



Like clockwork

Is your practice running on time? Understand the nuts and bolts of a healthy practice foundation with **Michael Bentley's** second article on wellbeing in the workplace

Following my previous article in February on finding your passion, I would like to go deeper into looking after your team's health and wellbeing.

I have been working in Irish practices for the last four years now. It is such a pleasure as I enjoy coming across the water to Ireland and working with fantastic people. On my



Michael Bentley

Michael has been a practice manager both within optics and dentistry since 1999. He has a business diploma in distribution management and is a qualified and General Dental Council (GDC) registered dental care professional. Michael has been a business development consultant with Horton Consulting since August 2012. He is also a semi-professional actor and singer and can often be seen treading the boards or presenting on his Sunday theatre show with Balsall radio.

travels, I have found that there is some basic foundational work that is not in place. But, if it were, it would have a huge benefit to all practices to safeguard everyone in the team.

I am going to address three key areas: job descriptions, one-to-one meetings, and system set-ups. If you spend time on these areas, it will start to build substantial substance in your practice with good HR systems.

I would like to point out that there is more to HR than these three areas, but these will help uplift performance, give you a chance to nip small problems in the bud, and establish an environment where everyone is treated the same, with clear expectations of what they are there to deliver.

Job descriptions

A job description is incredibly important as it states exactly what a team member is employed to do. When you have a job

description in place you need to update it regularly, as they do change over time.

The main areas of a job description are:

- Job title – this is usually obvious but if a team member is providing nursing and reception duties then you should dual role the job description
- Purpose of job – provide a detailed overview of what the team member's role involves, such as providing clinical support to the dentist
- Responsible to – who is the team member responsible to, eg, practice manager
- Responsible for – who is the team member responsible for, eg, trainee dental nurses
- Employment duties – here, you can bullet point the main parts of the job, eg, to follow practice policies and procedures
- Key tasks – the devil is in the detail here; this is where you go through as many of the daily duties as possible. This does need to have some thought and should be

altered to make it bespoke to your practice. I have known this section to be a few pages long depending on the expectation of each person, so definitely take the time to populate this area with substance

- Signature – the last step is a signature; it sounds obvious, but a lot of documents are issued for team members to read, however they are not signed. The signature is confirmation from the team member that they understand and agree to their responsibilities.

Once the job description is complete, the next step is to set up a job description meeting with every team member to go through your expectations and to ask the team member if they have any concerns. Do they need any additional training to support the duties and tasks that you wish them to do?

Creating a job description is a fantastic opportunity for you to review exactly what each team member is doing for your practice. You may be surprised, but having it in writing is one of the most important steps in being able to manage your team correctly.

One-to-one meetings

My next key area is one-to-one meetings. This is a meeting with every team member once a week for 15 minutes. 'Why on earth would you do that?' I hear you say. 'I see all the team members around the practice every day and I always ask them if they are okay.' I understand, in practice, this does happen; I call this 'the corridor chat'.

I do not advise you to rely on this as your one-to-one meeting as it has no value and is not good for the health of your team members.

Many problems can be dealt with much earlier if you invest and commit to a weekly scheduled meeting, so that each team member gets the focus they deserve by either the practice manager or the practice owner. At this meeting, you need to ask three questions:

1. How has the last week been for you?
2. Do you need my help with anything?
3. What are your goals for next week?

At first, you may not receive much of a

reaction from some team members, but once they understand the meeting format they will start to relax and provide you with more information week-on-week.

It is important to have goals ready to set each week; these goals should not be difficult and you need to make sure there is the time to achieve the goals/tasks set. Many owners tell me that they have set goals/tasks to team members and they have not been done. The one-to-one meeting is a great way to make sure the goals/tasks you

IT IS DOWN TO YOU TO MAKE SYSTEMS EXCITING AND UNDERSTANDABLE

have issued have been completed and any concerns the team member has with the task/goal can be raised with you directly.

Setting the one-to-ones up is the hardest part. Once achieved, everyone will be rewarded with the outcome.

Systems set-up

The third key area is capability systems. What is a capability? Well, a capability is basically a blueprint of how every job is completed in the practice. Each system needs to be documented in detail.

Capability covers every aspect – from a dental nurse setting up different dental treatments, to how each dentist completes a BPE and health examination, to the reception team handling different types of phone calls.

The tip with systems is, you need to think that if I was coming into your practice and I was to work with you, could I do the work immediately with my qualification as a dental nurse and experience as a receptionist? I should be able to come into your practice, find a guide on how your practice works, such as setting up a root canal treatment, how you like the appointment to be managed and your expectation of the support you require throughout the appointment.

WHAT'S IN A JOB DESCRIPTION?

- Job title
- Purpose of job
- Who is the employee responsible for?
- Who is the employee responsible for?
- Employment duties
- Key tasks
- Signature.


This is the soundest way to have your team match the same standards of performance across the board and not to have some members of the team who are very good and some that are not, as they do not fully understand what they need to do for you or they lack application!

It will take months to set up all your systems, as you will soon realise there are hundreds of systems in practice. To start the project, you will have to invest in a team member to observe and document your current systems. When doing so, I would advise you use different mediums such as taking pictures and/or recording videos/ audios as this helps a practice set up guides for its systems quickly and easily.

You have to remember many of your team members will not engage with reading and will take minimal information on board, so it is down to you to make systems exciting and understandable.

Time will tell

Once the work has been completed, you will have a firm understanding of all the nuts and bolts of your business and how it operates. All of the practice teams I have worked with who have gone to the trouble of setting up their systems say to me that the team is more in tune with each other as each team member is working the same way.

The additional bonus is that training a new team member is so much simpler as you have a system manual in place to support their training, which, in turn, will make their integration into the team so much faster. A win-win for all in my book. 



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