

WORK LIFE BALANCE

MEMBER
FEATURE
PEER-TO-PEER ARTICLE

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY ERIN ANDERSEN, MAADOM

I was at my desk recently drafting a job ad for a dental assistant, and I thought, "What can I offer a team member that *I* would want?" My first thought was quite simple: work-life balance.

That led me to start considering what our patients' employers offer them. How often do we offer our patients appointment times, and they reply with, "Oh, I can't take time off for that." We get to talk to them about their family, children, and grandchildren, and we hear stories about them missing sporting events or band concerts because they couldn't get the time off work. I feel this is a consistent thing I've heard over the years; it has worsened after COVID, and everyone is short-staffed.

But I believe if our goal is to be a family-oriented practice, it should start with our team members! When I typed out "we support a work-life balance", I considered how I implement this in my position and was saddened to think that I genuinely don't. We, as managers, pour our hearts and soul into our teams, practices, and patients. Sometimes, it is hard for us to see beyond the horizon.

Everything is at our fingertips. When I wake up in the morning and clean up my emails and check the weather and check my daughter's grades, do I *really* need to open my communication software and clean up text messages and voicemails so that my girls don't have to do it as soon as they get to work? Do I *really* need to answer non-urgent text messages from team members in the evenings and on the weekends? Do I *really* have to skip my breaks and work through my lunches to pound through the insurance payments and my daily tasks?

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In the last 24 years, I can't tell you how many times I've heard from those in the industry, "There are no breaks in dentistry".

Managers are usually the first to get to the office and the last to leave, and we completely exhaust ourselves in-between. Don't get me wrong, I love my job, my team, what I do, and ensuring my team has a good work-life balance, but why am I not doing the same for myself?

If this speaks to you, let's make a pact together. If we can't finish it within our work hours *with* our breaks, it can wait until the next day. We are already organized people and know how to prioritize our work, so if it isn't done by the end of the day, it *can* wait until the next day. When our break time rolls around, we will get out of our chairs and breathe fresh air, hydrate ourselves, check in with family, and reset our thoughts for our next task. We will delegate tasks to team members when appropriate because even though we think doing them ourselves is easier, our team members love something different and would be happy to help! When we get a text message after office hours or on the weekends and it is nothing urgent, we will gently reply, "I'd love to help you with this, but do you mind if I get back to you on our next working day?" Once you make this consistent, you will no longer get the messages, as your off-time becomes respected.

Our children only grow up once, and our parents don't get any younger. When today is over, we don't get a re-do. I don't want to be known as an office manager who works her butt off, always has her tasks completed, supports her team, and hits production numbers. I want to be known as an amazing person who loves her family, has a successful career, and always strives to be the best at both! Take care of *you* first, and then you *can* be the best at everything. And always remember YOU'RE WORTH IT! Let's make our pact! ■



MEET THE MEMBER

Erin is currently an office manager in Longview, WA. She started out 24 years ago as an ambitious dental assistant and was quick to learn the ins and outs of dentistry, where she found a passion for the business aspect and leadership in the profession. Erin

believes that if she takes care of her team, they will take care of their patients, and that is what drives her passion to succeed. Erin received her AADOM Fellowship distinction in 2022 and AADOM Mastership in 2023.

