

## **TOP TEN WAYS TO EFFECTIVELY CRITIQUE YOUR STAFF**

Ronald F. Arndt, DDS, MBA, MAGD

*Master Certified Coach*

Every manager, leader, CEO, dentist has had the uncomfortable task of disciplining, correcting or modifying the behavior of a staff person. The way the communication is delivered determines if it is a positive or negative experience. When delivered appropriately and in a helpful way the results can be positive and an effective learning experience. The following Top Ten will provide guidelines to help you modify unacceptable behavior.

### **1. Critique the behavior and not the person.**

Rather than direct your comments at the individual who will naturally become defensive and argumentative, direct it at their behavior. Example: "I feel displeased with your behavior in the presence of our last patient. I sensed she was irritated when you raised your voice to her." The ego remains intact and the staff person will be able to "hear" your observations.

### **2. Critique the behavior specifically.**

Rather than deliver a broad-based comment, make your remarks specific to a situation---not, "you're always late;" instead, "you were not on time for our last two staff meetings on the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> of this month." Get their acknowledgement to the specifics.

### **3. Begin with positive communication.**

Engage vs. alienate. Start off the conversation with something commendable. For example: "I feel you are an important member of our team." Make your comment sincere and honest. People will be able to see through a façade.

### **4. Use "I" messages.**

When the word "you" is directed at the individual be prepared for defensive behavior. When you use "I" and "we", you demonstrate that you want to work out any differences. For instance: "I feel disappointed that you did not get the report to me on the agreed upon date."

### **5. Mutual meaning, mutual understanding.**

Assure yourself that the staff person clearly understands the reason for your critique. Ask them to paraphrase what you explained to them. You might ask the question: "are you clear on why we are having this conversation?" Clarify any elements of the communication that is unclear.

**6. Empathize.**

Show your staff person that you understand their feelings. Be attentive, listen, ask questions for feelings. When we feel cared for and heard, we are more receptive to improvement. Comments like, “I understand how you must have felt,” or “wow, that must have been a tough decision,” will go a long way to opening up communication and developing empathy.

**7. Write, crumble, write.**

Many times you may be angry at a behavior and want to deliver your critique NOW. Take the time to write out your critique....let your anger flow through your pen. Then crumple up your paper now that the anger is gone and rewrite your critique more peacefully. Guaranteed to be better and more relevant now that the emotions have been removed.

**8. Carrots vs. lemons.**

Behavior that gets recognized and rewarded gets repeated. Offer incentives to develop the behaviors you need and want. For example, if your staff has not been asking for referrals as you have needed and you want to modify this behavior consider creating a game where the individual who asks for the most referrals during the month wins a full tank of gas or 4 tickets to the cinema.

**9. Just the facts mam!**

Short, sweet and to the point. Avoid lectures or long philosophical dissertations. Be assured, long-winded lectures go unheeded. Be empathetic and yet brief.

**10. At the end of the day, “I support you.”**

As you conclude your critique, be supportive, affirming and willing to help them make improvements. Demonstrate your confidence and offer to Coach them on a regular and timely basis. When you comment with: “This will take some real effort on your part to improve, yet I have a great deal of confidence in you and I want to make myself available to you during your progress,” you will see much greater individual growth.

---

*Dr. Arndt is a Dental Coach. He works with dentists and dental teams to be highly profitable and completely fulfilled in their personal and professional life. What that means for them is less stress, more time, more money and a healthier business. As a businessman and entrepreneur, he blends 20 years of clinical dental practice, five years of executive corporate experience in the financial planning and investment management industry with his graduate business training and hands-on experience. He delivers his highly personalized Coaching to doctors throughout the United States utilizing scheduled telephone calls, e-mail and fax. To learn more about his telephone Coaching techniques, his group TeleClasses or to subscribe to his newsletter, contact Coach Ron at*

**THE DENTAL COACH**

**Ronald F. Arndt, DDS, MBA, MAGD**

*“Solutions 4 Business*

Voice: 440-748-6161 Fax: 866-355-1212

E-mail: [DrRon@DrArndt.com](mailto:DrRon@DrArndt.com)

WEB: [www.DrArndt.com](http://www.DrArndt.com)

Blog: [www.coachmeron.com](http://www.coachmeron.com)