Managing small businesses with BIG requirements is not easy

Seema Sharma reflects on the skills sets required

All NHS and private dentists have to register with The Care Quality Commission (CQC) in 2011, and will be expected to comply with 50 regulations which can be grouped into six sections:

1. Involvement and information
2. Personalised care, treatment and support
3. Safeguarding and safety
4. Suitability of staffing
5. Quality and management
6. Suitability of management.

This article explores how Dentaby can assist your practice achieve the key outcomes and performance indicators expected by the CQC for section six: Suitability of Management.

Suitability of Management

A recent study associated with Invest in People showed that management has an important role to play in delivering company performance in terms of the improvements in quality, service and customer satisfaction. The good news is that it also showed that sound management structures lead to higher levels of profitability.

The more a dental practice embraces a management structure, the better its performance will be. This is because a good practice leader:

- Allows managers greater freedom and discretion to perform
- Supports the development of a learning culture for team members
- Enhances the effectiveness of the management processes being implemented
- Creates an environment where there is more focus on performance
- Ensures employees better understand their goals and their contribution to the practice.

Unfortunately, dental practices are often too big enough to accommodate a leader and a manager, so the practice owner/practice manager needs to have characteristics of both to have the ideal set of strengths for building a winning team.

So who’s going to do it?

And so the challenge begins – getting the whole team on the same bus is a manager's biggest headache. You're right, it’s not easy!

There are four basic styles of interaction:

- Delegation (not abdication) is a key tool in a manager's armoury too. The manager's role is to translate vision into action by empowering individuals to take on roles and generate results, but to stay at a close enough distance to provide assistance or guidance when required.

Relevant CQC Regulations

The following regulations are relevant to this section:

- Regulation 5: Fitness of service provider
- Regulation 6: Registered person: general requirements and training
- Regulation 26: Notice of absence
- Regulation 27: Notice of Changes

A good leader applies the right style to the right situation – there is no right or wrong style. Not sure what your style is? The good news is that skills traits can be acquired with the right mentoring and coaching.

A manager on the other hand implements the strategy outlined by the leader by building teams, setting up systems, organising workflow and solving problems.

Leadership – can we do it?

A leader provides strategic vision, engages, motivates, inspires and aligns the practice team with the owner's core vision. By defining the practice's vision and setting out aims and objectives clearly, he or she empowers the team to work together towards end goals... and then he does not actually have to be there all the time!

The worst thing a practice owner can do is try to be all things to all people – it's time to learn how to delegate. More than ever before, leadership skills are required in the new world of dental practice management. There are a lot of goals to be achieved for CQC, and the vision needs to be developed now to get the whole team doing their bit!

Leadership styles can be:

- Directive
- Authoritative
- Participative

Leadership – analytical, enjoys problem solving

Relater – Approachable, warm, loyal.

Inherent styles never really change, so my tip is to start by selecting the right personality style as well as the appropriately qualified person for the job during recruitment.

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