Mine, I'm Gonna Let it Shine"? The worst possible thing that can happen is to snuff out the sparks by packing away your CE notes and materials and never taking the time to pull out the pearls.

LIGHT A FIRE CONTINUED | PAGE 35

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...LIGHT A FIRE CONTINUED

I never knew the value of a bag full of brochures, samples, and business cards until I forgot to pick mine up at baggage claim. I began to realize there was a list of bullet points on a certain product that I wanted to reference, an email address for one of the lecturers, and a particular tool that was given to me in a lecture. I felt lost without my bag. Fortunately, I was able to retrieve it from the airport within a few days.

Figure out the three things in your conference bag that you would miss if you couldn't find them again. Those are the things that will light a fire under you and motivate change.

Share with the team, surprise and delight them with creative ways to implement, and make sure to ask for feedback along the way. Assign responsibilities to involve them in the process. Make it fun, set some incentives to keep the energy going and fan the flames. Give your team a "reason why".

Determine to succeed, and do not let the darkness in. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. ■

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