



# 3 Ways to Re-ignite the Drive in Your Dental Assistants

By Kevin Henry

**D**entists often tell me they're struggling to get their dental assistants to buy into the vision of the practice and that their assistants are just "going through the motions." They want assistants who have a passion for their career and love what they do — who come to work every day ready to help patients and grow the practice's bottom line. But, after nearly 20 years of working with dental assistants around the country, I know that it's not easy to achieve and maintain that goal. It takes work and communication to make your vision become a reality.

How do you re-ignite the drive in your assistants? Here are three suggestions that I have seen work in numerous practices.

### Dig a Little Deeper

Do you know why your team member became a dental assistant and what his or her favorite part of the job is? These two questions are critical to finding out what is at the center of your assistant's ambition, and knowing the answers enables you to grow that passion through further training.

For example, a dental assistant in Ohio recently talked to her dentist about how much she enjoyed oral surgery. The dentist found that they shared a passion for this procedure and began to seek out continuing education courses they could attend together. When they learned together, they found they could grow that part of their business together. Developing their shared passion opened doors for them to work together in a way they had never considered, and it also opened options to positively impact the bottom line of their business.

### It's Not About the Money

I often hear from dentists who believe that offering assistants a raise every year will ensure their happiness. But money doesn't solve all problems. Time and time again, assistants tell me they would rather work in a practice where they feel valued and appreciated than in a practice where money is expected to cover up underlying issues regarding teamwork and unity. In order to ensure your assistant is an engaged part of your business, you must create a harmonious workplace where everyone is seen as equals and their opinions are valued. When we know we are heard and respected, great things can happen.



I know a dental assistant in Ohio who saw an opportunity to make her practice more efficient. She saw that different team members were giving different answers to the same patient questions, and she decided to make a suggestion during her Monday morning huddle. Working with her team members, she scripted out the answers to the 10 most-asked questions they hear every day. Because of this, the dentist and team members were all on the same page when it came to patient care. None of that would have happened if she worked in an environment where she believed her opinion didn't matter.

### Say Two Important Words

I once surveyed 1,000 dental assistants and asked them what was the nicest thing a dentist ever said to them. Overwhelmingly, the top answer was two simple words: "Thank you."

Expressing gratitude can make a huge difference in the everyday attitude of your assistants. If they know they are appreciated, there will be less stress and more smiles. Those two words are an investment in your team that costs nothing and takes fewer than five seconds, but it can make an incredible impact.

I encourage dentists to think of one thing that their assistants did that made their day easier or less stressful. Take a moment at the end of that day to reflect with your assistant and thank him or her for making a difference. ♦

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