

# Implementing Change is Not Such an Easy Task

by Ralph Laurie

**Y**ou've been to lectures, listened to CDs and webinars, watched DVDs, and read countless books in an effort to better yourself personally and professionally. Each medium probably promoted "SECRETS" to success consisting of schemes that should be incorporated immediately to make you healthy, wealthy, and wise. While most of these courses have great content, for some reason, you just couldn't get the items incorporated into your routine. At dental meetings, you've purchased high technology equipment, appliances or dental materials that were all designed to improve your efficiency, effectiveness, and make you more profitable. But these items so often end up being used very little or not at all, often relegated to a dusty shelf or the dark corner of a closet. So why do such grand plans fizzle to nothing?

1. Most things are not as easy to implement as you are lead to believe.
2. In any busy life the "Rule of Posteriority," rules all. The rule states:
  - "There is only an hour in an hour and you can only do so much in that hour. When you add one more thing to the list, something takes the rear."
  - So when you try to implement a new procedure, resistance immediately kicks in – resistance to the new procedure, or resistance to letting some old procedure go.
3. What seems to be the perfect solution to you may be a nightmare to those around you.

In order to be successful, you must constantly be searching for new ways of being the best. New technologies emerge that you must evaluate. What worked great yesterday may not work today. Therefore, change must be an established part of your practice culture. Like the great white shark, you must move forward or die a slow death. So let's examine what is required to properly implement change.

You must first understand the psychological factors facing those who have to live with the change – including the person implementing the change. The four psychological factors are,

- |                            |            |
|----------------------------|------------|
| 1. Even Keel or Status Quo | 3. Trouble |
| 2. Over Confident          | 4. Growth  |

Make a List First

1  
2  
3

The "Even Keel" mindset is very common and describes those who are happy with the way things are. They have no desire to change because it means that they have to get out of their comfort zone. They picture change as chaos which interrupts the safety of the box in which they've placed themselves.

The "Over Confident" mindset is characterized by a sense of being "made." More times than not people with this mindset are arrogant and falsely self assured. They let you know that they're already the "best they can be" and don't need to better themselves.

The "Trouble mindset" is characterized by being or feeling out of control. These people have significantly more work to do than time to do it.

The "Growth mindset" is the most desirable of the mindsets. It is characterized by a need to move away from the status quo; an almost-constant feeling that something isn't working quite as well as it could be

## The Change Discrepancy

The distance from where someone is currently to where they want to be is called the "change discrepancy." The greater the change discrepancy, the more motivated they are to change. Someone with an Even Keel or Over Confident mindset have no discrepancy thus no reason to change. Those in a Trouble mindset have a huge change discrepancy, but their motivation is to get out of trouble, not to grow. The Growth mindset is the only psychological factor that keeps the organization moving forward.

## Employees In Trouble

Employees in the Trouble mindset are usually not properly trained. They're given a list of tasks to accomplish (which are often ill-defined), are pointed in the general direction of the tools they're expected to use, and are told, in essence, "get to it." They figure out ways to do things that are comfortable for them, or that they enjoy doing, but may not be the most important for the efficient and effective accomplishment of the tasks. Employees in Trouble are not being lead properly. They

need to have their tasks more precisely described, and they need to be trained how to do them efficiently and effectively.

### Even Keel and Over Confident Mindset:

Those in Even Keel and Over Confident modes are extremely close to being in Trouble – they just don't know it. They typically have been allowed to select what to do and have not been challenged beyond their comfort zone. After a period of time, because of a lack of direction, they believe that what they do is acceptable. When a change is introduced that effects their comfort zone, they resent it and often sabotage the process. The Over Confident employee takes on a more aggressive posture making those around them afraid of questioning what they do.

### Getting the Employees Aligned with Growth – Start with a List

In order to help team discover the need for continual growth, start with a list of functions that need to be accomplished. The list should include everything. Leave nothing to chance. It should be co-created by you and the dental team during a series of brainstorming sessions. Don't forget to write everything down.

- Appoint New Patients
- Appoint Recall Patients
- Meet and Greet Patients

There doesn't have to be an order to the list. When it is completed, organize it into major function categories.

- Front Desk
- Hygiene
- Doctor
- Marketing

With the list in category order, it's time to assign a responsible party to each function along with an alternate who will perform the function in the absence of the responsible party. Then assign a frequency to each function.

- Daily
- Weekly
- Semi-Monthly
- Semi-Annual
- Annually
- As required

Assigning a responsible party and an alternate next to each function provides you important information. You might find functions to which you have no one assigned. You can quickly

discover a problem that can come back and haunt you later. You might find you have people assigned to the same task as the responsible party, which often can lead to conflict.

Put everything into a spreadsheet so that the list can be sorted by Responsible Parties, Categories, Time Lines, and Frequency. This allows you to see each employee's workload requirements. Visibility is the first step to understanding the big picture. It helps better distribute tasks to those who currently have a lighter load. Once the workload is redistributed, everyone will be challenged to seek out new and better ways to accomplish their respective tasks, keeping them from falling into the Even Keel or Over Confident Mode. You might also lose an employee or two because they may feel threatened about doing new tasks. It's better to have this happen now than to let the practice stall because of someone who refuses to grow. If an employee leaves the practice, their tasks are documented. New employees have the visibility as to what needs to be accomplish.

You now have the basis for running your practice efficiently and effectively. From the list, you may begin to write out job descriptions and set priorities. You now have a basis for measurement and job appraisals.

The next step is to work the list. For those employees who are in trouble, see if there are alternatives that will help relieve the stress by implementing processes and procedures that can help them be more efficient and effective. As I have discussed in my previous articles, Practice Management Extended tools (PMX) can be implemented to help everyone accomplish far more without over taxing the budget. Good PMX software can relieve the stress on Marketing, Advertising, Recall, Appointment Confirmations, and the daily running of reports that take time and have a tendency to fall through the cracks. Plus, PMX tools can help the entire team get through the day effectively and efficiently.

To keep the flow going, regular meetings should be conducted with a focus on working this list to ensure everything is proceeding according to plan. Over time and with a lot of effort, remember there are no magic pills to running a successful practice, change will become a cohesive part of the the practice culture, driven by all parties.

Write me at [Ralph@justsayplz.com](mailto:Ralph@justsayplz.com) and I will forward a Task list Worksheet and some additional tips on PMX tools that will help you assign tasks and responsibilities.

Implementing change needs to be a process before your practice can thrive. Start now, there's still time.

### Here is what a portion of a completed list should look like.

Category	Task	Responsible Party	Alternate	Frequency
Front Desk	Appoint Recall Patients	Jeannie	Lighthouse	Daily
Assistant	Wipe down Op	Angie	Bob	Daily
Assistant	Sterilize Hand pieces	Bob	Angie	Daily
Marketing	Yellow page Ad Preparation	Dr. Frank	Wanda	Annually
Marketing	Monthly Mailer	Dr. Frank	Lighthouse	Monthly