

DOES YOUR TEAM REACH THEIR POTENTIAL?

By Janelle Storck

Your team is awesome! They work at their highest level of efficiency and react appropriately and timely in all aspects of their jobs. When you need additional help or input from the team, they step into another team member's role readily.

Right? Or maybe not so much.

Why are some team members, who seem to have such high potential in the beginning, not reaching it? Why do some team members seem to be losing their drive to perform at their peak?

Developing your team is a crucial part of your role as the practice leader, whether you're just getting started or an experienced practitioner. Training does not apply only to new hires. Just as you and your clinical team need CE throughout your career, your entire team needs training and support — both as individuals and as a team — to continue to develop their skills and to work efficiently.

Realizing that dental team members are a diverse group of people, and personal reasons can sometimes play a factor, there are familiar patterns seen in underperformance in dental practices. To determine how to help your team, it is crucial to understand the root of poor performance.

5 COMMON FACTORS FOR POOR EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

1. Work is Boring!

A team member who is not motivated or fully engaged is not putting forth the maximum performance. No matter how smart or creative an employee might be, if bored with the same daily tasks, the employee is not performing at maximum effort. Cross-training is essential in helping every team member to not only understand the job of fellow team members but to be a contributor in all aspects of the practice where allowed. It is important to ensure that an employee can vary tasks periodically and be challenged, to prevent the job from becoming stale and repetitive. Being cross-trained allows employees to step in when needed and to step away from their own day-to-day tasks.

2. Stressful Environment

We all have stress in our lives, and it's important to note the difference between the usual pressure to perform well vs. unhealthy extreme stress. The unhealthy levels may be due to issues outside of the practice or they may be caused by office politics, gossip in the office, lack of communication, not being properly trained, or other factors that can lead to team members feeling overworked, overwhelmed, and/or unengaged.

3. Overworked or Undertrained?

Team members and managers need to have a clear policy, following state and federal guidelines, which distinguishes between work time and personal time. When employees feel as if they must always work through lunch or are always staying late, burnout and fatigue result, leading to decreased motivation and performance. If employees are not trained properly or are not taking advantage of continual learning opportunities, they may feel as if they must work harder rather than smarter.

"Continuous learning is the minimum requirement for success in any field."

– Dennis Waitley

4. Lack of Positive Reinforcement

Acknowledgment falls into three different levels. The first level is a basic level which includes a simple action of saying "Great Job!" "Job" can mean handling the patient who was scared, dealing with the patient's concerns about finances, etc. The second level involves healthy competition or rewards, such as providing lunch for the office when reaching a goal, an individual gift card for exceeding expectations, a team retreat for exceeding goals, etc. The third level is more individualized and includes salary increases, bonuses, or opportunities for advancement.

5. No Training Opportunities

Sometimes an employee is underperforming because of lack of opportunities to train, grow, and improve skills. Team members should never stop learning. Providing access to training that is available anytime and anywhere is the key to growth. Virtual training can be the best option to achieve this goal and is the most accessible option in today's learning environment.

An efficient and effective team doesn't come together by accident. There are many ways to help your team perform at its highest level. Start with clearly defined roles, job descriptions, and goals to keep everyone on track and achieving potential. You can help your team members build trust with team activities and develop their skills and experience by delegating. You can ensure everyone can take on tasks by cross-training.

If you want your team to perform better, take the time to talk with them. Find out about their goals, what interests them, and how they can use their skills to improve. Identify areas where they could benefit from training and provide resources to help them develop full potential. Since the team learns from its leader, it can also be helpful to appraise yourself too. You may be pleasantly surprised to identify areas where you can grow that will, in turn, help your team to grow.



Janelle Storck is the Chief Operating Officer for Front Office Rocks, a leader in web-based front office training for dental practices.

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Ask the Consultant

Q: Is it HIPAA compliant to send a postcard to a patient with the date and time of the appointment, as a reminder, as long as it doesn't have the reason for the appointment?

A: It is OK for the office to send a postcard confirming the date as long as the type of appointment is not outlined, but you should refer to the OCR's FAQs, since that is the government agency responsible for enforcing HIPAA privacy and security regulations.

www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/faq/index.html

Q: Why are we not supposed to write fees in a patient's paper chart?

A: According to the American Dental Association: No financial information should be kept in the dental record.

Ledger cards, insurance benefit breakdowns, insurance claims, and payment vouchers are not part of the patient's clinical record. Keep these financial records separate from the dental record.

Other information best left out of the record include personal opinions or criticisms. Stick to facts, especially those related and relevant to providing dental care. Imagine what you write in a record being read in a court of law (remembering this is a legal document). Do document a patient's refusal to accept the recommended treatment plan and canceled appointments.

Responses provided by **Kathleen Johnson**,
President of Kathleen Johnson Consulting, Inc.

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— Theodore Roosevelt



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— **Connie O.**, Office Manager



FUN! Fact

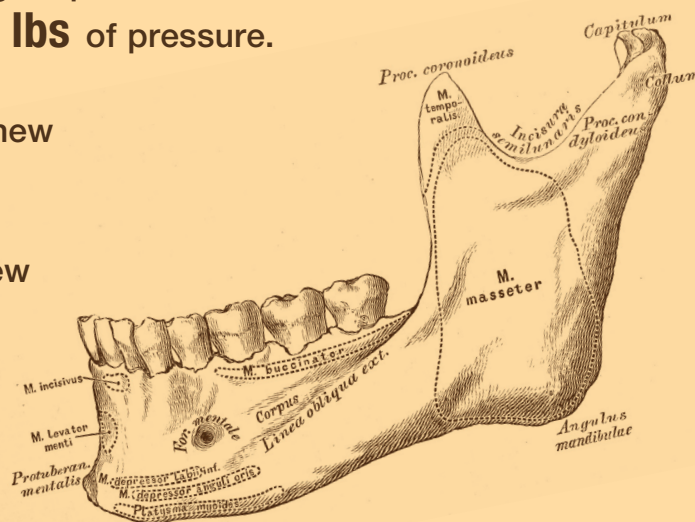
The average North American can exert approximately **30-40 lbs** per square inch of pressure with their jaws. Denture wearers can get up to about **15 lbs**. Some Inuit people can exert **350 lbs** of pressure.

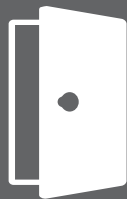
If you are **right-handed**, you tend to chew on the **right side of your mouth**.

If you are **left-handed**, you tend to chew on the **left side of your mouth**.

Only your lower jaw moves when you chew.

Your upper jaw stays still.





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