

## Four Cornerstones Of Success BY LINDA MILES

Every practice has a tremendous ability to succeed far beyond the owner's expectations. In consulting for over thirty years, I've learned the true secret to success is to build a structure, or a foundation, known as the cornerstones. The same is true in every practice, large or small.

**The first and most important part of the foundation is COMMUNICATION.** From the doctor to the employee, from employee to co-worker, and from all to the patient. Knowing very little about one's services and less about the benefits to the patient is the downfall of many professional practices. In his book, *Everyone Lives By Selling Something*, the author Alan Lord clearly defines this weakness in most businesses as one's inability to connect customers with the product or services on the shelf. The same is true for dental practices and includes the inability of the doctor to clearly define the mission or goals of the practice to the workers. When the communication within a practice improves, the likelihood of workers enjoying their environment is greatly enhanced.

**The second important cornerstone of success is ORGANIZATION.** Some people are totally disorganized which causes stress for others as well as low productivity for all. Looking for things that could be found in seconds versus minutes or hours is one of the key reasons why some practices are not only less productive but also less profitable. I truly believe it is the top 20 percent of efficiency and organization that creates another 40 percent of productivity. Going home "happy tired" versus "stressed-out tired" will be the workplace of the future and one that is highly organized. Some workers are born organized and others struggle with it. I find that some employees need simple organizational plans to accomplish more each day. Outlining these plans step by step, prioritizing the lists by due dates, then color-coding or computer tracking memos will help.

**The third cornerstone is MOTIVATION.** Often employers and employees lack motivation to move their practices to the next level. At meetings, they continue to discuss what needs to be done but the motivation necessary to turn great ideas into finished projects through teamwork and delegation is not there. Motivation is a gift we give ourselves. We

can't look to others to motivate us. How a person thinks, who they spend time with, and what they listen to often shape their level of natural motivation. It isn't the daily challenges that come to a person during the day that causes their stress. It is how one chooses to deal with the issues that come their way. If they process responses through a negative filter, they will have negative results. The opposite holds true for the optimistic people of the world. They process everything, even obstacles and challenges, through a positive filter, which brings positive results. We all enjoy being around positive, motivated individuals as they give us energy. Negative people are referred to as "joy robbers" who drain our energy!

**The last, but certainly not least, is the fourth cornerstone for success in business, which is APPRECIATION.** Appreciation for one's work, co-workers, patients, and the opportunities for being able to contribute is having "an attitude of gratitude." So many employers are not appreciated by the people they hire, even when the employers go out of their way to create a good work environment for the employees. Some employers do not appreciate their employees. These employees usually end up leaving when there is little, if any, praise and respect for the workers. If a practice has good employees, they should be treated like gold. In today's world, attracting and retaining good employees is not an easy task.

Most important to success is an appreciation for patients. Let them know you appreciate their business, so when they need your service, they think of you first and only. This type of patient loyalty is found in practices that have strong leadership, effective communication, praise, and appreciation for employees and employers. The trickle down effect is obvious in a happy practice where the levels of appreciation and respect are strong.



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