



Create a culture of constant change

Michael Bentley reveals how taking up boxing has inspired him to look at the importance of change in work and business life

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There's no doubt about it, change can be hard. Sometimes, stepping into the unknown is a little scary, but, most of the time, it just feels downright uncomfortable, having to carry out new actions that are unfamiliar to us.

However, without change we can become stagnant, both personally and professionally – and the same applies to businesses. If we want to achieve a different outcome, we have to put different processes in place. The most successful businesses have a culture of constant change and a communicated vision that the team buys into.

Working as a consultant/trainer in dental practices, I often see objections and resistance to change, but it can be such an amazing experience when dealt with correctly. To highlight this point, I would like to share my own experiences with change.

Stepping out of my comfort zone

Last year, I decided to take up boxing; for anyone who knows me this would have seemed outrageous. I was inspired to start after I was invited to be a ballroom judge for Ultra Ballroom across the Midlands.

Created by Cancer Research UK, the Ultra events raise money for the charity. After talking to many people that took part in the dancing, I found out they had also competed in the Ultra boxing. I felt inspired and decided it was time for me to take on a new challenge.

Over four weeks, I was adapting and making changes so I could be successful at my new skill. I was taught how to stand correctly and rotate my body while keeping balanced. I learned boxing moves: hooks, jabs and crosses to name but a few. During the first week, my head felt completely mashed and I struggled to understand what I needed to do. However, after eight weeks I could move around the ring with balance and deliver synchronised moves. If you had told me at the start I would be at this level within just two months I wouldn't have believed it, so why was it successful?

The first reason is down to having a great leader who mentored me and showed me the correct techniques. I was given the right level of support and encouragement to keep me on the right path, which helped me to believe I could do it. In addition to this, I was focused, had a clear mindset and knew why I needed to make these changes because I could envisage the ultimate goal.

I won't lie, while learning this new sport I found it difficult to adapt and learn new skills. That being said, I gained so much by going through the process and sticking with it, even when things got really tough. The same applies in all businesses, even dental practices.

Change and new skills are vital in a dental practice, life moves on quickly and we all need to be kept sharp to embrace new challenges.

How to instil change

Talking about the benefits that change brings will help to create a sense of achievement.

When discussing changes you must take time to explain your reasons, provide an understanding of why you are making changes and give each team member an opportunity to have their input, so when it comes

to implementation everyone is in it together. Share the end point, if people can see the ultimate goal and feel invested in it, they will want to help you achieve it as a team, which will mean they will be more inclined to take on any initial challenges that come with it.

Whatever role you have in the practice, remember when changes are made, the focus should always be on the long-term benefit of that change, not on the way it makes you feel at the moment.

I often get grimaces when working with practices on areas such as diary zoning, telephone training, dental examination training, handover and clinical systems and so on, but the power of change and the benefits far outweigh the small amount of discomfort.

Keep coming back together to discuss the changes, what obstacles you are finding and share any methods or techniques that you are each using to cope with the differences. Go back to the reason why you are instilling these changes, reinforcing the vision and end goal will help to energise everyone again. Remember that you are all on the same journey together and sharing it will be far more enjoyable.

Don't close your mind to change; it is what keeps us sharp and alive. On a personal level, you really don't want every day to be the same, it becomes mundane, and on a business level you don't want to become stale and lag behind your competition. The longer you stay the same the harder it becomes to move forward. Getting both yourself and your team into the mindset of change is not just good, it is vital. **D**

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