

Get Your Office IN THE ZONE

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Why is it that in sports, some names automatically make us think of winning teams: Vince Lombardi, Phil Jackson, Red Auerbach or Tom Landry? These individuals were all coaches and their names are more associated with their winning teams than the players themselves. They were coaches and leaders who, out of a group of individuals, made teams capable of achieving results greater than any *one* could imagine.

We, as dentists, are always striving for excellence: how to get a better margin, a better bond, or to improve the quality of care for our patients. While doing so we often feel like we are fighting a lonely battle.

Colleagues often complain that their staff is pulling in all different directions. Why do we have to remind our assistants to always use the measuring cup, to make sure the hygienist uses the intraoral camera, or have the receptionist smile at our patients? Maybe its because we need to create a better dental team, one motivated by common goals and one willing to sacrifice individually for the good of the team.

As dentists we must wear several hats; clinician, owner, marketing expert, and equipment repair guy. However, we often neglect to wear the most important hat (and whistle), that of the coach.

Without a doubt in my mind, the single most important aspect of success, patient satisfaction and even peace of mind in your practice is having an ***excellently motivated team***. To achieve this, a good coach is able to establish a goal and show the team how to reach that goal. The dentist must be a teacher, a friend and a boss as he/she maintains the team on track and then celebrates with the team once the goal is achieved.

A successful coach is able to bring the best performance out of people. Imagine having a dental team eager to learn new techniques and reach new goals. The dental team must be *in the zone*. As dentists, we can learn from some of the best team leaders in the sports world. I've done considerable research on the lives and techniques of many successful coaches. Although they all use different strategies, I found six common principles in their recipes for success.

A clear view of what the goal is, and the ability to make the entire team share the same goal.

A team cannot reach a goal if there isn't one, or if the goal is different for every member. The coach must establish a clear team goal, and if there is a member who does not share this team goal, the coach must somehow convert him or get rid of him.

Establish a clear road map on how to achieve this goal

Once the team has a goal, a plan of action needs to be made. A good coach has to assess the circumstances of the team and capitalize on the strengths and minimize the weaknesses. This plan has to be clear to all team members.

A good coach must be Consistent, Decisive and Focused

This is the most challenging requirement. A good coach will remain focused and encourage the team to stay on course. On a daily basis we are faced with new obstacles and a successful coach will be decisive and focused enough to successfully manage them.

Ability to create a team spirit and a willingness to sacrifice for the good of the team

In our selfish society, it is difficult to ask our team members to sacrifice for the good of the team, but a good coach can do just that. The coach must stress that the success of the team and the achieving of the team's goal will greatly benefit the entire team (example: reaching production goals), and, for this reason, the individual likes and dislikes have to be sacrificed (example: an assistant may have to take X-rays more often than they like.)

Willing to celebrate and share success

Celebrating and sharing success is the reward for all the hard work. This must be done on a regular basis to keep the team motivated. Team players will appreciate this recognition of their hard work and continue to give 100 percent.

Once the goal has been reached, they are ready to establish new goals

Great coaches follow these rules and reach their goals. Is that the end of the road? The real Great Ones, after winning the Super Bowl, or having the best year of their lives, celebrate, share and ***get ready for the next goal***.

We can certainly apply these principles and turn our Dental Office and Staff into a winning team. ◆