



Breaking glass ceilings

By Dr Kia Pajouhesh

Dr Kia Pajouhesh is presenting another series of intimate one-day educational events titled "Breaking Glass Ceilings in Your Practice" in Adelaide on 23 April; Sydney on 7 May; and Brisbane on 21 May. Here he shares some answers to common questions posed at past events.

Q *My goal is a better lifestyle out of work, with reduced hours at work and a happier, more profitable workplace. What's your advice?*

A Work-life balance, like happiness, and like the never-ending search for knowledge, is a journey and thus, in my opinion, should not be referred to as a goal. To claim that you have mastered any of the above is madness, yet to strive for them on a daily basis as part of your journey through life is highly admirable.

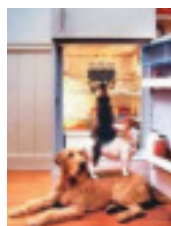
Therefore, as a fellow student of the challenges work-life balance brings to all professionals, I would like to share the following with you.

A number of factors challenge us in this field, and the parameters we must improve upon include:

- auxiliary staff training and retention rates
- attracting, selecting and retaining good assistant dentists
- business protocols, systems and profitability
- finding the balance between working ON our business and IN our business
- changing the mindset whereby our negative thoughts and deep-seated internal belief systems make us ineffective delegators of time-draining tasks and duties.

I wish to explore some of these internal belief systems with you. If you have any of the following negative thoughts about delegation, you are greatly hindering your journey to better work-life balance. They may include, but are by no means restricted to, the following:

- "No one will do this job as well as I can. If I want something done properly, I need to do it myself."
- "I fear losing my valued customers if things go wrong."
- "No one else is as fast and as good as I am at this task."
- "I will have to go back and correct all the mistakes they have made anyway, so why bother?"
- "I have no time to train them, and I have been burnt before."



Delegation is the essence of freeing up time. It is also the foundation for better team work - and, in turn, better job satisfaction - in the workplace.

- You should judge your success by your ability to train others and delegate. A successful business is one that functions normally while you are lying on the beach in the Bahamas. An ineffective delegator will always be restricted to what he or she can produce with their own two hands and will be alarmed to discover, in succession planning, that their business goodwill has little or no value.
- You should also judge the value of your management staff by their ability to delegate, teach and mentor more junior staff. We often make the mistake of gauging the value of an auxiliary team member by the amount of knowledge and expertise they store in their own heads. In fact, some staff guard such knowledge in order to keep an advantage over their peers for negotiating better pay and conditions for themselves. It must be made clear to all your team members that an ability to manage others – and, in turn, to receive the fruits of progress – requires them to actively teach, effectively delegate to, and passionately mentor others in the team.

Ineffective delegation may result in:

- **under-burdening our staff** - In this instance, we are not able to let go of tasks that we consider important or too complex. Hence we are forever instructing our assistant dentists and auxiliary staff in menial and simple jobs. Our team members then feel that their skills and abilities are not valued and that their development is being hindered in our presence. This will eventually make them become negative - or even resign, with little remorse.
- **over-burdening our staff** - We often find ourselves assuming that a person is more capable than they really are. Because of our assumptions, we take little or no time to mentor and train them. It may also be a case of having chosen the wrong person for a particular task, making our team members feel overwhelmed and stressed as a result. As confidence and motivation levels further plummet, the downward spiral eventually erodes staff retention and productivity.

In a dental practice where delegation skills and team work principles are strong, the benefits that flow include staff being empowered with more confidence and motivation, and greatly enhanced loyalty within the team. The result is that the performance level of your team increases dramatically, leaving you more time to work ON your business... or work on your golf handicap!

To learn more about the tools needed for better work-life balance and the delegation skills required to manage a dental practice, you can hear Dr Kia Pajouhesh speaking in Sydney, Adelaide or Brisbane in April/May 2008. If you are unable to attend one of Dr Pajouhesh's seminars, please email your questions to kia@smilesolutions.com.au for publication in a future edition of Australasian Dental Practice.