

Anyone who wants to develop his or her career in dentistry needs to have a self-development plan

# REACH GOAL!

## STICK TO IT

## GET TO WORK

## MAKE PLAN

## SET GOAL

# SELF-DEVELOPMENT PLAN ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS

**In her first article of a brand new bi-monthly series, business coach Laura Horton advises on how to map out your future ambitions**

It's great that *PPD* has a section devoted to the dental team - why? Because the dental team are not only the eyes and ears of a dental practice, but they are also the key to the practice's success. Whether you are on the front desk or a dental nurse, the perception that patients have of you is very important.

Dental nurses are now registered professionals with the GDC - when this happened in 2008, I was extremely happy and proud to be on a professional register. Ever since my qualification in 1999, I placed myself onto the voluntary register, but to be counted as a professional is something else.

As a dental professional, you have to ensure that your behaviours are always appropriate in and out of work; that you are promoting good standards; but you also need to be self aware. I hope with this feature, you will be able to recognise and develop areas where you can grow as an individual, as well as feel inspired to help develop your practice.

Anyone who wants to develop his or her career in dentistry needs to have a self-development plan (SDP). Put simply, it's about goal setting. In this article, I will explain where to start and show you, the vital team member, all the ways in which you can

prosper within dentistry. Here are my five top tips:

### **1. MAKE A START**

Making it real - release your thoughts and put them onto paper. I would recommend that you type out your SDP, and also include photographs in this to make sure you keep the focus. Why not print it out, and display this somewhere that you will see it every day? The fridge is always a good idea!

When you sit down to think and plan, you need to begin with the end in mind. Where do you want to be in five years' time, and how are

you are you going to get there? You then need to work backwards. Once you start to work backwards, list where you want to be year by year, the next step is deciding how you are going to achieve that goal. What steps do you need to take?

For each goal that you set, you need to work out the details: where, when and how, including how much! It may be that your employer is not prepared to help you with the costs incurred.

## 2. BE SMART

SMART is a well-known tool for setting goals. When you are creating your SDP print out this SMART picture and have it next to you.

**S** = Specific details are needed. Do not write a generalised goal; lay it out in detail. Writing, 'I want to be the best dental nurse I can be' isn't specific, whereas writing, 'To be trained and qualified where possible in radiography, impression taking, dental photography', is specific

**M** = Measureable. How do you know when you have achieved this? Is it a qualification or a certificate?

**A** = Achievable. Goals need to stretch you slightly, but if you decide to do something way out of your reach, you won't stick at it.

**R** = Realistic. Which simply means do-able. If you said to yourself, you will never eat unhealthy food again, would that be realistic?

**T** = Time bound. Don't be vague, set an end date and ensure that it will work. Do not say August 2013 if you know that the examination for a qualification is November 2013!

I always fell short on 'R' and 'T' by trying to do too much at once. Remember, you will have distractions that may slow you down, but such is life.

## 3. LIST THE BENEFITS

What are the benefits of achieving this goal? Listing the benefits that this will bring to you, and your employer, is another good way to confirm you are setting this goal for the right reasons, the goal doesn't always have to benefit your employer, but it has to benefit you!

## 4. SHARING

At your next appraisal (if you haven't had one for more than six months, then ask for one),

share your SDP with your manager (this is where benefits to them are important). Don't be scared to, or think that they will think negatively of you. Dentists are a high creed profession, so if they know they have a like-minded team member, they will know that you will be a great asset to them.

## 5. IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT COURSES

There is a wealth of knowledge available to you, and Amazon is a great place. I would advise you to read a book a month. Some great ones for members of the dental team, that are non-clinical, include *Fish!*, *Raving fans* and *7 habits of highly effective people*. For practice managers, there is *The one minute manager*, and for TCOs and dentists, *Integrity selling for the 21st century*.

If you have a long journey to work each day, why not listen to audio? I rarely spend time in the car listening to music, and much prefer to spend my time learning and growing by listening to audio CDs and podcasts. Yes, the occasional Chris Moyles podcast may play, but I see no better way to use this time. Podcasts are great and free! Search in iTunes for any chosen topic and a list will appear.

## SELF-DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Here is an example of how a dental nurse could develop in their role:

**Goal:** To be a part of the dental examination in a deeper way

**Time frame for completion:** November 2013

**What I need to learn:** Trained and/or qualified in the following areas: radiography, impression taking and photography

**Where I learn:** Through attending courses X, Y and Z

**Start date:** Course X 30/10/12; Course Y 10/01/13; Course Z 04/05/13

**Cost:** Course X £250; Course Y £300; Course Z £250

**Benefit to me:** Two qualifications and certificates for dental photography. Enhanced role in the role and greater job satisfaction

**Benefit to my employer:** Currently, we post out treatment plans to patients, as the dentist doesn't have time at the end to plan. At the end of the examination, the dentist can prescribe the radiographs, impressions and photographs to me. This will save

them around 20 minutes per new patient examination. During this time, the dentist can either see another patient or can begin their treatment planning. By introducing this new system, we become more efficient and have stronger evidence for the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Think about the investment you need to make to achieve your goals, as you may need a savings plan. If you take home £1,500 per month, saving 3% a month (£45) will give you £540 a year.

To ask a question or comment on this article please send an email to: [comments@ppdentistry.com](mailto:comments@ppdentistry.com)



Laura has worked in dentistry for 15 years and has an interest in treatment coordination and team development. In 2008 Laura left her full-time practice management role. Ever since, with her years of experience and vast amount of knowledge, Laura has been working with dental practices to help them successfully reach their true potential and is a treatment coordinator business coach.

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