



Implant Game Changers

A Whitepaper Series By Roger P. Levin, DDS

Implant Game Changers is a monthly whitepaper on an important implant practice management topic. It provides you with a quick and easy way to understand a specific business challenge and how to translate the solution into higher production and profit, greater efficiency, more implant patients, lower stress and greater personal satisfaction.

5 Questions Every Specialist Should Ask Their Team

As the number of specialty practice team members quitting jobs continues to grow, specialists are trying to understand how to build greater team longevity. In exit interviews, we are finding that the resignations of many staff members could have been avoided. This is particularly regrettable as most specialists or office managers discover that they did not take the time to find out how the team members were truly feeling in their positions. Further, this often happens even though they typically only work a few yards away from them.

At one practice we know, the office manager started asking, “Is there anything else that we could have done differently so that you did not decide to leave the practice?” The team members’ answer often centered around the fact that there were no real conversations regarding team desires, satisfaction, or opportunities. This is one of the major reasons that team members are leaving practices. Unfortunately, conversations around employee satisfaction often take place when it’s too late—at the exit interview.

One of Levin Group’s findings in its 30-year ongoing study of top 10% producing specialty practices was that these practices typically had 17 principles in common. One of those principles was higher levels of team longevity with an average tenure of 11 years. Practices that have higher rates of turnover often find that in addition to lost revenue, growth has been stifled for some period. The higher the rate of turnover, the longer the growth rate is affected. Therefore, many specialists and office managers have become keenly interested in learning about methods

and techniques for creating a more satisfied team and cultivating higher longevity.

One of our strongest recommendations for decreasing the number of team members who resign is to have regular conversations with key questions in place. According to one Gallup study, as highlighted in an article from the Harvard Business Review, 52% of exiting employees stressed that their manager or organization could have done something to prevent them from leaving the job. Although this was a general business world study, we believe it is directly applicable to specialty practices as well.

Having coached thousands of team members in specialty practice management consulting since 1985, we can validate these findings. Many team members have shared with their consultants that they wish that the practice had asked them questions to encourage their growth before they decided to move on. Furthermore, they wanted these questions to come from their specialist or office manager proactively, rather than at an exit interview. In other words, once we reach the exit interview stage, it is too late to salvage the team member in almost all cases.

Here are five questions that should be asked regularly to team members over the course of their career.

- 1. How would you like to see yourself within our practice?** Although career development is somewhat limited in a specialty practice, it is still important to many people. Some team members do not see themselves simply as front desk staff or assistants. While there may not be new

departments to move into or promotions to be offered, there are opportunities to enhance skill sets, knowledge, responsibility, and delegation.

2. Do you feel that you have a purpose in your job?

Many team members have changed how they think about work. They no longer want just a job; they want a purpose. They want to feel like they are contributing and making a difference. Specialty practices are often so busy with a volume of patients coming through the door that they tend to focus only on the negatives like late patients, no-shows, or decreasing referrals. Negatives do not reinforce the sense of purpose in a job. Specialists should share a vision with the team for the future. Whether it is a mission statement that lays out the stated purpose of the practice or a vision for where the practice will be in five years, sharing what you see for the practice's future creates a deeper sense of purpose on the part of the team member and leads to increased team member longevity.

3. What do you need to do your best work? We were surprised by how many team members were never ever asked this question. They are expected to come to work each day and do an almost perfect job and the only commentary they ever got was when they made a mistake. Adding appreciation, recognition, and compliments to the daily equation goes a long way toward improving team member satisfaction, but not all the way. Team members would also like to be asked questions about things such as what they need to do a better job or whether they are constantly taken out of their main role by interruptions and distractions. In one case, a front desk person resigned because she was asked to do more than a full-time front desk job and was pulled away for approximately 30% of her day into the clinical area to assist because of her

background as a dental assistant. No one ever asked her how she felt about her job, the ability to do excellent work, or her satisfaction.

4. What are we doing or not doing as a practice that you feel we should adjust?

The best managers let team members know that their opinion counts. People are no longer satisfied to work for just a paycheck. They want to be heard, they want job satisfaction through continual improvement, and they expect that their opinions will, at the very least, be listened to and evaluated. We have been continually amazed at the excellent ideas that team members generate when they are simply asked. Rather than asking for the sun, moon, and stars, we find that most of these requests are within the best interest of the practice and if acted upon will result in increased production, profit, income, and team member satisfaction.

5. Do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?

This question is different than question number #3 about doing your best work. There may be times when a team member's job can be rearranged, which often happens as a practice moves between what we have identified at Levin Group as Entrepreneurial Stage 2 and Entrepreneurial Stage 3. In Entrepreneurial Stage 3 of a specialty practice, systems are implemented to allow team members to rearrange job descriptions and tasks so that they can focus on what they do best. If you don't ask a team member what they feel they do best or how they can best support the practice, you may miss an enormous opportunity going forward to place people in the right positions.

As Jim Collins has said in his bestselling business book, *Good to Great*: "Leaders of companies that go

from good to great start not with “where” but with “who.” They start by, as Collins starts in his book, “Getting the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats.”

In this case we are referring to getting the right people in the right seats by asking “the people” (i.e., your team members) where they feel they can best serve

the practice in the best way. If you’re willing to have conversations that are open and productive with team members and be able to address the questions and answers as explained above, we only have one other question which is:

Why would any team member want to leave your practice?

ROGER P. LEVIN, DDS

Roger P. Levin, DDS is the CEO and Founder of Levin Group, a leading practice management consulting firm that has worked with over 30,000 practices to increase production. A recognized expert on dental practice management and marketing, he has written 67 books and over 4,000 articles and regularly presents seminars in the U.S. and around the world.

To contact Dr. Levin or to join the 40,000 dental professionals who receive his *Practice Production Tip of the Day*, visit www.levingroup.com or email rlevin@levingroup.com.