

# Learning to Fly in Formation

BY SHARI TASTAD

Imagine the opportunity to enjoy an evening on your deck appreciating all the beauty of our spectacular landscape. I take that opportunity whenever possible. This time of year I often find a flock of geese that bless me with their abundant cheering (honking!). It reminds me of a dental team I have the privilege of knowing and working with.

Let me share this story with you: Several years ago a dental team was faced with the daunting news that their dentist had suffered an aneurism and would be disabled for an extended period of time. What I witnessed was a group of individuals that **knew** and were focused on the vision of the company. They immediately went into action. The cross-coverage agreement was found and implemented. They had a local dental “team” enrolled

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to cover the scheduled days until a Locum Tenen was found. I believe it even meant working on a Friday and Saturday to accommodate the other local dentists’ schedules. The team extensively interviewed the Locum Tenen to make sure the person fit the vision of the office.

They supported this person for six months before realizing their dentist would not be returning to the practice. At that time, the team moved to the next phase of what they saw as their responsibility for supporting both the owner and the patients and they began to interview possible buyers for the practice. All this time, they maintained a production level that some of you are still aspiring to.

What does it take to be such a flock of geese? Let’s learn from the lessons below:

- As each goose flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the following birds. By flying in a “V” formation, the whole flock enjoys 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone. The dental practice described above thoroughly understood that teamwork not only made the job of each member easier and more efficient, but it provided better service to the patients.
- Every member knows the direction of the flock. Sharing the common direction makes assuming the leadership role easier. Because each team member knew and was focused on the vision for the company, it made finding the perfect Locum Tenen efficient and effective.
- When the lead goose tires, it rotates back in the formation and another goose flies to the point position. Every member is willing to assume leadership when the flock needs it. In the described practice, when the dentist fell ill, the supporting flock members were ready, able, and willing to take their turn at the front.

- Followers encourage leaders. In a flock of geese, that recognizable honking has been found to be a form of encouragement. The geese honk loudly to encourage those at the front to keep their speed.

- Flock members look after each other so the collective goal can be achieved. If a goose is sick or wounded, two geese immediately drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They remain with the ailing goose, feeding and caring for it until it recovers or dies. Then they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.

Imagine how rewarding it must have felt for the ailing dentist to have the help and support of his team!

To this day, this group of individuals remains a fabulous team with a new dentist who has blended beautifully. They continue to flourish. And, if you were to step into the office, you would undoubtedly hear their honking! ☺



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