Staying motivated and passionate

When it comes to CPD, are you just ticking the boxes?
asks **Ruth Glover***

In dentistry, professional development is now an integral part of our working lives, particularly since the introduction of revalidation. However, it would be quite wrong to suggest that we are all merely conforming to General Dental Council (GDC) regulations, as the majority of practitioners recognise the enormous benefits of continuing professional development (CPD) and value the concept of lifelong learning.

CPD enables us to keep up-to-date with what is current and new in our chosen profession. It helps us to improve our skills, increases our knowledge and enables us to offer the best possible care to our patients - not to mention the fact that CPD also helps ensure our continued employability for the

rest of our lives! Add to this the fact that it can help us to maintain an interest in our work and keep us motivated and passionate about what we do, and it seems clear that quality CPD is essential to the committed professional.

So what are some other key benefits of participating in professional development?

- Keeping updated with changing technology - staying current and taking advantage of new developments will keep you engaged, motivated and at the cutting edge of advancements in your field
- Achieving your goals efficiently - taking a planned approach to skills development may help you to move up the career ladder quicker and be better placed for change
- Achieving recognition - gaining additional, CPD-verified qualifications will help your professional standing, both in your own workplace and in the industry as a whole
- Developing professional authority - acquiring the knowledge and expertise that others respect will mean that you are able to influence and help guide them to achieve their own goals
- Providing evidence of competence - formal certificates as well as one's own records can help you with regards to employers and also to the GDC, where it is required by regulation
- Demonstrating commitment to your chosen profession - with an ever-increasing focus on ethical practice, 'doing CPD' is an important part of being a dental professional.

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Continuing education can be pursued through a variety of means, including lectures, articles, mentoring or courses. Different approaches suit different individuals. However, one particularly significant element in learning is active participation, and for this reason, courses that are interactive and ‘hands-on’ can be one of the most effective approaches to CPD.

Being an active participant in the process will ensure you the best chance of success. In other words: ‘Tell me and I’ll forget; show me, and I may remember; involve me, and I’ll understand.’¹

Participation involves feedback and takes time. A course that delivers a concentrated stream of facts to a passive audience may appear to cover a lot of ground in a short space of time, but it will not provide a depth of understanding and the ability to apply those facts in the same way as a course with interaction.

It is also important to have both long- and short-term goals for your CPD. This will help when choosing courses, as you can consider how each course’s aims and objectives will further these goals.

So what are some key elements of a good course?

- Does it update and extend your knowledge and skills? Does the course lead to a new qualification or is it simply a ‘refresher’?
- Does it have clear expected learning outcomes? You should be informed of what you may gain as a result of taking the course
- Are there formal educational aims and objectives? Learning should have a defined

purpose and goal

- Is there a quality control process? There should be an opportunity to comment or provide feedback with a view to improving quality
- Does the course provider have credentials? Is it an established provider, with a reputation for high quality teaching skills and courses?

One further feature of course participation to look for is the level of student’s involvement in defining the four levels of understanding

the involvement the course. To this more, consider levels of thinking about and teaching:² ‘The levels range from [...] level 1 – where the student is

merely a sponge absorbing material without too much thought as to where the knowledge is taking them, to level 4 where the student is actively engaged in management of their own learning.’³

A course can encourage this kind of management by involving the students in choices of topic or time allocation. An

exemplary course will foster a proactive attitude and encourage the students to continue independently in their studies and learning, even after the course has ended.

Taking a structured approach to your professional development will help you to manage your CPD, your job and your career more effectively. If you decide upon your goals and take control of the path to

accomplishing them, you will find that the support and satisfaction that you gain will be well worth the effort. However, you must choose your courses wisely and be careful not to remain a passive participant in your personal learning experience.

1. Chinese proverb, author unknown.

2. Biggs J. *Teaching for quality learning at university: what the student does*. SHRE and Open University Press, 1999.

3. Houghton W. *Engineering Subject Centre Guide: learning and teaching theory for engineering academics*. Loughborough: HEA Engineering Subject Centre, 2004.