



Building Teams and Trust

If you hire people just because they can do a job, they'll work for your money. But if you hire people who believe what you believe, they'll work for you with their blood, sweat and tears. And if you give them purpose, they'll love what they do.

Look at Wikipedia, which is run by 30,000 volunteers and has become one of the most robust, trusted sources of information in existence. Look at Dentaltown! Everyone on our site is sharing. People who need help or have questions go there every single day, and other Townies are helping them from their hearts, from a place of volunteering. That's not to say you shouldn't have a volunteer staff—just a dedicated one.

A shared greater purpose

When I first started my practice, my team took Friday mornings off for the first two years because I told them that it was insane for me to drill, fill and bill every day between age 25 and 75 (or whenever I decided to retire or die). The city water supply was unfluoridated then, and I thought that if Phoenix were fluoridated it would prevent many cavities, so I decided that every Friday morning, my team would go meet with the mayor and city council members.

I was so young and dumb that I thought this would take three weeks to do. It took every Friday morning for two years ... but in 1989 our team finally fluoridated what was then the third-largest unfluoridated city in America. The Arizona Dental Association gave me an award for the work—but more importantly, our work gave my team purpose, and patients who came in and said, "I saw you debating on the news." Your team must have purpose, like Wikipedia, AA or Dentaltown.

When you start building a purpose-focused mission, then people buy in. The main thing that a CEO must have is vision. The team must know that vision and believe in it.

Selling the invisible

The reason you have to build an amazing team is because dentistry sells the invisible. When consumers go to the store and look at an iPhone or a can of Pepsi, they know what they're buying. But what we sell can't easily be seen. If a patient walks into the practice and you tell her that she has two cavities that need to be treated, how is she supposed to know? She likely considers you as trustworthy as the auto mechanic who told her she needed a new carburetor after she went in for just an oil change.

If you can reduce or eliminate employee turnover, your patients develop long-term relationships with you—and, more importantly, your staff. Do you know what happens after you present treatment to a patient and leave the room? The patient will turn to the dental assistant, whom they've known for years, and ask questions. If you were to record the conversation that happens in that operatory once you leave, the first things that come out of the patient's mouth are going to be trust questions: "Really, do I have two cavities? Do they really need fillings? Is he your dentist? Does he work on you? Is he good with kids? Because my son needs an appointment."

We sell the invisible, and it's all about trust. You have to have staff who believe in you, who will stay with you for years and years, who will help build trust between what you sell to your patients.

I think it's funny how many dentists are afraid of competition from corporate dentistry. As a dentist, I would worry more about the old man across the street who has had the same staff for 10, 15, 20 years or more, and everyone knows them—and everyone trusts them. It's the most important part of the team.

Why women will rock dentistry

There are about 211,000 licensed dentists in America, but there are more than a million physicians—five MDs for every one of us. Where and how are the best ones crushing it? The founders of the Mayo Clinic, for

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by Howard Farran, DDS, MBA, publisher, *Dentaltown* magazine

example, said: “We’re going to create a hospital where we’ll be known as the best—the ones to be trusted.” Same with John Hopkins—again, about trust.

Meanwhile, we have more women coming out of dental school who are easier to talk to, more engaging, more preferred by patients, and they’re going to absolutely crush it in dentistry. (Ask any mom in America whether she thinks a male or female dentist would do a better job on their child, and chances are she’ll opt for the woman.)

Because communication builds trust, women can hold a significant advantage over men. On average, women say about 5,800 words each day, compared to men’s 1,500–1,700. Women talk more, and that is by no means a negative—in fact, when you’re building a team in health care, this is a very good thing.

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Howard Farran, DDS, MBA, is an international speaker who has written books and dozens of articles. To schedule Howard to speak at your next national, state or local dental meeting, email rebecca@farranmedia.com.

2017

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MAR

Patterson Dental Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Event
Cleveland, Ohio

19-22
APR

Townie Meeting 2017
Caesars Palace, Las Vegas

28
APR

Winnebago County Dental Society
Rockford, Illinois

29-1
JUL-Aug

Pearly Whites conference
Melbourne and Sydney, Australia



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We measure success in two areas in dentistry—treatment planning acceptance and staff turnover. Look at the stats on decay: For every 100 cavities that a dentist diagnoses, only 38 get filled. Roughly one-third. I firmly believe that if you write a prescription for high blood pressure for Grandpa, he’s going to throw it out the window on his way to McDonald’s. People are crazy. I’m crazy. We’re all crazy. You know who takes that prescription and makes sure it gets filled? Grandma. Or the grandpa’s daughter or granddaughter.

Women get things done and taken care of. When it comes to your practice, that’s usually your treatment plan presenter, your office manager, your assistants. If it weren’t for them, even those 38 out of 100 cavities that do get filled would drop off. It’s also because of them that we see more than those 38 getting drilled and filled. They know that they’re selling the invisible. They know it doesn’t really come down to what insurance covers when they can see the patient just bought a new \$800 iPhone, and they just heard about their vacation to Disneyland with the three kids. We all know patients have that \$250 to save their tooth. ■



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