



Before You
Open Your
Practice:

Five Things to Know About Building a Team

by Laura Hatch

Opening a new dental office can be a crazy and even scary time. As an owner of a new practice, there are so many things coming at you at once. Tons of decisions to make. Lots of things to buy. Marketing options to consider in order to find new patients. And to top it all off, you need to find good people to work for you, hoping you're making effective hiring choices.

That final step is probably the hardest, but, if done well, will have the highest payoff.

BEFORE you open:



1. Hire on attitude, not solely on skills or experience.

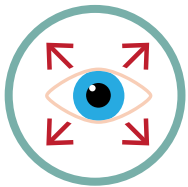
Too many new owners are so nervous about what to expect, they ignore their instincts when it comes to the overall attitude of the candidates. Of course, it's important to look at what candidates have done in the past, considering their interviews and resumes, but it is even more important to hear their attitudes. Thus, the first step to hiring well is to allow the candidates' attitudes to show whether they are the best fit for your new office or not.

Technical skills are important, especially in some positions. However, if you hire someone who has a lot of experience or education but doesn't care about what you want to accomplish, that person won't be a good team player.



2. Make sure your new team members understand why you are opening this office.

If your team members don't know why you have decided to become a dentist, open an office, or hire them to help you, then you can't really know if they will be fully dedicated to your team. Team members who don't know your ultimate reason for doing this work can only support you so far. Even when doing their best, it's not possible to truly help in furthering your goals if they have no idea what vision and priorities you hold.



3. Help team members understand their part in fulfilling your vision.

You know where you want to go as a new office, now show your new hires how they will play a part. Team members are more motivated and demonstrate more buy-in when they know your "cause" or "vision." Regardless of the generation you employ, everyone feels better and works harder when they feel they are part of a bigger game or purpose. Start a dialogue as to what you want your practice to be and how each member can play a part in building it. Give them the chance to articulate why they are personally motivated to help you meet this goal.

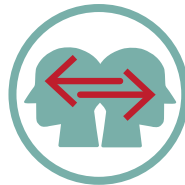
Most of all, make sure they know they are on the same team with you. Communicate clearly and fully about your expectations and how staff can contribute toward the outcome. It's also important to discover their motivation to help you with this. When you know they are on the same team with you and working toward the same goal, everyone will learn to trust one another and work better together.



4. Employees need to feel support and know you are going to invest in them.

Your biggest monthly expense is payroll, and investing in that makes so much sense.

Your team wants to know that you value them and will help them do their jobs better. Give them access to regular training, not just in the beginning, but as you continue to grow. Lead by example and demonstrate what you expect. Build an environment where employees feel safe to come to you, to make mistakes and own up to them, and to know you will always have their backs if they have yours.



5. Remember your team members need to know how they are doing.

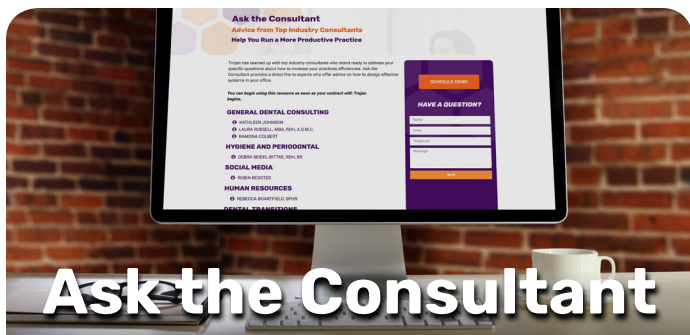
The number one complaint of most team members about owners is lack of feedback and communication. Surprisingly, the feedback does not always have to be positive. Team members are eager to hear anything, good or bad, so they can improve and grow. Make sure to let them know and show them they make a difference.

The first few weeks and months after you open will be chaotic and crazy, but, hopefully, this is not how it will be forever. If you take the time to put in systems and you work together as a team, you should be able to look back in the not-too-distant future and see things are improving. When you start to feel there is some improvement and growth, don't forget to stop and recognize it. Celebrate the wins, no matter how small they are. If the team sees the forward momentum and you acknowledge it, they will continue to push forward.



Laura Hatch, named in *Top 25 Women in Dentistry 2016*, provides real-world front office expertise and training for dental practice success. She is the CEO and Owner of Front Office Rocks, a sought after public speaker, and author of 200 published articles. She has helped hundreds of doctors grow their practice.

FMI: FrontOfficeRocks.com.



Ask the Consultant

Q: When we use the code **D9110** for Palliative care, can we also charge for an examination and x-rays? I see that in some situations we can use **D9110**; we can also code the treatment with other service codes. For instance, when not all decay has been removed, and a temporary filling is placed vs. **D2940 – IRM Sedative Filling**. Or, applying desensitizing medicament to an exposed root surface vs. **D9910 – Application of Desensitizing Medicament**. Do we charge out both codes to insurance?

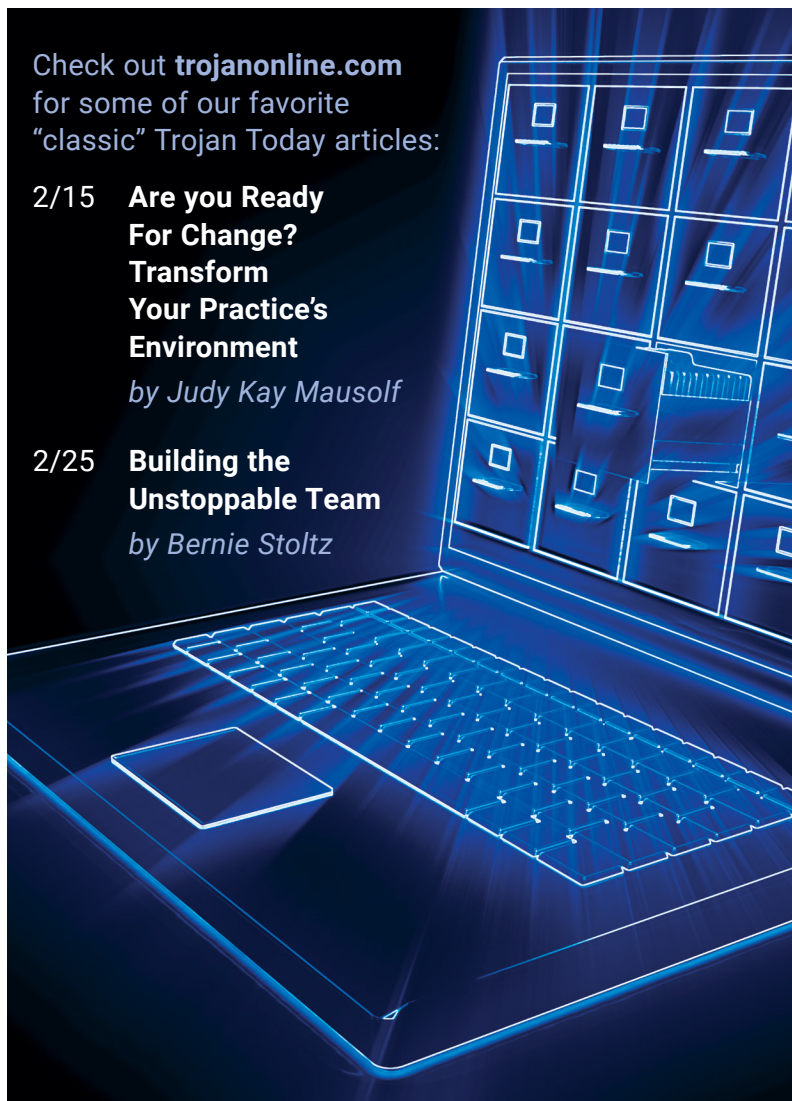
A: You can bill **D0140 – Limited Exam** and **D0460 – Pulp Vitality Test** in conjunction with **D9110**. However, not all insurance plans will cover if both procedures are performed on the same day. One or two x-rays are usually covered.

From my experience, the billing of this code varies from one insurance company to another. Some will ONLY pay for that procedure on the date of service. It's considered an emergency visit, and whatever treatment is rendered at that visit is solely for pain relief. Keep in mind, billing for **D0140** usually counts against the routine exam frequency.

Response provided by **Kathleen Johnson**,
President of Kathleen Johnson Consulting, Inc.

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