

Join-Up Efforts for New Employees

Once hired, many promising auxiliaries do not become long-term team members; rather, they lose interest and often choose to quit within a few weeks or months. Among the reasons for this failure are (1) lack of training and (2) lack of welcome and acceptance by current staff members.

The dentist should lead the way and set the tone for the staff to extend a welcome and to help the newcomer develop a sense of belonging and pride in the practice. Fundamental to this effort is a contagious spirit of enthusiasm, cooperation, and respect between the dentist and all team members. If the aura in the office feels unfriendly, strained, or unpleasant, the new auxiliary will find it difficult if not impossible to join up, to seek training, and to become productive.

From Day One of the new auxiliary's employment, extra effort should be made to make the new team member feel a valued member of the group. Praise her/his strengths, ask her/his opinion about certain situations, include her/him in conversations, and thank her/him at the end of each day. Have frequent one-to-one discussions the first few weeks of employment. Assure the newcomer that all of you need and appreciate her/his contributions to the practice.

The first 60 to 90 days of employment may be a training period in which a match between office needs and new employee skills is determined. During this time, all OSHA-mandated inoculations and training should proceed; however, no benefits or accrual of time toward benefits need be given unless the dentist chooses to do so. Upon successful completion of the training period, employment becomes finalized, and benefits or time accrued toward full benefits may begin. Mark the first day of official employment as an important one for the new team member. Celebrate with lunch for the entire team or snacks in the break room during mid-morning or afternoon. Give the new staff member a personalized coffee mug or tote bag or some such small gift. In short, do something special to celebrate the new person's successfully joining the team.