



## What Your Team Needs to Grow Your Practice – Knowledge, Skill, Desire

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Not long ago, a question came up on an online forum for ECP's. "My business started out great but after a couple of years I'm noticing a decline. Any ideas on why it would go up and then go down?" My first thought was "it's your staff."

### **Knowledgeable Team Members**

As a trainer I often encounter staff that know the products and services and can perform tasks or follow a script, but they haven't been trained on the background or the "whys" behind what they are doing. And the patient knows it and does not feel confident to take their recommendations or suggestions. Studies show that 68% of patient's that leave your practice do so because of a bad interaction with a staff member.

Recently, I was conducting a manager's workshop and the question of discounts came up; overall, the response was, "my staff can only sell things that are at a discount." I think this is a cop-out. When experienced, knowledgeable, professional staff work with patient, educating them and making sure they understand the benefits of products and services, the patients rarely ask about discount.

### **Effective Skill Set**

Does this sound familiar? You want the front desk person to be fun and friendly, and then you place them in the clinical lane and want technical professional skills, and ultimately in the optical arena where you want sales skills to be the priority. If you're able to find that all-in-one person, hold on tight, pay them well and hope they never leave.

In reality, it is so much more effective to partner the skills you want to the person you hire. You can't make someone comfortable selling if that's not his or her skill set. Consider carefully, how you word your employment ads, what are the skills you want for the position? How do you screen for them? What questions do you ask? What experience would partner well with your expectation? Hire for skill and develop it, don't plan to train for it.

## Desire - The Most Valuable Trait

If someone really tries hard and wants to do a good job they have a real opportunity to succeed in our profession. You can't train for desire but you can inspire it! Evaluate yourself. What's your attitude on Monday morning? How do you respond to a difficult patient? In other words, lead by example. If you make a mistake, learn from it and move forward, same thing for everyone on the team. It should be less about the mistake and blame and more about finding ways to never do "that" again.

Your team needs to know that learning and growth are expected and while mistakes sometimes happen, the attitude will be more about embracing change and growth and less about hanging on to the old ways and avoiding.

Quality patient care should not be about what's cheapest or what the insurance will cover. It should be about creating team that understands what they are doing, why they are doing it and care about being the best.

1. Who on the team currently, would you re-hire? Why? Consider making them leaders on the team and have them help define your staff plan.
2. Is there anyone on the staff now that you would not re-hire? Why not? If the problem is lack of knowledge, create a training plan and develop their abilities. If it is skill, consider placing them in a different position, if that's not possible consider terminating. If they have no desire, move them out immediately to minimize the negative impact to the rest of the team. You'll be surprised what an improvement this will make for your practice.
3. Do you need to hire staff? Look at your market, who competes with you, outside the eyecare field for staff? Is your package fair, above average, below? Can you attract the best people? If not, rethink your plan. You want your team to reflect you and the character of your practice, define that with your human resource choices.
4. Keeping the quality team. This takes a lot of effort, beyond compensating well you need to create leadership that includes, fun, goals, gifts, compliments, growth opportunity, and autonomy. All this happens with a plan not by accident.

When I was a practice manager one of my favorite quotes was from Vince Lombardi "If you aren't fired with enthusiasm...you'll be fired with enthusiasm!"

My challenge to you is to create a team that you'll want to invest in and do it. It's better to have a great team working well together for three years than a mediocre team together for a decade. Go out and find your best team!

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