

# **#1 Way to Grow Your Practice in 2011 and Beyond**

## *Make Recognizing Your Team Members a Daily Habit*

By Ronald F. Arndt, DDS, MBA, MAGD—*Master Certified Coach*

The number one challenge facing my clients is staff! Every day, I am coaching them around ideas to get them to show up on time, to contribute to the expansion of the practice, how to motivate, terminate, and generally be more productive to the practice. For many years, dentists thought that cash bonuses, higher salaries, or an expanding menu of benefits was all it took to motivate workers. Research over the past decade, however, confirms something else. The two motivational factors most mentioned by employees were not salary and benefits, but rather an interesting job and recognition for doing that job well.

Recognizing and rewarding team members for a job well done or for meeting performance goals are no longer a luxury. It is a basic requirement for strong teams, higher productivity, and a more effective practice.

Consider the following Top 5 Tips to make the process of recognizing your employees a regular and daily habit.

1. **Four-Quarter Technique:** at the beginning of the day put four quarters in your right pocket. During the course of the day “look for” team members doing something “right.” At that moment, stop, acknowledge them with praise and then you can transfer one quarter to your other pocket. Foolish you might think? It’s a simple, yet effective way to create a positive habit guaranteed to earn the respect and praise from your team.
2. **Create Awards:** Use awards to make people feel special. Awards are symbols that outwardly demonstrate recognition for a positive attitude. The more you reward a positive attitude, the more the practice attracts in happy patients and co-workers. Example: Energizer Bunny® Award. Use a pink bunny to recognize the achievement of specific goals that required someone to keep going, and going....
3. **Hand Write Notes:** write a note at the end of the day to an employee who has done something remarkable, or saved you time or embarrassment, or went the extra mile. A simple “thank you” or “I appreciate you” is powerful to the soul. You may even send this note of acknowledgement to the spouse, parent, or significant other for added emphasis and encouragement.
4. **Tell team members why they are important.** People who understand that their efforts make a difference to the success of the team want to make sure their team “wins”. Let everyone know how important they are – everyday! Make this simple daily task one of your daily and weekly “to do” list.
5. **Leave a Message:** when a team member does something remarkable of note worthy call their voice mail at home or their cell phone and leave a message of

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praise and acknowledge them for a job well done. If you're too busy during the day, do it on the way home from your cellular phone. Don't be surprised if they don't save the message and replay for their friends and family...or perhaps to hear again and again.

The attraction and retention of dental auxiliaries are increasing concerns for my clients and many dental business owners---and the situation is only expected to get worse as baby boomers grow older and retire from the workforce. Retaining workers in a competitive market requires an office environment that is supportive, caring and stands out from the rest. This will require an attitude of gratitude. The doctor will need to become more "consciously grateful" for the contribution of employees.

How can you show your employees you care and, in the process, develop a loyal workforce? Recognition and rewards come in all shapes and sizes. They can be formal (part of a planned program) or informal (given spontaneously). They can be free (a warm smile and a sincere "thank you"), simple (a single red rose in a bud vase for each staff member at the end of a productive week), or elaborate (a team one-day trip to Atlantic city).

Suggestion: Celebrate what you want to see more of. Determine what you want to see more of, less of, expanded, improved, eliminated, or modified. Then acknowledge that behavior. So what two things will you celebrate today? Take the next step and implement a simple system of recognition and acknowledgement in your office. If you simply use the five ideas listed above you will be well on your way to creating a more appreciative atmosphere in your office. Do one of them today and observe the positive results.