

Three Steps to Make This Your Best Year Yet!

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“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” ~ Albert Einstein

I love this quote because it reflects what I often see when working with dental teams. A current system or protocol is good but not great and is holding the team back from exceling. Yet it continues to be done the same way. When I ask why the usual response I receive is; “we have always done it this way”! Similarly, our level of performance in life is defined by our willingness to question and challenge the status quo. We get good at something and it feels comfortable. Comfortable feels safe and is the downfall of excellence.

Stop doing what you do just because it’s comfortable and challenge yourself to excel and you can make 2015 your best year yet!

A team meeting format is a great way to review and evaluate current systems and protocols to raise the bar to excellence.

Step One:

Establish a clear vision for what you want to achieve.

Start by asking; how can we do this in a way that will improve effectiveness, efficiency and enjoyment? What does the change look and feel like? Define even the smallest details. I am going to refer to your vision as your boat. Describe your boat. What does your boat look like? When and where is it going? How fast is it going? What crew members do you need? What are their roles? What capabilities do you want them to have? What character traits do you want them to demonstrate? What is the purpose of your boat?

Step Two

Create a systematic step by step action plan for all training, tasks and responsibilities necessary to achieve the changes.

Introduce one idea at a time and go deep enough to resolve any obstacles and create a step-by-step action plan. Avoid doing a data dump of many ideas left unresolved that you must continuously revisit. Be precise, practical and

realistic with the action plan. Evaluate whether you have enough time and people to accomplish the action plan. If not, what changes would you need to make in order to succeed?

Most of us want to excel at what we do. It's the unrealistic expectations that often get in the way. For example, let's say the goal is to deliver an over the top experience to patients checking in as well as patients calling because it is the first interaction and impression most patients have with the office. If there is only one person handling all the calls and checking every patient in they are limited in the amount of time and attention they can give any individual patient. The limited staffing coverage impedes them from exceling. Another example is adding an additional procedure to a hygiene appointment protocol that is already over capacity. Either add time to the appointment or remove a procedure. These are examples of unrealistic expectations that can frustrate even the best of employees to the point where they lose their passion to excel. We are in essence setting them up to fail. It is important to always evaluate time and staffing and set precise, practical and realistic expectations to empower the team to excel!

Step Three:

Establish accountability.

Accountability starts with everyone being held equally accountable to the ideas, systems, protocols, and standards. No double standards for anyone including the doctor or manager or you divide the team. Doctors and managers sometimes shy away from addressing what's not working or not being done to the standard. Often to avoid what they believe to be micromanaging or conflict. This only delays what would have been a simple conversation and allows the situation to fester until it is ready to blow at any time! If an inappropriate behavior or attitude does not get addressed by the doctor or manager, it may be considered acceptable by the team. Address any concerns with attitude or behavior as soon as they happen (within a 24 hour period if at all possible). It is important for the entire team to maintain the new ideas, systems, or protocols. There are no individual opt outs! If something is not working for an individual, rely on the team to help to resolve. You may find other team members have difficulty as well and it may be necessary to adjust the protocol. Sometimes things look great on paper and yet don't work well in real life.

If we want to achieve more than we ever have in the past we must be willing and open to change. Changing thoughts, beliefs, and habits can create a sense of groundlessness and uneasiness. Our first impulse will be to revert to old habits because they feel comfortable. Our goal is to hang in there until the change is complete. In the end, change requires letting go of what we've always known and done to allow in something new.

What is one thing you can you stop doing starting today that will make the biggest impact in making 2015 your best year yet? What is one thing you can you start doing starting today that will make the biggest impact in making 2015 your best year yet?

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