

Ongoing Training for Dental Practice Staff

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Dentists understand the value of continuing education. What many of them don't realize is that CE also makes sense for members of their practice team... not only for clinical skills but for interpersonal and business skills, too. Ongoing team building training is vital for any functioning practice.

Managing patients, structuring schedules, handling financial matters, even answering the phone—all contribute to practice success. As team leader, it's up to you to ensure that your staff members are well-trained in these and the many other tasks they're responsible for.

If your staff training program has been allowed to languish, there are ways to increase its value for staff members and for your practice. Here are some points to consider:

- *Training is an ongoing process, not a series of events.* In business, as in dentistry, new technologies and techniques appear every year. To take advantage of the latest and best thinking in the business world, establish a substantive year-round training program for each team member. Establish a CE habit for your entire staff.
- *Put together a combination of in-office and off-site training events.* Some of the most valuable training experiences take place in seminars, workshops, courses and other educational activities. Draw on these to create an individualized curriculum for every staff member, and supplement it generously with training activities at your office.
- *Ask team members what kind of training they think they should receive.* Career development empowers team members and can strengthen their bond to your practice. Give them a chance to participate in shaping their individual training program and they'll be more motivated to build skills and improve performance.
- *Make training part of your practice culture.* Set up and periodically review training schedules with the whole team, to keep the subject top of mind. Spend a little time at monthly business meetings role-playing with scripts for interactions with patients.

A haphazard, on-again-off-again staff training agenda no longer suffices in the tough new dental market. For consistent performance and growth as a business, your practice should have a comprehensive, ongoing training program in place.

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