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started her career in dentistry in 1971 and was Founder and President of National Practice Advisors. She expanded NPA from a one-person start-up to a full-service health care consulting organization. Now affiliated with Dental-Medical Economics, Inc., her management services are expanded to provide a complete range of professional resources and capabilities.

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Enhancing People Management & Communicating for Success

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Finding and developing capable people is difficult in any business. Companies and practices are not built on money, they are built on people. Recruiting good people is difficult, but the harder part starts when the training begins. Enhancing good communication skills from the beginning is a necessary function of a good manager. A good manager ensures that a good training program exists and the employee understands the demands of the job. Lack of any concrete plan for orientation will stymie a new employee. Training procedures must be in place. The employee should be able to follow guidelines to complete necessary tasks for any position. If the office has not created this training, now is the perfect time to design a training manual.

Communicating through Training & Development

Give New Employees a Faster Start

- Give them time to get acquainted with other key people.
- Make sure to inform them of company objectives, plans, and the image the practice expects to convey.
- Explain to them that every new job provides surprises.
- Give them materials to read and follow if they are not familiar with terminology.
- Encourage them to take good notes.

Give New Employees the Will to Work

- Make sure that new employees feel a part of the overall effort of the entire team.
- Let qualified people do their jobs with as much freedom as possible.
- Show that you care about their progress and aspirations.
- Personally give credit for good work.
- Encourage them to accept coaching and help if they are confused about a new task.
- Encourage them to ask questions.

Experience has shown that clear job descriptions are an important tool in any office. They describe what each person does and how the position integrates with other members of a working team. A job description is a dynamic instrument (and it can constantly change). At least once a year, and more often, tasks change, and the job descriptions must be revised when necessary.

If an employee has not been given a clear job description, it can lead to misunderstandings and communication problems. A job description is vital to a good, close, working relationship with other staff members and managers or supervisors. Generally, I have an office make up

a Job Description Summary and have each staff member complete it for the employee's file and reference.

Job Description Summary:

- Name:
- Position Title:
- Responsible To: (Supervisor)
- Present Salary:
- General Description of Duties:
- Define Specific Duties:
- Daily:
- Monthly:
- Quarterly:
- Semi-Annually:
- Annually:

It is useful for the practice to design a format. The format keeps staff member files uniform and consistent. Usually, a more detailed description will be used for a Training Manual.

Employee Surveys— As a Communication Enhancement

In any type of business, employee surveys can be used to encourage communication. They can be used to continually improve operations and productivity. Not only do they improve efficiency and attitudes, they encourage creative thinking and originality. If the employer uses a survey, he or she may want to keep the information and responses confidential. Your practice may want to use a format of questions such as the following:

Office:

- Do you believe the office values your input and suggestions?
- Do you think management communicates goals and expectations clearly and thoroughly?
- Briefly describe, as specifically as possible, what you think are the company's best contributions to its clients.
- Please indicate by percentage from 1% to 100%, your overall impression of other staff members. For example, if you feel that 75% of the staff is cooperative, then answer 75%.
 - a. Cooperative
 - b. Efficient
 - c. Friendly
 - d. Well Trained
 - e. Satisfied
- Are you dependent upon others to complete certain duties before you can proceed with your major duties?
- What do you like best and least about the office in general?
- Do you have any suggestions for the overall improvement of any office procedures?