

When Performance Problems occur, Don't Delay!

by Art Deden

Hate the thought of dealing with performance problems? You've got plenty of company. Ask most dentists and they would all agree that it is the absolute worst part of their job. Having to face a team member who is under-performing ranks right up there with, well, getting a root canal.

If given the choice, most dentists (and most humanoids) would avoid confronting poor performers hoping instead that the problem will "go away" on its own. Unfortunately, it rarely does! The likely scenario, played-out in thousands of businesses each day, is that the problem becomes so serious and impacting to the organization that you have no choice but to act. Not only do you cause more harm, it's one of the most unfair things you can do to a team member. Whoever said talk is cheap was mistaken. "Saying Nothing" is incredibly more expensive for both the dental practice and the team members involved. It doesn't have to be that way.

As the leader of your practice, your job is to guide, influence and motivate team members to be as productive and successful as they can possibly be. Knowing that someone is performing below standard – and not doing or saying anything about it – means that, you are also not meeting the standard required to be an effective and successful leader. In truth, you are just as guilty for poor performance as your teammate. There are just no valid excuses for inaction on your part.

Consider: at some point you eventually sit down with the employee and explain the seriousness of the problem. When asked "how long has this been going on?" you answer, "for quite some time now." They ask why you hadn't told them sooner. How are you going to respond to that question? "I was too busy"? "It wasn't a big problem before and now it is"? Do you see the problem here?

So, make the effort to deal with performance issues as you become aware of them and don't delay. Help your teammate recognize their performance short-falls and re-define the expectations you have for them as well as the results you want. Put a plan in place, along with a timetable, to monitor results. Make sure you provide them with the resources, support and feedback they need to get back "on track."

It may require you to work through some fear, anxiety, or discomfort you have...but once you master the courage and the skills, your practice will become a more enjoyable place to work and a lot more successful.

Continued Success to You and Your Team!