

# BUSINESS

## A balancing act

Do you know when to praise the team, but also how to deal with poor performance? It's a fine line many practice owners and managers fear to tread

I always hear, 'we don't feel appreciated' from the team members; and, 'all I do is praise them, but they can't take criticism', from the dentists. Nobody is ever happy, but there is a fine balance that can be achieved.

This is what I recommend: Praise each member of the team that you come into contact with every day. Saying 'thanks for today' is not enough. You may take the view that, 'they are doing their job and getting paid, so why should I praise my team?' My question to you is, do you want the team to do the bare minimum and do so with a negative approach? Or you do you want the team to complete their duties with pride and go the extra mile? If you want the best from your team, then you have to lead them to be the best.

By praising, you can motivate, build confidence and encourage positive behaviour. Three little words and an explanation of what they did well works wonders. Complimenting your team members on little things such as, 'your tone of voice with that patient was lovely, you sounded so friendly. You really put that patient at ease and it was a great help, thanks so much', and/or 'the way you dealt with that disgruntled patient was super, I learnt a few things from you then – thank you'.

### How to deal with poor behaviour

When you know a mistake has been made, often managers and owners find it easier to talk to everyone in the group – that way, there is no finger pointing. This is not the way to do it. You need to have a one-to-one

meeting with the team member in question, and discuss why you are not happy. Use the word 'feel', eg: 'I feel very sad that this problem has occurred. Can you explain what has happened from your point of view?'

Listen, and then put your view across – seek first to understand, and then be understood. Also, ask your team member to come up with a solution and agree upon the solution together. You need to show that you are all part of the same team and that you are there to help them find solutions and new systems.

Next, explain that this will be going on their personal file as a reference, so you can review the situation again if

problems persist. Lastly, end on a high note. For example, 'Sarah, I am glad we have turned this problem into a solution. I know you work hard. Just this last week or two, I have observed you doing XYZ (examples of positive points), and do enjoy working with you. Thanks for your time today.'

This is the solution to success – praise daily, create a motivated team, but critique one-to-one when needed, and the team will take it on board, and, together, you will move forward. **LD**

#### The good...

- Say thank you and offer praise every day
- Have a one-to-one meeting with staff underperforming or those who have made a mistake
- Seek first to understand their actions and then make sure you are understood
- Ask them to devise a solution to any problem and work together to implement this
- Always end discussion on a high note.

#### ...and the bad

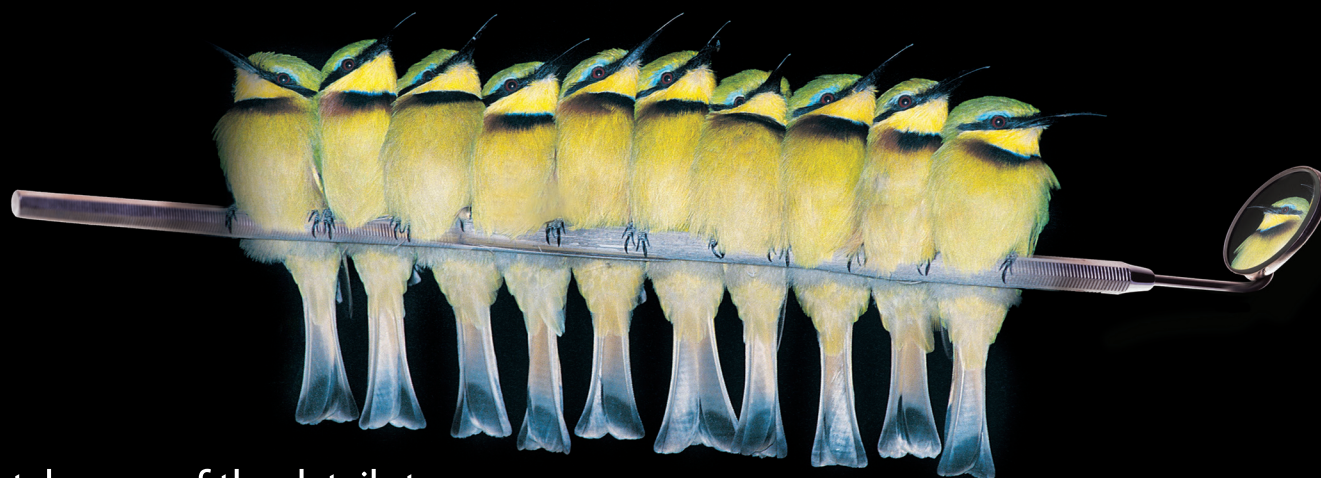
- Saying thank you once in a while is not enough
- Do not think that the fact your team is paid should be enough
- When a mistake has been made, address specifics. Do not hold a meeting with the whole team.



Laura has an outstanding knowledge of dentistry. Having joined the dental profession in 1996, she has experienced many different environments and is a registered DCP and dental radiographer. She has also studied business and sales management and marketing, and has extensive management experience in dentistry. Laura's passion lies within the training and implementation of the treatment coordinator role, and she has been largely responsible for the breakthrough of this role in the UK dental profession. For more information about Laura Horton Consulting call 01793 862009 or visit [www.laurahortonconsulting.co.uk](http://www.laurahortonconsulting.co.uk). Twitter: @LauraHorton1 Facebook: Laura Horton Consulting LTD

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