

# The Importance of Well-written Job Descriptions



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Clinical assistant, treatment coordinator, scheduling coordinator, financial coordinator, marketing coordinator—these are the parts that make up the whole of your orthodontic team. And the performance of the team determines your orthodontic success. The interview process helps you to get the right people in the right positions, but how do you empower these marvelous people with purpose, motivation and direction? How do you measure the success of your orthodontic team?

The answer lies in a written, well-articulated description of the duties, responsibilities and measurable outcomes of the job. Employees need to have a clear understanding of how success is defined. Good employees want to exceed the expectations of their employers. Unfortunately, many leaders, in this case, orthodontists, are guilty of placing good people in a position where the definitions of success are ambiguous.

## Job Descriptions

To quell this ambiguity, start with a well-written job description for each employee. The job description should be a bird's-eye view of how the team member's duties and actions will contribute to the practice's overall success. The job description should clearly express the practice owner's vision and priorities.

For example, the treatment coordinator is the sales force that ensures prospective patients successfully move from initial lead to happy recipients of orthodontic treatment. His or her success as a treatment coordinator is measured by the number of patients who sign up for treatment (number, percentage and dollar value). The revenue he or she generates is essential to the health of the practice. Meticulous people skills, excellent communication skills and follow-through will guarantee a treatment coordinator's success.

## Checklists

Written checklists further break down the bird's-eye view of the job into bite-sized tasks. Often, a business owner walks a tightrope, balancing the desire to micromanage on one hand while letting chaos run rampant on the other. These mission-critical tasks on the checklist place responsibility squarely on the shoulders of team members, allowing the doctor to focus on the tasks only he or she can do.

### Example: Scheduling coordinator daily checklist

- Confirm patients
- Review scheduled patients for delinquency
- Contact patients about next visit
- Welcome and greet every patient by name
- Prepare daily production or receipt reports

## Metrics

Things you measure will head in the direction you wish them to. Measure your weight, your steps, your cholesterol, your hours of sleep, the amount of money you spend on fast food, savings. All of these things will improve once you start tracking their value. Similarly, once your team members understand their purposes and have been given a blueprint for how to put priorities in practice, it's time to start measuring outcomes. It's difficult to give feedback to an employee unless you have measurable, objective data regarding how he or she is doing. For the clinical assistant it may be bond failure rates or going over time for scheduled templates. For the marketing coordinator it could be number of dental offices contacted or number of new patients generated from a given marketing initiative.

## Reports

For any given number that is tracked it is important to review the progress over various time intervals. The financial coordinator, for example, needs to track the number of delinquent accounts they have for a given month or quarter. These metrics should be tracked and discussed in order to fine-tune the checklists, duties and priorities of the practice. A report that is prepared and submitted at the monthly staff meeting ensures accountability and follow-through. When possible, every employee should come to the monthly meeting with a report of the metrics of their specific job. Clinical assistants should have duties specific to their areas of responsibility (ordering, equipment maintenance, lab work, stocking, etc.).

There's no one way to run a dental practice. Every office should have its own vision, duties, priorities, job descriptions, checklists and reports. The key is to run your practice deliberately. The more deliberately you plan and execute your practice's vision, the more satisfied you and your staff will be. ■

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