The first impression is the final impression, but...?

By Dr. Ehab Heikal

From a fancy looking clinic to a friendly smile, first impressions are no doubt the most vital impression you will ever make in business so it is important to get it right first time.

But no, this does not just mean making sure that your feet aren’t on the desk when serving a customer or making sure there is a permanent smile imprinted on your face at all times. It is more about the other details.

First impressions are really important in any industry, but in the current economic climate they are more important than ever before. Our patients are continually faced with making so many decisions that we have to make the right impressions in their minds to make it easier for them to choose us. This is a vital part of any dentist practice management program.

Shifting away from an obsession with first impressions is vital as it cannot be encompassing, so shift well clear of only treating your patients extremely well on your first ever contact with them. We all know that in the current economic situation it can be very easy to lose some of your most valued customers, so be sure not to count your chickens before they are hatched!

How are we doing? Getting the best from your staff

By Fiona Stuart-Wilson

In these difficult times, it has become more important than ever to ensure your dentistry or service is as enjoyable and friendly as possible.

You know how important your team is to your practice. You want them to perform well, to work as a team so that patients are happy and satisfied with the services you provide.

But how do you manage your staff? How do you make sure they are up to the required standard of performance?

The success of your practice is in the hands of everyone within it and depends on their delivering a good service. Any weak link in the chain will have a negative effect on your practice and on your ability to deal effectively with patients.

The point of managing performance is to make sure that the performance of your team contributes to the better practice, and taking action to improve things when this does not happen.

If you manage performance effectively it will mean that everyone in your practice understands:

- what the practice is trying to achieve,
- their role in helping the practice achieve its objectives,
- what they need to know and what they need to be able to do to fulfil their role,
- the standards of performance required,
- how they can develop their own performance and contribute to development of the practice,
- how they are doing, and if there are performance problems which can be done about them.

However, good performance management looks at how people do their job as well as what they get done. So, how a person approaches their job, or the way they behave as part of a team or communicate with patients and the rest of the team is just as important as what tasks they ac-

Improve performance. The first step to improving performance is to ensure that you manage your staff well and that you provide them with the tools they need to succeed.

The foundation of this usually involves creating a unique selling advantage.

- Then create a good marketing strategy, which will attract the right type of patients to your practice. The kind of patients who are more likely to be interested in your specific type of dentistry or service.
- You need to get your entire team in on the action of what you are trying to do.
- Create systems within the clinic on accomplishing the unique experience for your patients, which complies with your marketing message.
- Customer service is a key element in the provision of your dentistry.

Open give, honest and direct feedback regularly so that people know what they are doing well just as much as what they are not doing well, and establish a performance review system which allows for two way discussion.

We all want staff who are engaged, take pride in their job and show loyalty towards the practice. If your team can see the bigger picture and how their role contributes to the success of the practice they are more likely to do their best for you. Performance management is about continuously improving the performance of individuals and in so doing improving practice performance.

And that’s not just good for the practice – it’s good for patients too.

Fiona will be presenting a great seminar on the Dental Business Management Conference in Dubai – 12th June, 2015.

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Look at the bigger picture

By Eniko Simon

Analyze data to understand the performance of your dental business.

There are many important decisions we have to make when managing a dental clinic; we make these decisions on gut instinct or based on previous experiences or by analyzing data that is available for us.

Most of the dental clinics I have been working with had some understanding of the power that data can add to their business. It is essential that you regularly track a wide range of data across your clinic to allow you to have a good understanding of your business. Now days there are fantastic dental software such as Software of Excellence or R4 very well known on the market. These dental software can assist dental businesses to analyze important key performance indicators gain a better understanding of their business.

Some data that you need to look at – who are your patients, how did they hear about your clinic, nationality, age group, your chair occupancy in your clinic, the hourly turnover your associates generating, how many new patients you have monthly and many more KPI’s we can look at. Undeniably collecting clean and reliable data and analysing it in a consistent way is part of 21st century management.

Data is the fundamental ingredient in decision making, figuring out where to focus your resources, create your targeted marketing approach.

Taking control of your data

The data on its own has no meaning, it can not provide the full picture, it does not take into account the values you stand for and the culture you trying to create in your dental business or your patients’ personal feelings they feel about your clinic.

Practice data alone can not be used to guide the success of the clinic. In order to fully utilize the facts and figures they need to be put into context. Hours spent collecting data is wasted if the bigger picture not taken into consideration.

The clinic’s short and long term goals needs to be agreed upon and once you are on your journey the collected data can demonstrate if you are on the right track to achieve your goals.

The numbers provide an effective tool to help manage and control the growth and development of your dental business but do not set the strategy you need to adopt.

Constantly analyze your data – look at how your clinic is performing. The right data at the right time will aid your decision making process regarding your finances, marketing, operations of your clinic – but be ensure that you control your data and put it into context.

Always understand the “whys” to know the way forward to the “hows.”

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