

SIMPLE: Staff in Focus

Staff members can be your greatest asset—or biggest impediment to success. Here's how to achieve team harmony.

BY TRACY DRUMM WELDON

A surgeon once told me that the hardest part of working with people is working with people. One of the greatest struggles many physicians face is hiring and ultimately retaining great employees. With today's modern practice environment, it's easy to focus on social and web advancements or excessive competition and assume practice struggles are the result of external factors. What experience has taught me, however, is that staff members have the potential to be the "Achilles' heel" for many practices.

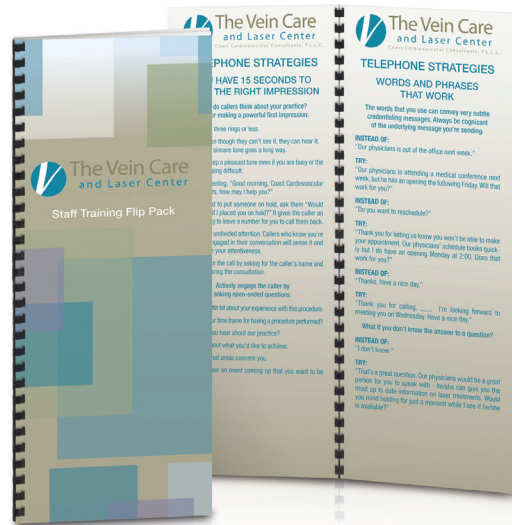
Staff members can be your greatest asset and truly propel your business to new levels of success. Conversely, they can be your biggest impediment to growth and prosperity. Thankfully, there are steps you can take to achieve harmony within your team.

Thinking back to the SIMPLE formula for growth, which this column is based upon, remember that physicians are encouraged to start any marketing projects or new initiatives by engaging their staff members. Employees often spend as much time with your patients as you do and as a result, largely shape their impression of your brand. For this reason it is critical for each member of your team to be thoroughly educated on your practice's mission, goals, and services.

One of the first steps in helping your employees to help you is to establish "safety nets" that encourage positive and meaningful patient interactions without burdening your team with extra responsibilities. These safety nets are visual cues that require a small investment but can help the staff by prompting patients to ask questions about your experience and services. The idea behind these small initiatives is that, no matter how busy your team gets, there are plenty of visual aids throughout the practice to ensure patients receive updates.

One such tool is a personalized name tag for each employee. The name tags help create a professional image for your staff and can provide personal information that credentials the practice, helps "break the ice", and encourages patients to ask about new treatments. For a nominal fee, [Nametags.com](#) is a great resource to experiment with. Your front desk or clinical team

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The name tags help create a professional image for your staff and offers additional benefits. Talk tracks increase phone conversions.

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can each make versions that reveal their favorite treatments. The name tag can also share a personal fact about the employee as a way to help nervous patients feel more comfortable talking about their aesthetic insecurities. Name tags can reveal employee passions, their favorite vacation destination, or credential their experience in dermatology. A receptionist could have, for example, a name tag that says “Happily serving patients for over 12 years.” This inexpensive tool offers information about team members that might not have otherwise been revealed.

Another easy-to-implement strategy is to create personalized phone scripts with your team. Many physicians who originally thought this activity was too sophomoric for their longstanding employees have reported being surprised at the effectiveness of a “refresher” course. This free exercise can ensure “talk tracks” are consistent and ensure employees are providing prospective patients with strong credentialing information.

Sit down with your team and go through your top 10 treatments. Discuss common questions for each service. Have your staff also create at least one statement for each procedure that sets your brand apart from competitors. For example, when discussing fillers your team can share with patients how many treatments the practice has ever performed. Perhaps your team is currently quoting prices and rushing off the phone with prospective callers without separating your services from others. By taking the time to talk through the ideal “dialogue,” your receptionist can now use an updated “script” that helps convert more callers into patients.

When it comes to helping your busy employees, consider ways you can make it easier for them to provide information to new patients as well as create personal and product-based conversations. Implementing a “Practice News” display at your check-in desk or simply giving your staff buttons that announce new services are both ways you can communicate to patients without a significant investment in time or funds.

A LIFELINE TO PATIENTS

In many ways, employees are your lifeline to your patients. Start all marketing promotions by involving them, and you will help validate their roles and gain support for your initiatives. Patients are positively affected by employees that are happy, informed, and invested in the practice’s success. Consider ways you can grow your business by helping your staff transition from individual employees to a team working toward a common goal. ■

Tracy Drumm Weldon is a medical marketing expert with over 12 years of aesthetic experience. Check out her latest marketing book featuring the SIMPLE formula and hundreds of tips to grow your practice at www.drivethebook.com.

