



PRIME PRACTICE
the dental management specialists

Why Practice Management?

By Dr Phillip Palmer BDS

There seems to be a negative stigma among many people about getting business coaching. It's like the complaint women often make about men never wanting to ask for directions when they are lost. As if somehow asking for help, coaching, directions or education in something indicates a weakness and/or fault in the person. That is, it is better to not ask for help...stumble your way through and learn for yourself, it even if it means knowing that for the time being you aren't doing things as effectively or efficiently as you could be.

In the world of dentistry this attitude is evident in many dentists' views on continuing education and practice management consulting/coaching. Running Prime Practice, I am often asked about the profile of our clients. Questions like: "What kind of dentists come to you?" "What kind of dentists need practice management?" "What kind of problems do your clients have?" My answer to these questions often surprise people because the people who seek our services at Prime are rarely business ignoramuses or people in trouble. As a matter of fact it is more commonly the good practitioners who see the possibilities in their practices.

The profile I usually see in a dentist getting practice management coaching has a mixture of the following qualities:

1. They realise that some aspect of their practice isn't all that is could be:
 - o Some dentists feel they deserve and should have a higher income level
 - o Some dentists want to work less
 - o Some dentists want more control of their practice lives (of their staff interactions, of their books, of their appointment book, etc). They feel their practices run their lives rather than they run their practices.
 - o Many dentists take on practice management because they just want to be the best they can be.
2. They take responsibility for the practice the way it is. Too many people blame other people or circumstance for their lot in life. I hear dentists complaining about how bad their front desk person is or about the poor quality of their patient base.

As principal dentists, our practices and employees are a reflection of us. Things are the way they are, because of our action or inaction. The good elements of our practices are because of us, and all the problems in our practices are, also, because of us.

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3. They are committed to growth personally and professionally. They look at how they can improve their career, practice and life.
 4. They realise they need to expand their capabilities beyond what they know in order to achieve what they want.
 5. They don't have too much ego to seek out help. Too many people feel that to ask someone to teach you how to do something degrades them in some way.
 6. They are brave enough to step out of their comfort zone and try solutions. It's all too easy to keep doing things the way you are used to, make excuses for why your practice isn't as good as it should be and get used to the devil you know rather than try potential solutions.

Many people think "remedial" when they hear the word "coach" but when you think about it all top athletes and sports teams have coaches. Tiger Woods has always had a coach! Does that mean that Tiger Woods is remedial...or somehow inept at coping? Of course not!! It means that he is so serious about achieving his goals that he has sought out someone who can keep him focused and honed towards getting there.

For those of you out there who still feel like they can work things out on their own and shouldn't ask for help or directions along the way in their careers I have a question for you. Think for a minute about who looks cleverer...the man who stumbles around in the darkness or the man who asks for help finding the light switch.

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