Encouraging your dental team to embrace change

Lisa Bainham
explains
how a
dental

practice manager can
best implement change
among the dental team,
and promote a high-
performance culture.

As practice managers or someone managing a dental team, we have the pleasure of generally being the person/people that must implement the changes to systems within your practice or teams.

To grow, we often need to change, and quite often it is not always the managers that this mostly affects. So how do we ensure that our team not only embrace the changes but goes on to then promote a high-performance culture and continuous improvement?

Recognising personality types and politics within your team and presenting changes accordingly is a massive help. Not all of us react in the same way but will get there in the end dependent upon your leadership

techniques. You may need to adapt your style of leadership to get the required response.

Our teams are usually made up of four types:

- Persons who will initiate the change process
- Persons who will accept the proposed change
- Persons who will be indifferent to the proposed change
- Persons who will not accept the proposed change.

Top tips for change management within your teams

Encourage and promote positivity and flexibility – if you aren't positive, why should others be? But also be flexible to help and

suggestions from your team when discussing the changes. Walking the talk is vital to build trust and competence within your team; any negativity will be used against you when implementing changes. That said, it's also important for you to be realistic and explain that you are aware that some changes may need to be tweaked along the way and that you can be flexible and open to suggestions for improvement from the team.

you about their concerns or obstacles; it might even be something you haven't considered, and could be valid. Set up specific times and meetings with your team so they know they can discuss issues with you. If they know you have set time aside to listen to them, they are less likely to be demonstrating negative behaviours. By having set meetings this also prevents the 'corridor chats' when often people can be flippant or can come across

being adopted, then using more specific measures such as performance management can begin – but ensure your support and guidance has been noted.

Remove obstacles and eliminate 'well poisoners' or 'dementors' (for the HP fans). Sounds harsh, I know, but after 20 years of building and growing two successful practices and now a team of 42, I haven't been without my fair share of these types of employees. They are much more dangerous than the 'Greater Spotted Matildas': the waltz in, do their job and waltz out again type, who are generally harmless and will sometimes be spotted using initiative and surprising you with their attitude towards changes – when nurtured and guided properly, and quietly warned about the well poisoners.

The well poisoners will often try their best to prevent change and ensure that others are not embracing change positively. Recognising that type of team member is crucial, and one to one management may be required to get them on board. In my opinion, it is sometimes a case of 'they are either on board for the journey or they need to get off the bus'.

Most of the team will be able to identify a well poisoner but often new or younger team members aren't so lucky and could be easily influenced to resist change. Again, recognition and removal of these negative barriers will help the wonderful changes happen (in

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Enlist positive members of your team and help them to influence others that are maybe a little resistant. Do not be confrontational but do not be afraid to challenge those who are being resistant. Question the obstacles and ask how they may be able to overcome them. By asking them the questions they often find their own answers.

Be open – encourage your team to talk to

'moany' ... or in the manager's case, distracted and impatient.

Look at your organisation chart and roles. Try to consider how the changes will affect different team members and be active in reflecting on what their resistance may be and why. Are your team going to be affected financially, physically (is their job harder) or will the changes touch them from a 'hierarchy' perspective?

Author information

Lisa trained to be a dental nurse at North Staffordshire Hospital and qualified in 1994. Originally working in an orthodontic practice, she then developed an interest in practice management and came to join Steve Lomas as the practice manager from when the practice opened in 1998. Lisa has continually gained numerous practice management qualifications and new skills over the years.

Lisa was awarded Practice Manager of the Year 2015 by The Association of Dental Administrators and Managers (ADAM) and was very proud to also win Practice Manager of the year 2016 at the Dental Awards.

Lisa has gained a wealth of knowledge and experience over her last 18 years as a practice manager and is now supporting other practice managers in her role as President of ADAM, who have members throughout the UK.

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Whilst implementing changes can be frustrating for a manager, you must consistently try to avoid responding in a negative way, either by using sarcasm or cynicism.

Embrace reality with productive actions and behaviours – ensure your team realise the benefits of the changes – not just to the practice but for them individually too.

Most importantly! If you have employees showing negativity to the changes you must try to support them. If the changes still aren't

theory-mostly).

However, give them chance to change, and clearly explain what is needed, expected and what isn't acceptable.

Finally, avoid the cliché 'change is good' because unless you have explained the good, it is rarely initially thought of in that way.