

Build a Better Dental Team with Job Descriptions

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

How do members of your practice team know exactly what they're supposed to be doing? When you make changes in responsibilities, how are they documented and communicated? What do you use as a guideline for evaluating staff performance?

There's one answer to all these questions: the dentist job description.

As the team leader, you owe it to your team members to state specifically, in writing, what your expectations are and how their performance will be measured. A well-crafted job description serves as a reference for all parties. Follow these general rules for making and using them effectively:

- **Gather all relevant information.** You, your office manager and the staff member should note the various tasks that are involved in a particular staff position.
- **Edit the notes into a concise, accurate document.** Think about not only what duties *are* part of an individual's job but also what *should be* included. Incorporate enough detail to avoid misinterpretation, but keep it brief.
- **Include performance targets.** If a team member will be expected to hit certain targets as part of her job, highlight these targets in the job description.
- **Review the tentative job description with the employee.** Before finalizing the document, check back with the person who holds the job to make sure there are no misrepresentations and to get the team member's sign-off.
- **Base annual performance reviews on job descriptions.** If this document has been carefully written, it will serve as the guide for judging how well the individual has performed. It puts everyone "on the same page" and helps prevent conflicting opinions about how the employee has measured up during the past year.
- **Edit the job description as needed.** As your practice systems, strategies, conditions and goals change over time, remember to reexamine all job descriptions to see if modifications are appropriate. Review changes right away with affected team members to ensure consent and compliance.

Detailed, accurate and up-to-date job descriptions are essential building blocks for effective team building. Create solid job descriptions and you'll be laying the foundation for a stronger team.

Author



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