

VIEWPOINT **Eileen Morrissey, RDH, MS**



The Blah Team

A dentist came up to me at the break during a lecture I gave in Brooklyn several weeks ago. He said, “Eileen, what do you do with team members who are there just for the paycheck?” I asked him to explain further.

He said, “A couple of months ago, I approached one of my staff members and asked her if she’d like to attend your lecture with me because I thought it would be of value. Her response was that your lecture was scheduled on her day off. I offered to pay her for the day, and she told me she didn’t want to give up her day off to go to a lecture.”

I felt genuine empathy for this dentist, who seemed so tired and frustrated. He said, “I wish so much that she were here today. I don’t know how to get through to her.”

In the morning session, I spoke about the power of motivational lectures, and how great it is when teams attend together. I told the group that my employer, Dr. David Fishberg, asks his team to attend a program together at least once a year and pays all of us — part timers, like me, and full timers — to participate. We have a great time, and always come back to the office invigorated.

So how do I respond to this gentleman? I was reminded of another frustrated dentist whom, just the previous week,

told me he often feels like a one-man cheerleading unit. His staff is not interested in having team meetings. Their collective thoughts are that “there is no need for improvement; and what difference would it make?”

As a consultant, it’s easy to say, “Get rid of the deadbeats and get people on your team who are committed to the practice!” This is easier said than done, because as an employer in today’s tight dental market, you’re dealing with more job availability than qualified candidates. To further complicate matters, both doctors stated, “These women are good at what they do at the office.” This is *not* good if good attitude is part of the job description!

I thought seriously about how I’d approach my team if I were in either one of the above situations. I really don’t understand the mindset of these employees. For the heck of it, give them this article to read. (Sometimes it helps to hear it from an objective observer.) Message — If you are the aforementioned deadbeat employee, this is for you. When you attend lectures with your team, leave with some new ideas to integrate into the practice, make a point of following through with a definitive action plan, and you are guaranteed to see some positive results. And those positive results are going to translate into more business

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for the practice, and, since your employer is the type of leader who wants to involve the team in this endeavor, I will wager that he or she also is the type of leader who will share the benefits of those positive results with you! In other words, raises, bonuses, or some sort of financial recognition as the practice becomes more successful.

But there is more. Do you realize that attending a motivational lecture can be fun? Doesn't the routine of clinical or administrative dentistry "get" to you every once in a while? As a hygienist, I can tell you it gets to me. So, if I take back one piece of motivational pie from a lecture and it shakes up my drudgery, I think it's *great* and well worth the time spent.

Let's get back to the responses for the two frustrated doctors. Ideally, these gentlemen want to keep their current team members in place. They need to have sit-downs with the respective Blah Staff-Person or Blah Team. The conversation would go something like this: "Blah Staff-Person, I am committed to raising the bar of our practice, and I ask for your support. Will you please attend this lecture with me (or participate in these team meetings with me)? I'm not demanding a huge block of your time. You will be paid! But most importantly, this would mean a great deal to me. I value you as an employee (or team), and I need you with me on this." This message would be delivered sincerely, with eye contact, from the heart.

As a leader, you are now setting a clear expectation for how you would like team members to participate in your practice. What happens if an employee continues to be negative? I think you'd be reaching a moment of truth — perhaps a needed one. Is an ultimatum in order? Could you tolerate working side by side, after speaking from the heart, and finding out that this per-

son *has* no heart? If such is the case, do you want this individual in your workplace? Only you can decide; remember — a decision not made is a decision just the same.

From a preventive standpoint, it's important set the expectation regarding her participation in lectures and meetings at the time of

the employment interview.

Choose what works for you, but do something! Take the plunge and address this head-on. Don't let it fester! You are meant for better things in this lifetime than to allow a Blah-Team Member to drain your energy. Good luck!

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