

# Great systems for a stellar staff

*We all want an A-team—but what if one of your superstars suddenly left? Here's how to ensure your practice's strategy for success is bigger than any one person. By Ginny Hegarty*

**By Ginny Hegarty**

He reassured himself: Eileen had been with his practice eight years, and he'd been thrilled with her command of the position and her natural talent for the job. She couldn't be unhappy.

"Sure Eileen, what's up?"

"Well, Dr. Martin, I have good news and bad news. First, the good news: My husband Tom has just been named the president of a new division in his company. But, the company is based in San Francisco and we'll need to relocate by the end of the month."

Dr. Martin wanted to be happy for Eileen and her family, but all he could think about was how this "good news" was going to affect him and the practice. Visions of the old days, with trickling cash flow and out-of-control accounts receivable, whirled in his head until he felt dizzy. Eileen's departure was just two weeks away.

The rest of the team had that deer-in-the-headlights look after they heard the news. The team were all superstars in their own right. Unfortunately, there was no one else on staff who could fill Eileen's shoes, and it would be near impossible to hire and train someone before Eileen's departure. It no longer felt like a great springtime morning; Dr. Martin was deep in the dead of winter, dreading what would come next.

## **Common scenario**

The good news varies: Some team members leave due to pregnancy, marriage, transfers or retirement. The result is the same: a gaping void in the dream-team they had created, coached and counted on, and an overwhelming sense of vulnerability.

To avoid this scenario, it is critical that you realize that successful staffing and personnel management is a two-part process. First, you must have the right people. Second, you must support these people with the right systems. Instead of having great systems in place, too many practitioners rely solely on the great people they have in place.

It's the combination of great systems and great people that make the critical difference.

You see this played out in the sports arena all the time. How did the Detroit Pistons beat the Los Angeles Lakers in the NBA playoffs? Because, while their skills are arguably less than the Lakers' stars, the Pistons have a better system, a system that keeps the players focused.

There are nearly endless examples of dental teams that have suffered serious setbacks because they didn't have well documented systems in place to support their talented staff.

## **Knowledge equals potential power**

Training had occurred without the benefit of a complete understanding of the role of insurance coordination. Documented systems fill this void and complement training with education and a focus on the big picture. No one can remember everything; systems must be documented with step-by-step instructions .

Conventional wisdom tells us knowledge is power. Experience has shown me that knowledge is not power; it is potential power. Knowledge becomes powerful only when it is properly documented and disseminated throughout an organization.

It's a sad day when you lose a great team member; it's tragic when your practice loses a wealth of knowledge and experience along with her. Don't let this happen to you; act now to ensure that your dream team leaves a lasting and permanent legacy.

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