



# Implant Game Changers

***A Whitepaper Series By Roger P. Levin, DDS***

Implant Game Changers is a monthly whitepaper on an important implant practice management topic. It provides you with a quick and easy way to understand a specific business challenge and how to translate the solution into higher production and profit, greater efficiency, more implant patients, lower stress and greater personal satisfaction.

# The Best Way to Keep Your Team and Grow Your Practice

It has been well-established that the key to success of any specialty practice is documented, proven, and step-by-step systems. When effective systems are implemented, practice performance improves almost immediately and can increase practice revenue by 30%–50% over approximately three years. However, there is an added “secret” opportunity called leadership that can allow a practice to perform even better and achieve growth and lower stress faster.

What do your team members really want? For many, the answer is money. However, we are exiting a transactional employment world where the general philosophy was “I pay you, you do work.” This was more than satisfactory for many years, but in the new employment revolution many people no longer find work that enjoyable. Simply paying them more might keep them around longer, but some are just biding their time until they quit.

By implementing documented, proven, and step-by-step systems, practices can create efficiency that makes work easier, practice performance flow better, and teams perform at a higher level. Systems increase revenue and decrease stress, which is a positive step toward moving from transactional employment to building an environment that is desirable for today’s team member, but there is more to the story...

## The most powerful step to keep your team

The most critical step in keeping team members is for them to know that the practice cares about them. How can you show caring? Consider these five approaches:

- 1. Be engaging.** Leadership today is about engaging team members in their work more than ever before. For example, many experts believe that a manager should give feedback to an employee up to 14 times a day. Giving sincere feedback leads to team member engagement and engaged team members work better, stay longer and enjoy their jobs.
- 2. Give compliments.** In the past, I’ve recommended giving compliments to build strong and powerful interpersonal relations. Today, business literature indicates that the younger the employee, the more important compliments are to their engagement. The challenge develops when you have a specialist or office manager that is 50 years old managing team members that are in their 20’s or early 30’s. There is a disconnect as the older manager does not think to give sufficient compliments as part of the management process and the younger team feels under-appreciated and under-recognized.
- 3. Create an enjoyable environment.** Team members today want to know that the practice is more than just a workplace. They want to be at a workplace that cares about them. They want an enjoyable place to work and a collegial atmosphere.
- 4. Fight burnout.** In a recent study, 44% of employees who quit their jobs stated burnout as one of the primary reasons. This can be a challenge in specialty practices due to the nature of the work. So, what can a busy specialty practice do to keep stress down and productivity up? Take advantage of opportunities for small breaks. For example, a practice could select a specific day around a three-day holiday to add a fourth day, give everyone advance notice, and close. Any potential one-day loss in production, profit, and income is nothing compared to the loss of a team member, which Levin Group estimates to be \$50,000 – \$100,000 of lost revenue per turnover.

**5. Get creative.** Caring today means understanding each team member. What are their needs and desires, and what are the creative ways to meet those needs. For example, one practice had two team members that wanted to contribute to their children's education, but they didn't have the financial capability. Those two team members were given very attractive bonus plans that would contribute directly to tuition plans for their children. Another team member had a desire to take a four-week trip to Italy. The practice set up a longevity bonus that after 15 years would give the team member a month off and \$4,000 toward their trip. When a new team member was recently hired, the specialist called the team member's spouse to find out if there was something that the team member wanted. The answer was a piano, and an immediate goal was set that when the practice achieved a certain level of growth, the team member would receive a piano. This practice had a different high-level plan for each team member and very little turnover.

## Leadership and Caring

The definition of caring needs to change. Caring means that the practice now creates an environment and takes into consideration the life and lifestyle of team members. Although there are limits to specialty practice flexibility, the practice environment can become one that is merely an extension of the team members' personal lives. If it's easy, effortless, and enjoyable to be at work, then team members will embrace the environment and want to stay. Their performance will also improve, and practice revenue, profit, and income will grow.

Some of this may sound very foreign and strange to specialists and specialty office managers and at first there will be resistance. However, practices that have better leadership, better engagement of team members,

and demonstrate an environment of caring will retain team members longer, perform better, and have much more enjoyable and satisfying careers.

You may think that you care, and you probably do, but does your team know it? In the new world of team development and retaining team members, you need to go to another level and go out of your way to demonstrate caring. Here are a few examples:

- **Meet with team members every 3 to 4 months for a 10-minute check-in.** Let the team member know that this meeting is simply to check-in so that they don't think that they are in trouble. During this time, ask them a few open-ended questions about how they're doing at home and work, if they need any training, challenges they are experiencing, or any recommendations for making the practice better. At first, staff members may be a little skeptical or cynical, but as you continue to have these meetings (with a spirit of conversation and without any judgment) the team member will become more comfortable, look forward to the meetings, and view them as an example of caring.
- **Have a fun activity for the practice every two months.** These activities don't have to be expensive, but they should demonstrate a desire to make the practice fun, easy, and enjoyable. Little things like bringing in lunches, dressing up for holidays, and having contests all go to the heart of fun monthly activities and demonstrate caring.
- **Hold a team activity outside of the office every quarter.** This gives your team a chance to see each other as people, and it fosters friendship and cooperation. These activities can include dinners, happy hours, movies, sporting events, community activities, and community charitable activities.

## The power of team

No practice will achieve or maintain a high level of success without a good to great team. In Levin Group's ongoing study of top 10% performing practices, we found 17 principles that these practices generally have in common. One of the key principles was high-longevity teams. There are many reasons team members leave that are beyond the control of the practice. What we want to focus on is reducing turnover for team members that are dissatisfied, fatigued, or burning out. We also want to make sure we understand the desires and growth path for each team member if possible.

Specialty practices are somewhat limited on promoting team members or moving them into other areas, which means that we must go out of our way to do an even better job of creating a fun, satisfying, and enjoyable environment. The longer the team is with you, the better the odds that you will have a good to great team.

This is where systems come in. If you have documented systems that team members can access, proven systems that are already working in other practices, and step-by-step systems that become instruction manuals for each job, team members will rise to the highest level of performance. Furthermore, you should periodically review systems with team members and ask them to

identify ways to eliminate waste or make improvements. This is also a display of caring about improving the practice, making the job easier, and creating a fun environment.

## Summary

We are entering a new era of employment and employee management. If you want to build and keep a great team, and enjoy your practice, then you must be able to offer an environment of engagement, unique approaches to different team members, and caring. It does not have to be over the top. However, without changes in most practices there will be team member turnover, loss of revenue, high levels of frustration, fatigue, and burnout. With the recommendations in this article, a specialty practice can move to an entirely new level of team member engagement.

As one final note, communication is also critical. Meeting with team members regularly for what Levin Group calls "stay interviews" help to determine a team member's satisfaction, happiness, goals, and desires on an annual or semiannual interval and will demonstrate the engagement, unique approach to each team member, and caring that are all now so critical to building and maintaining a great team.

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