

Three Vital Keys to Finding and Training Good Employees

By Laura Hatch

Is it time to bring on a new employee? I know a lot of office managers and dentists are frustrated with the entire hiring and training process. As an office manager myself, I get it. But I have good news: the process doesn't need to be a negative one, if you go at it the right way. In my experience, there are three key aspects of hiring and training that will make the process less painful and far more effective.

First, step back and check your attitude about the process. If you go into the hiring game with the attitude that there are no good employees out there, then guess what? You won't find any. It's important to start the process with a sense of determination that you intend to find that next great team member. However, you've got to be clear about what type of person and what skills you are actually looking for. If you're just looking aimlessly without a good idea of what you want, there is a good chance you will never find that person. The next part of this equation is understanding that your attitude shines through in your job advertisement. If your advertisement is so specific that very few applicants will fulfill the requirements, or so hum-drum that no good candidate would want to apply to the position, then you're not going to find your next superstar. If you have the right attitude, understand that finding a good employee is possible, and recruit with the idea that you are trying to find a great employee beginning with the way you write your advertisement for the position, the right person will show up on your doorstep.

Next, prioritizing training is a key to making this new employee successful. Too many times, we hire employees with no real training plan in place for how we will teach them what they need to know. We either have them passively sit and watch someone else do their job, or we throw them into the deep end and see if they sink or swim. Both methods are ineffective. Honestly, all that these methods accomplish is creating stress for the team as well as your new employee, who could be your next superstar with the right training. A job outline and training plan should be established prior to the new employee's start date, and it should include specifics about what the employee will be doing, who will be teaching that employee the job requirements, at what step during their training the employee will learn certain duties, etc. Creating a detailed training strategy prior to the employee's start date is vital for many reasons:

- 1) Many times we are teaching the new employee too much at once, which is overwhelming and does not allow them to fully grasp what is needed. Or it's the opposite: we don't teach them enough, which makes the job boring.
- 2) We tend to try to train the new employee while doing our own job at the same time. This causes stress on the employee who is doing the training, and it compromises the job at hand and the training quality for the new employee.
- 3) Not everyone is cut out to train others on specific job duties simply because they're good at performing the task. In other words, we frequently ask current employees to train new staff on tasks that they might be good at doing but aren't necessarily good at teaching. Simply showing the new employee how things are done is not necessarily training. Teaching the employee effectively is a very different thing, and that needs to be the purpose and the intention of the person doing the training.

And here's the last of the three keys to effective hiring and training. During training, the new employee is generally shown how to do something, but it's rare for the new employee to learn why the task needs to be done. Superstar employees aren't created by simply mimicking the actions that were modeled for them. This is how we end up with an office full of busy employees who are all doing the right actions but

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not being very effective. An effective training program will not only address “how” to do something but also the “why,” so that every employee has a clear understanding of their part in the bigger picture. If the new employee understands the why, they will be more vested in learning how to do the task correctly and want to accomplish the goal of that particular task, knowing that it is vital to the success of the overall mission.

The takeaway: If you want to create superstar employees, start by adding the right people to the team by targeting your recruiting efforts with a laser focus. Then, once you’ve hired a promising candidate, give them the chance to excel by providing well thought-out training that helps the new employee understand the “why” of what they’re doing. Ultimately, these actions are the keys to success and growth for any dental office.