Finding the right coach for your practice

Chris Barrow discusses the benefits of the right business coach

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here’s no doubt that dental business coaching has achieved a much higher profile in recent years. Most people are aware of the profession, but they may be less certain of exactly what it entails, how long it lasts and what the benefits are. Broadly, there are two types of business coaching: quantitative and qualitative, and the length of the contract very much depends on the relationship with the client.

An example of a quantitative relationship could be a dentist wishing to increase their profits by 50 per cent. Once they reach that point, the target has been achieved and the contract fulfilled. Other targets could include a conversion from NHS to private, or someone wanting to get their profits by 30 per cent.

Quantitative coaching means having a target to aim for. Whether it’s raising the number of patients a week or the profit, there is a set number of tests and procedures to achieve the desired outcome. A continuing cost is needed as the client needs to keep track of their performance.

A qualitative relationship is where the client needs a happy team, or somebody who can look from the ‘outside in’. It’s not only about qualifications, to ensure they know what that feels like, but about the process and how to look at them.

There’s a fantastic quote attributed to North American Indians, ‘wisdom enters through the wound’. In other words, if you’re going to open a business, you need a battle-scarred veteran on side; someone who’s run their own business and experienced both failure and success. They know the taste of both, so they know what to do when either one occurs and will be able to pass on that experience to you.

As for fees, it’s a cliché but you really do get what you pay for. There are coaches who will work for £500 a day, £2,000 a day or £5,000 a day. You’ve got to ask yourself, what is it that you want?

A business coach becomes part of the team, and importantly, a team member with the experience that the dentist does not yet possess. Whatever the business venture, whether it’s a dental practice, florist or pub, it’s going to be a good idea to have someone around who’s got a 10 to 15 years’ head start.

There’s a fantastic quota...

About the author

Chris Barrow has been a consultant in the dental profession for seven or more years. He is the founder and Managing Director of the BKH Group of Companies and runs Chris Barrow Limited, which is a blended solution from more than one provider. The focus is on areas such as marketing, team training, financial control and management, social media marketing, treatment coordination, front desk and telephony, and so on.

Dentists need to determine if they need general business advice from a strategic perspective, or very specific tactical implementation, or both. Take a good look round the marketplace to see what’s available and decide if individual help is needed or a blended solution from more than one provider.

As with any business, a dental practice is at its most productive when principals surround themselves with the right people in the right roles and delegate accordingly. How can you move to the next level if you can’t see the bigger picture? Having a skilled team in place – including a business coach – is the difference between being down in the trenches and sitting in a hot air balloon with a clear view all around you.